

# **A Study of Migration from Bangladesh to Assam, India and Its Impact**

*by*  
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## **Abstract**

Migration from Bangladesh to Assam, a north-eastern state in India bordering Bangladesh, has significant implications for its demography, economy, socio-political framework and environment. The migration that started at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century from areas in today's Bangladesh continues unabated making it a large-scale migration problem.

This study is based on author's data gathered through a number of field surveys conducted in Assam between 2009-2012. It has also been complemented by existing knowledge of the migration from various sources; notably, government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the literature. The primary aim of this study was to obtain a better understanding of the scale, composition, causes, trends, process and impact of migration to Assam, with a special focus on migrants' adjustment in their destinations. An in-depth analysis of factors that influence migration has been presented by developing a comprehensive understanding of the implications on Assam's changing demography, socio-political dynamics, environment and economy. The study has also dealt with several other underlying issues, topics and problems which are important and relevant to the subject. Implications of various policies relating to migration have been discussed.

Although the migration from Bangladesh is being projected by some quarters only as a major problem for Assam with no benefits whatsoever, author's findings, however, suggest that this is not totally true. It shows a mixed outcome, both positive and negative. The study shows that although there are several negative aspects to the migration, one cannot overlook the contribution the migrants have made towards the development of the state in its early phase under the British Rule. There is yet no widespread acceptance of migrants by indigenous population of Assam. However, increasingly many of them are interacting with local people through business, matrimonial alliances as well as through their children's education.

The study concludes that it is an undeniable fact that large-scale migration from Bangladesh to Assam has taken place over many decades, and it still continues. It is a reality and has changed its demographic landscape. Therefore, it is important for the policy makers to address the problem of migration by taking into account its long-term impact on the state as well as the country as a whole, instead of looking at the short-term expediencies or utilizing migrants as a convenient political vote bank. A long-term measured solution is necessary for this problem so that both indigenous and migrant communities can live and work together in harmony, and prosper in a socially-responsive and environmentally-friendly manner. This study also makes a number of recommendations and suggestions for further research in this area.

## **Dedication**

*I dedicate my work*

*to*

*My lovely daughter Trianna,*

*My parents who worked so hard throughout their life just to get me here,*

*My past, present and future generations,*

*also to*

*My teachers, advisers, contributors as well as well-wishers who supported me in every stage of my studies.*

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## Statement of Originality

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Madhumita Sarma

\_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / 2015

## Chapter 1: Introduction

"Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, a new form of migration process within developing countries took centre stage, not only because of the massive flow of people, but also of the conflicts they engendered in the less developed world, forcing western scholars to view the process as inherently destabilizing and a crisis of state and how both sending and receiving states respond to emigration/immigration crises."

(Nandy, 2005, p.1)

"Anyone would be loath to leave his home and heart except in the pursuit of better economic avenues ... Poverty-driven people are like water, they chart their own course."

Tariq Ahmed Karim, High Commissioner of Bangladesh in India on April 8, 2010 in Guwahati, Assam at the "India Bangladesh Relations: Beyond Borders" organized by the Centre for Development and Peace Studies, while commenting that the large-scale migration from Bangladesh to India, especially Assam is governed by the dynamic of economics and that a developed Bangladesh would serve the interests of Bangladesh and India better (The Assam Tribune, April 8, 2010).

### 1.1 Introduction of Migration

Migration is a constant but dynamic phenomenon. It is propelled by a number of factors, primary among which are growing demographic disparities, socio-economic imbalances, political dynamics at local and regional levels, fast and advanced new social networking avenues and also the effects of environmental changes and sudden climatic events and calamities. It is predicted that the number of migrants worldwide will almost double from 214 million in 2010 to 405 million by 2050 because of "*demographic disparity, environmental change, new political and economic dynamics, technological revolutions and social networks*" (World Migration Report, 2010, p.3). The UN Population Division (UNPD) has defined migrants as "*persons who move to a country other than that of their usual residence for a period of at least one year, so that the country of destination effectively becomes their new country of usual residence*"<sup>1</sup>.

People worldwide are on the move for various reasons and purposes, the most obvious being economic gain, achieving a higher standard of living, security, poverty alleviation, discrimination, educational opportunities for offspring and also political and environmental changes. Movements are sometimes voluntary, and at other times, forced.

"Population mobility is best viewed as being arranged along a continuum ranging from totally voluntary migration, in which the choice and will of the migrants is the overwhelmingly decisive element encouraging people to move, to totally forced migration, where the migrants are faced with death if they remain in their present place of residence. The extremes in fact rarely occur, and most mobility is located along the continuum" (Hugo, 2008, p. 16).

Both positive and negative impacts are associated with migration. It can contribute towards the economic growth and innovation in destination countries while alleviating poverty in the sending countries (Weiner, 1995). However, migration into an already

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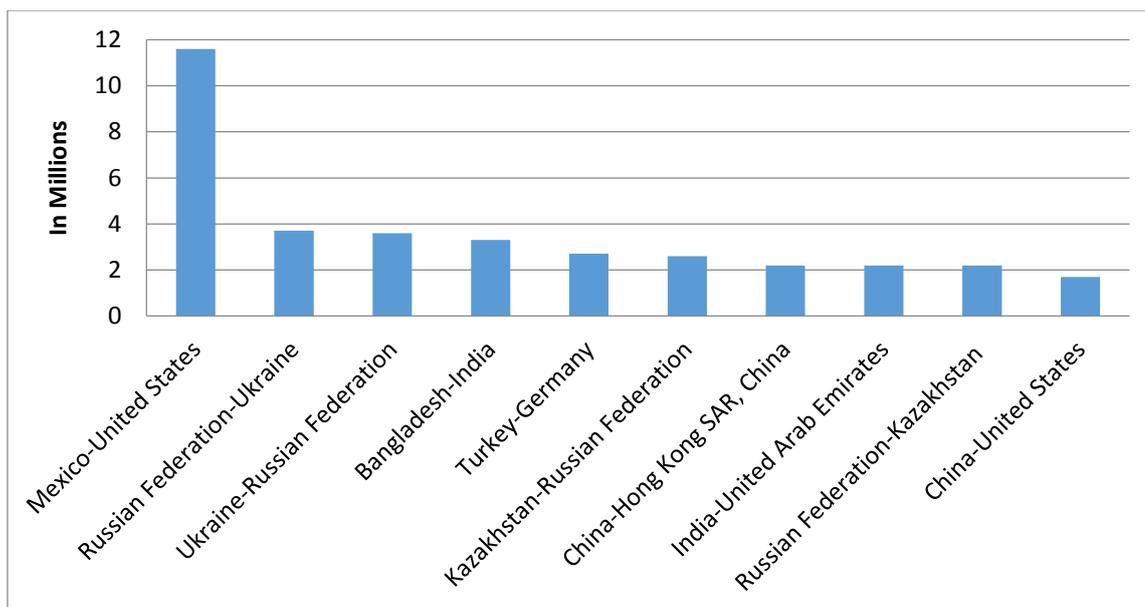
<sup>1</sup> As quoted in World Bank Migration and Remittances Fact Book 2011, p. 264

densely populated area or country can lead to new challenges as it may lead to conflict over sharing limited population sustaining resources and civic amenities, poorer living conditions, health and sanitation (Weiner, 1995).

India is the largest migrant host nation in Asia with an estimated 6.1 million migrants, mostly from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in 2001. As shown in Figure 1.1, at around 3.3 million migrants, the Bangladesh-India migration corridor is the fourth largest among the migration corridors in the world (World Bank, 2011). This places India among the top ten global migration destination countries. Handling such large-scale migration is a challenge, which is further compounded by the fact that most of the migrants from neighboring countries to India, particularly from Bangladesh are undocumented (World Migration Report, 2010). Hugo has summarized the magnitude of such large-scale undocumented migration by stating that:

“Undocumented migration is increasingly an issue within the region. It is estimated that some of Asia’s largest undocumented migration flows may be among the largest overall contemporary flows, with Bangladesh – India alone involving up to 17 million people.” (Hugo, p.167 in World Migration Report, 2010).

**Figure 1. 1: Top-Ten Migration Corridors in World, 2010**



Source: Development Prospects Group, World Bank (Migration and Remittance Fact book, 2011)

Migration from what is now Bangladesh had in fact begun in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was then viewed as an intra-country migration from one region to another as India was an undivided nation under British Rule. This migration has since continued unabated even after the 1947-partition of India into two separate nations under the “two-nation” theory based on the religious makeup of the population. According to the data released on September 13, 2013 by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) ahead of the global summit on migration and development hosted by the UN General Assembly in New York on October 3-4, 2013, India was home to 3.2 million

migrants from Bangladesh in 2013, "the single largest bilateral stock of international migrants"<sup>2</sup>.

This study focusses upon migrants in India who originate from the region which comprises today's Bangladesh. Over time there has been constant change in the scale and composition of migration from Bangladesh, which has had important socio-economic, political and environmental implications for India. This study also seeks to understand and analyze these aspects.

The migration of Bangladesh nationals across the Indo-Bangladesh border can be compared to a certain extent, with migration occurring across the United States-Mexico or Indonesia-Malaysia borders. What is common among these migrations is a key driver, which is shortage of labor in the host or receiving country and high unemployment in an adjoining sending country. Another factor which has also contributed to this migration is the inequality or disparity in economic development on either side of the border (Hugo, 1992, 1993, Mazumdar, 1990). Other factors that are important are political and socio-cultural determinants (Sukandi and Haris, 2003). Political factors such as state policies and laws, migration laws, border issues, treaties, Indian political parties giving legitimacy to irregular migrants to become Indian citizens to buy their votes, etc. are the problems that need to be addressed. In addition, issues that relate to socio-cultural phenomena should be considered as international relations have had a big influence on the shift in the pattern of social and cultural relations.

"Therefore, efforts to understand the phenomenon of international labor migration cannot be isolated from other issues that constitute the framework of the formation of international relations." (Sukandi and Harris, 2003, p. 3).

Another factor relevant to this study is undocumented migration or irregular migrants. The 2010 World Migration Report (IOM, 2010, p.29) has reported that around 10 to 15 percent of the migrants' worldwide fall into the category of irregular migrants. These irregular migrants are not documented, and as a consequence, they are ignored especially in terms of their rights and entitlements. However, their "visible presence" cannot be overlooked, particularly when their number swells disproportionately among the population as is the case with the irregular migrants from Bangladesh. In addition to raising law and order issues – perceived or real -- in the destination countries, such large-scale irregular migration can also undermine legal immigration systems. Indigenous citizens in the host country become increasingly apprehensive of poor border control measures which, in their mind, may be detrimental to their way of life in their own country (Weiner, 1995, p.141). It is for such reasons, the life of irregular migrants can be difficult; for, they become

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<sup>2</sup> Reported by The Times of India, September 13, 2013, and also via online through web post of Kounteya Sinha of TimesNow News: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Bangla-migration-to-India-largest-in-developing-world/articleshow/22528497.cms?intenttarget=no>

vulnerable to situations where they may be harassed, detained and deported back to their country of origin.

The country of origin of irregular migrants, too, does not fare well. Irregular migration may lead to corruption, human trafficking by unscrupulous “agents” who engage in producing counterfeit documents and fraudulent activities. In addition, irregular migration also impacts the administrative and security infrastructure along the routes used by the migrants (Massey *et al.*, 1993, p. 450).

In the context of irregular migration from Bangladesh to India and Assam, environmental and climatic causes have a special relevance, as Bangladesh is among countries that are most prone to natural and climate-linked calamities such as perennial floods, cyclones, riverbank erosion, storm surges and droughts (Asian Development Bank, 2011). Effects of such calamities may not be direct and/or become immediately obvious; however, over a period of time, their effects are manifested indirectly, such as low crop yields due to degradation of land fertility, loss of top soil, increased land erosion and rise in the salinity of both soil and water to an adverse level, decrease in food production, water shortages, poverty and urban unrest. These effects, either in isolation or in combination, eventually may lead to out-movement of population from the area (Cruze *et al.* 2007). The World Migration Report (IOM 2010) also states that:

“While the relationship between environmental change and migration is complex and remains unpredictable, the number of migrants, especially in the less developed world, is expected to increase significantly as a result of environmental changes” (IOM, 2010, p.4).

With the above backdrop, this chapter presents an introductory overview of the underlying issues pertinent to migration from Bangladesh to Assam, a north-eastern state of India. The research objectives are presented and the relevant geographical and historical background is discussed. The history of migration from Bangladesh to India, in general and Assam in particular, is then presented while the next section looks at population growth in Assam between 1901 to 2011 and compares it to that of India to establish a relationship between population growth in Assam and migration. It then examines the relationship between environmental degradation and migration from Bangladesh. Finally, the motivation for the study is presented followed by an outline of the organization of the study.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

The aim of the study is to obtain a better understanding of the scale, composition, causes, trends, process and impact of migration from Bangladesh to Assam since the late 1940s, with a special focus on migrant’s adjustment in their destination country as well as to throw light on the general issues of undocumented migration. To meet the aim of the study, five specific research objectives were formulated:

**Objective#1:** To investigate the reasons motivating migration from Bangladesh/East Bengal/East Pakistan to Assam since independence.

**Objective#2:** To examine trends, patterns, processes and scale of migration and demographic change in Assam.

**Objective#3:** To determine the political, economic and environmental impacts of the migration on Assam.

**Objective#4:** To study the social and economic adjustment of migrants in their country of destination, India.

**Objective#5:** To study the various policies and measures taken by the governments of Assam and India at different times to maximize the benefits, and minimize the negative effects of migration.

### **1.3 Geographical and Historical Background**

#### **1.3.1 Assam**

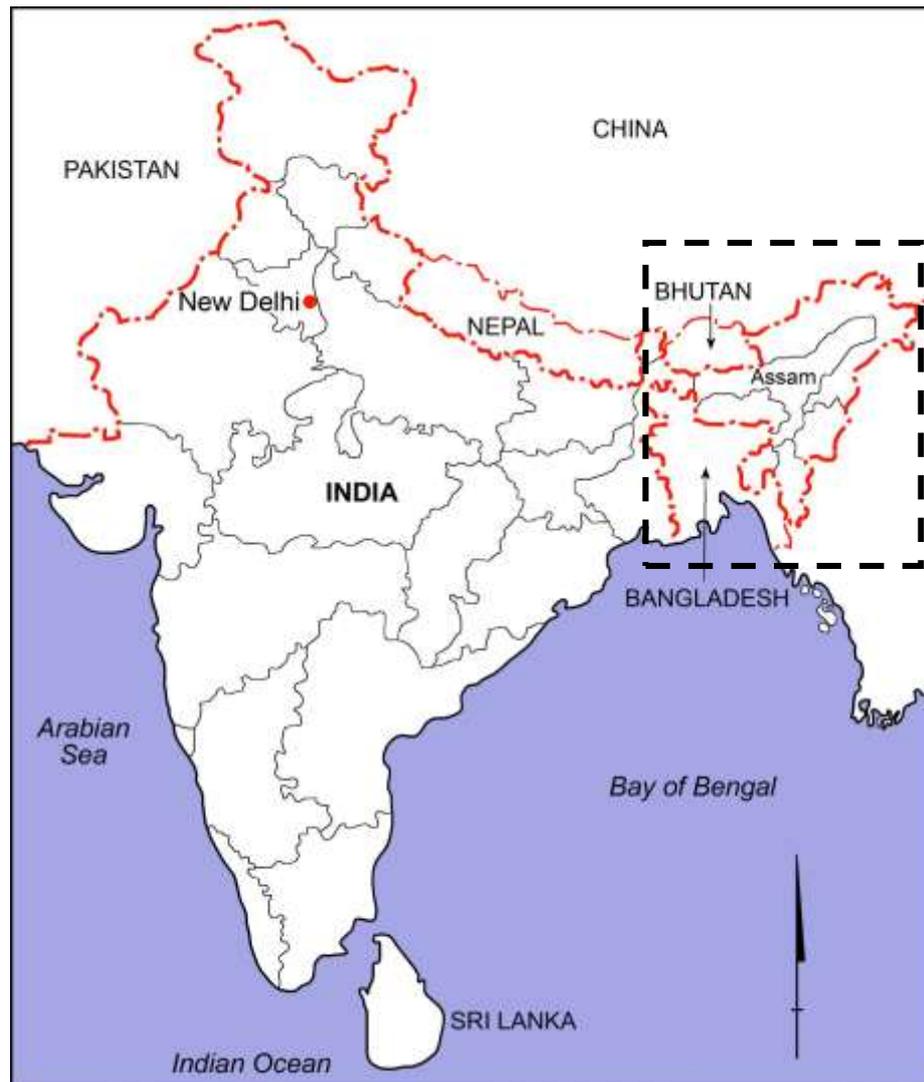
Assam is a state in the north-eastern region of India sharing international borders with Bangladesh in the south-west and Bhutan in the north (see Figure 1.2). Within the federation of India, Assam shares boundaries with six states: Arunachal Pradesh in the north and north-east, Nagaland and Manipur in the east and south-east, Meghalaya and Mizoram in the south, Tripura in its south-west and West Bengal in the west. Assam together with these north-eastern Indian provinces, excluding West Bengal, shares a 1,879-km border with Bangladesh, including its share of 262 km of which 92 km is riverine (Goswami, 2006). Topographically, the north-eastern provinces are mountainous and hilly; Assam is partially hilly with two major river valleys, Brahmaputra and Barak.

Geographically, Assam comprises three major physical divisions: the Brahmaputra valley, the Barak valley and the hills of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar. The Brahmaputra valley, named after the river Brahmaputra covers 72 percent of the state's total area with its east-west extension of 725 Km and about 80 Km width. Its total area of approximately 58,000 sq. km is drained by 32 major tributaries on the north and south banks of the Brahmaputra River, which essentially traverses the entire length of the state (Bhagabati *et al.*, 2006). The Brahmaputra River flows into Bangladesh in the west of Assam just after the district of Dhubri, the point after which it is known as the Jamuna. Finally, Jamuna merges with the river Padma to form the Meghna river system. The soil of Brahmaputra valley is alluvial and fertile (Taher, 2009). The Brahmaputra valley has four micro-physiographic divisions; notably, the northern foothills, the southern foothills, the middle plains and the flood plains where the chars<sup>3</sup> are located (Bhagabati *et al.*, 2006).

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<sup>3</sup> Char areas refer to areas that are created following floods in riverside areas and/or as river islets due to sedimentation of alluvium material carried in water. Usually these areas become accessible and cultivable during winter months when occurrences of flood and heavy rainfall are rare.

**Figure 1. 2: Map of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Assam and Bangladesh are within the Dashed Inset Box**



The Barak Valley is located in the southern part of the state, comprising Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj districts. This 85-km long and 80-km wide valley named after the river Barak is surrounded by the North Cachar Hills in the north, and Manipur and Mizoram Hills in the east and south, respectively. Towards the west, the plain merges with the Sylhet plain known as Surma plain in Bangladesh (Taher, 2009).

The Hill areas lie between the Brahmaputra valley in the north and the Barak valley in the south. Thus, with an elevation of between 300-400 meters, the hills of Assam are mainly confined to the districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills now known as Dima Hasao district, where the North Cachar hills is a part of Barail mountain range. The area is drained by the river Kopili and its tributaries (Bhagabati *et al.*, 2006).

Assam enjoys a tropical monsoon climate consisting of cool dry winter and hot wet summer. The major industries are tea, oil, natural gas, coal, granite, limestone and cement, timber, fertilizer and paper mills (Assam Government website, 2011).

Assam has a diverse population mix: plains and hill tribes of different origin. The Mongoloid tribes are of Chinese, Burmese and Thai origin. The tribe with Thai origin, known as Ahom was once ruling Assam, and according to many historians, the very name "Assam" might have come into being to represent the Ahom reign (Gait, 1906); however, there are others who hypothesize that the name "Assam", pronounced as "Axom" with the literal meaning of "uneven", could be attributed to the regional topography of the terrain. In addition to the above tribes there are Assamese and Bengali speaking people in the plains and also a sizeable population from other parts of India making Assam their permanent home; especially, the tea garden laborers and the immigrants from East Bengal/Bangladesh who together form the majority of such population (Bhuyan, 1977).

Until a few decades ago, Assam was a very peaceful state of India, with her people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds living in relative harmony. Most of the indigenous people were self-sufficient and owned their own land. There were vast tracts of uninhabited land, especially the char areas, hills and river banks (Barua, 2009, Nandy, 2005).

With an area of 78,550 sq. km. it is the fourteenth most populous state in India with a total population of 31,169,272 (Census, 2011) at a density of 396.8 per sq. km. (Census, 2011). The official language is Assamese along with English which is used for official purpose only. As per 2001 Census data, the three major religions practiced here are Hinduism (64.9 percent), Islam (30.92 percent), and Christianity (3.70 percent) along with Buddhism (0.19 percent), Sikh (0.08 percent), Jain (0.09 percent) and others 0.13 percent (Census of India, Assam, 2001).

The state is accessible by air, railways and roadways. However, unlike in the other more developed Indian states, the transportation network and connectivity are poor, and they are often subject to disruptions due to natural causes such as floods and landslides. Within the state, the river Brahmaputra provides some waterways. However, due to the non-existence of a formal river transport system between India and Bangladesh, Assam has not been able to fully garner the potential her river system offers for waterway transportation beyond the border.

### **1.3.2 Bangladesh**

In August 1947, when the British government relinquished its power, India was divided into two independent sovereign countries based on a controversial religion-centric 'two-nation' theory: Pakistan and India. The two nation theory was laid on the basis of the then prevailing demography of the two major religious groups, Hindus and Muslims. Accordingly, the predominantly Muslim-populated areas became the part of the newly carved out country, named Pakistan (Fig. 1.2) and the rest of the areas with a Hindu majority remained in India. Rulers of some Princely States (ruled by Kings and Territorial

Dynastic Rulers with limited autonomy and treaty with the British colonial government like Kashmir and Tripura) in the border regions were offered options to choose accession to any of the two countries: India or Pakistan.

The partition of India along religious lines, however, was not simple and straightforward; for, both Hindu and Muslim communities had been coexisting within the same localities spread all over India. As a consequence, the partition resulted in Pakistan having two distinctly Muslim-majority regions – West Pakistan and East Pakistan (Figures 1.2). There was no land corridor connecting these two East and West Pakistan regions. Moreover, other than religion, there was hardly any other cultural and linguistic similarity or bond between these two regions. This, plus the vast geographical separation between East and West Pakistan eventually led to the complete separation of East and West Pakistan into two independent countries again in 1971. East Pakistan became **Bangladesh**<sup>4</sup>, a new country born out of Pakistan in 1971 as a result of civil war and war with India. The erstwhile Pakistan reduced to only what was previously West Pakistan.

Geographically, Bangladesh is located between Assam and Meghalaya in the North, West Bengal in the West, Tripura, Mizoram and Myanmar in the east and the Bay of Bengal in the south (Figure 1.3). As a result it shares almost 95 percent of its land border with India. In comparison, Bangladesh's share of the land border in the south and south-east with Myanmar accounts for only about 5 percent of its total international land-border. This vast shared but mostly porous border across India, with inadequate border-control measures, has facilitated cross-border movement of people (Deka, 2011).

Bangladesh, with a total area of 143,998 sq. km., has a high population density 1,015 persons per sq.km and is the seventh most populous country in the world. According to the 2011 Bangladesh census, the majority of its population (89.5 percent) are Muslims, with 9.6 percent Hindus and others constituting 0.9 percent. Bengali or Bangla is the national language but English is widely used for business and official transactions. About 68 percent of its population depends on agriculture and agricultural-related work (Rahman *et al.*, 2002).

A vast area of southern Bangladesh is a delta with low elevation (Figure 1.4). Bangladesh also hosts the confluence of three of major rivers in the world: the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna (Ahmed, 2006). To make the matters worse, the country is also at the receiving end of most calamities caused by human activities in the upstream, notably deforestation and soil erosion in China, Nepal and India. The country is prone to

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<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise stated, in references to the migrant-originating locations, the name Bangladesh is being used to represent erstwhile East Bengal prior to the partition of India in 1947, East Pakistan during 1947-1971 and Bangladesh since its liberation in 1971 from Pakistan in the same context.

cyclones, flood, drought, salinity intrusion and other natural calamities (Climate Change and Bangladesh, 2007).

**Figure 1. 3: Political Map of Bangladesh showing its Seven Administrative Divisions (Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dhaka, Sylhet, Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong)**



Bangladesh enjoys a tropical monsoon climate with mild winter, hot humid summer and warm rainy monsoon season (CIA, 2011). Among the major industries are cotton, textile, jute, garments, tea possessing, paper printing, cement, chemical fertilizer, light engineering and sugar (CIA, 2011). Most of the country is accessible by airways, roadways, railways and also waterways.

In the context of examining migration from Bangladesh to Assam, it is important to develop an understanding of the comparative demographic and economic features of Bangladesh with Assam. Table 1.1 provides a summary of these features, on the basis of respective census data from 2001 and 2011.

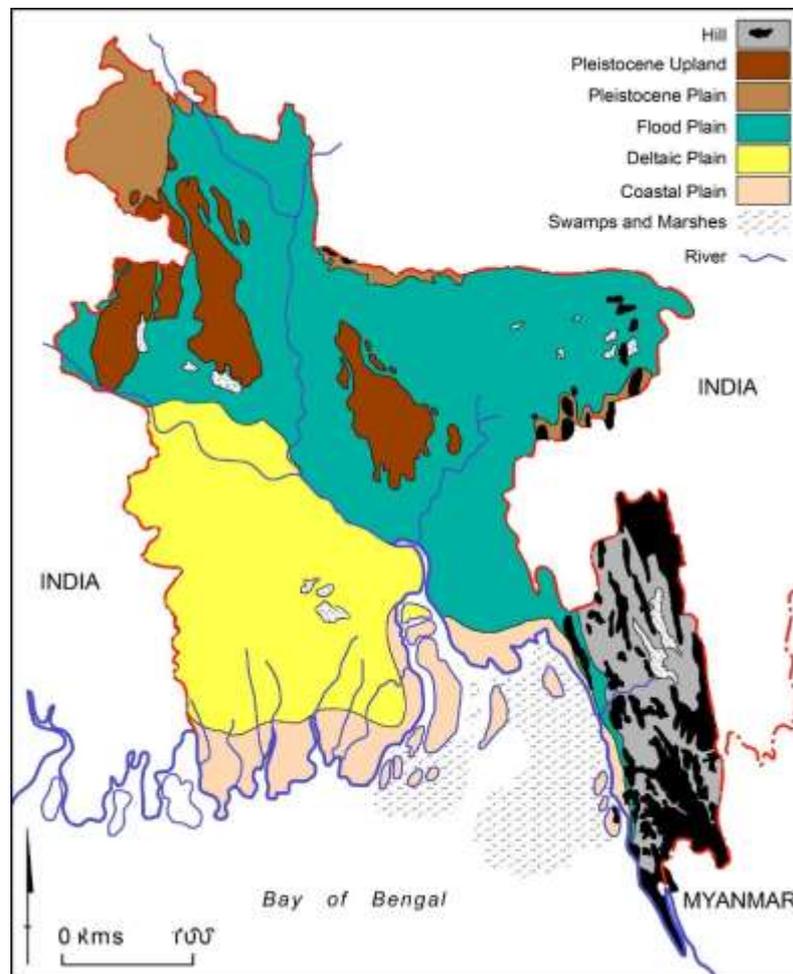
The 2011 Bangladesh Census results were finalized in July, 2012<sup>5</sup>. It registered an annual population growth of 1.37 percent which is below the annual growth rate of 1.58 percent reported in 2001. Of its total population of 152.5 million, only 1.59 million (1.05 percent) are reported to be ethnic population comprising of 797,000 males and 788,000 females.

<sup>5</sup> Reported by The Daily Star newspaper in Bangladesh on July 17, 2012,

As per the 2011 Census, the average family size in Bangladesh decreased to 4.4 persons from 4.8 persons reported in 2001 and 5.5 reported in 1991. This trend suggests that families in Bangladesh increasingly prefer smaller families for a better living standard.

A comparison of the key features of Assam with Bangladesh as shown in Table 1.1 shows that the decadal population increase in Bangladesh is higher than in Assam according to the 2011 census. It is 22.6 percent for Bangladesh as compared to 16.9 percent for Assam. The literacy rate of Bangladesh according to 2011 census is 51.8 percent whereas it is 73.2 percent for Assam. The human development index after inequality adjustment, for Assam is 0.341 in 2012 whereas for Bangladesh it was 0.515 in 2011. High population growth (Weiner, 1995, p. 27), low literacy rates and high unemployment in Bangladesh are contributing to migration from Bangladesh (Deka, 2011).

**Figure 1. 4: Physical Map of Bangladesh**



**Table 1.1: Features at a Glance of Assam and Bangladesh 2001 and 2011**

Particulars	Unit	2001 Census		2011 Census	
		Assam	Bangladesh	Assam	Bangladesh
<b>Location</b>		South Asia	South Asia	South Asia	South Asia
<b>Total Area</b>	Sq. Km	78,438	143,998	78,438	143,998
<b>Population</b>	Million	26.7	124.355	31.2	152.5
<b>Decadal Percent Increase in Population</b>	Percent	18.9	17.0	17.2	22.6
<b>Population Density</b>	Per Sq. Km	340	834	397	1,015
<b>Sex Ratio</b>	Females Per 1000 males	935	940	958	997
<b>Literacy</b>	Per cent	63.3	45.4	73.2	51.8
<b>Male</b>	Per cent	71.3	49.6	78.8	n/a
<b>Female</b>	Per cent	54.6	40.8	67.3	n/a
<b>Urban Population</b>	Per cent	12.9	n/a	16.5	28.0
<b>Rural Population</b>	Per cent	87.1	n/a	87.3	72.0
<b>Religions</b>	Per cent	Hindu 64.9, Muslim 30.9, Others 2.0	Muslim 896, Hindus 9.3, Others 1.1	n/a	Muslim 90.4, Hindu 8.5, others 1.1
<b>Per Capita Income</b>		n/a	n/a	US\$475	US\$641
<b>Gross Domestic Product</b>		n/a	n/a	US\$11.71 billion (At constant level of 2004-05)	US\$100.32 billion (around 6.5percent projected GDP, 2010)
<b>Industries</b>		Petroleum, Coal, Jute, Fertilizer, Cement, Wheat Flour, Lime stone, Natural Gas, Paper, Tea	Jute, Cotton, Garments, Paper, Leather, Fertilizer, Iron and Steel, Cement, Petroleum Products, Tobacco, Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Ceramic, Tea, Salt, Sugar, Natural Gas, Fabricated Metal Products	Petroleum, Coal, Cement, Wheat Flour, Lime Stone, Natural Gas, Paper, Tea	Jute, Cotton, Garments, Paper, Leather, Fertilizer, Iron and Steel, Cement, Petroleum Products, Tobacco, Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Ceramic, Tea, Salt, Sugar, Natural Gas, Fabricated Metal Products
<b>Mode of Transport</b>		Railway, Roadway and Airway	Railway, Roadway, Airway and Waterway	Railway, Roadway and Airway	Railway, Roadway, Airway and Waterway
<b>Official Language</b>		Assamese, Bodo and English	Bengali and English	Assamese, , Bodo, and English	Bengali and English
<b>Linguistic, Caste and Ethnic Groups</b>		Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, Bodo, Nepali, Santali, Oriya, Manipuri, Karbi, Rajbanshi and others	Bengali 98% and others (Tribal groups, like Chakmas, Santhals, Garos, Kaibartta, Meitei, Mundas, Oraons and zomi, non-Bengali Muslims like Biharis)	Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, Bodo, Nepali, Santali, Oriya, Manipuri, Karbi, Rajbanshi and others	Bengali (98%) and others (tribal groups like Chakmas, Santhals, Garos, Kaibartta, Meitei, Mundas, Oraons and Zomi, non-Bengali Muslims like Biharis)
<b>Human Development Index (HDI)</b>				0.341 (2011), Inequality Adjusted	0.515 (2012)

Sources: Census of India and Bangladesh (2001 and 2011), Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Assam (2010-2011) and CIA (The World Fact Book 2012), Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2001 and 2011 Census Reports, <http://countryeconomy.com/hdi/bangladesh>, n/a = Not Available

#### 1.4 History of Migration from Bangladesh to India

Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, India experienced a major influx across its borders, especially from neighboring countries as a result of ethnic conflicts, new geographical boundaries or for economic and political reasons. The following are some of the examples of population flows to India after World War II (Samaddar, 1999, p. 29):

- The 1947 partition of India into two countries India and Pakistan saw the flow of population on both sides of the border, involving about 15 million Hindus as well as Muslims
- An exodus of more than one million Burmese Indians during 1948 to 1965
- One million Tamils from Sri Lanka since 1954
- Flight of about 10 million people, as refugees, from East Pakistan/Bangladesh during the 1971 India-Pakistan war
- One million Chakmas from Bangladesh to India in 1981
- Continuing flow of unwanted Bangladesh nationals to Assam since 1971 India-Pakistan war
- About 100,000 Tibetans from Tibet and
- The two-way flow between Nepal and India

According to 2001 Census of India data, a total of 6,084,826 persons living in India were born in other neighboring countries and more than 56 percent of them hailed from Bangladesh followed by Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka (Table 1.2).

**Table 1.2: International In-migrants by the Country of their Last Residence in 2001 from top three countries**

<b>Migration From</b>	<b>Persons</b>
Bangladesh	3,084,826
Pakistan	997,106
Nepal	596,696

Source: Census of India D-3 series (2001), 2011 Census data has not yet been released

Table 1.3 presents the total migration to India and also shows the details of migration from neighboring countries by duration of residence. It is obvious from these data that Bangladesh is by far the largest contributor of migrants to India.

After independence from the British regime, there has been a continuous influx of refugees and immigrants in India's eastern borders from erstwhile East Pakistan, and this did not stop with the formation of Bangladesh. In particular, in the years leading up to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 and since then, there has been continued large scale migration from Bangladesh to North Eastern India (Datta, 2004). However the exact reasons for such migration has not been well established and documented. The underlying reasons for continued migration are a combination of factors – economic, social, historical, decreasing

land fertility, poor crop yield due to degradation of soil, climatic damage to crops and properties (Panda, 2010, pp. 9-10).

**Table 1.3: Migration from Neighboring Countries by Residency Duration, 2001**

Neighboring Countries	All Duration	< 1 year	1-4 years	5-9 years	10-19 years	>20 years	Not Stated
Total International Migration	5,155,432	77,196	329,199	334,472	808,895	3,263,184	342,477
From Neighboring Countries	4,918,266	55,287	275,871	298,332	760,623	3,209,550	318,600
Afghanistan	9,194	116	622	4,057	3,004	865	530
<b>Bangladesh</b>	<b>3,084,826</b>	<b>12,839</b>	<b>95,539</b>	<b>171,518</b>	<b>535,795</b>	<b>2,096,946</b>	<b>172,189</b>
Bhutan	8,337	412	2,194	1,436	2,044	1,662	589
China	23,721	383	4,873	3,457	2,360	1,158	1,060
Myanmar	49,086	781	5,387	4,865	6,845	26,174	5,034
Nepal	596,696	36,757	137,119	89,734	128,061	160,906	44,119
Pakistan	997,106	2,619	18,635	16,246	34,516	847,687	77,403
Sri Lanka	149,300	1,380	11,502	7,019	48,001	63,722	17,676

Source: Census of India, 2001, Data\_Highlights\_D1-D3, 2011 census data has not yet been released

This study deals with migration from Bangladesh to Assam. The migrants and their distribution in various districts of Assam during the pre-independence period of 1911-1931 are presented in Table 1.4 and compared against similar data during the post-independence period of 1961-2001 provided in Table 1.5.

**Table 1.4: Number of Persons Born in Bengal and Mymensingh, living in Brahmaputra Valley of Assam 1911-1931**

Districts	1911 Bengal (Mymensingh)	1921 Bengal (Mymensingh)	1931 Bengal (Mymensingh)
Goalpara	77,000 (34,000)	151,000 (78,000)	170,000 (80,000)
Kamrup	4,000 (1,000)	44,000 (30,000)	134,000 (91,000)
Darrang	7,000 (1,000)	20,000 (12,000)	41,000 (30,000)
Nowgong	4,000 (1,000)	58,000 (52,000)	120,000 (108,000)
Sibsagar	14,000 (Nil)	14,000 (Nil)	12,000 (Nil)
Lakhimpur	14,000 (Nil)	14,000 (Nil)	19,000 (2,000)
<b>Total</b>	<b>120,000 (37,000)</b>	<b>301,000 (172,000)</b>	<b>496,000 (311,000)</b>

Source: Census of India, 1931, Vol.3, Part 1, (Figures in parentheses represents number of people from Mymensingh District of Bangladesh)

It appears that most of the migrants in the pre-independence period were from the Mymensingh district of Bangladesh and the figures in parentheses show their numbers in Assam. It rose from 120,000 in 1911 to 496,000 in 1931. This trend continued until 1971 and after then the population growth rate marginally declined. The post-1991 decline in migrant population in Assam occurred due to a number of reasons; for example, the

newer migrants moved elsewhere in India to seek employment (Ahmed, 2011), many migrants who came during the partition of India in 1947 died due to old age (Data Highlight, Census, 2001), undertaking of border fencing by India, anti-foreigner's movement in Assam (Ahmed, 2011) and the scarcity of land in Assam due to its high population density (Samaddar, 1999, Mannan, 2011).

**Table 1. 5: Number of Persons Born in Bangladesh, Pakistan, East Bengal living in the districts of Assam, 1961-2001**

<b>Districts in Assam</b>	<b>1961</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1991<sup>§</sup></b>	<b>2001<sup>§</sup></b>
<b>Goalpara</b>	145,950	178,761		
Goalpara			10,811	7,222
Dhubri			13,202	7,320
Kokrajhar			11,314	8,183
Bongaigaon			21,195	12,155
Chirang			-	-
<b>Kamrup</b>	136,377	167,500		
Nalbari			6,990	4,278
Kamrup			21,692	12,261
Kamrup Metro			-	-
Barpeta			20,470	8,758
Baksa			-	-
<b>Darrang</b>	88,424	96,963		
Darrang			17,317	8,349
Sonitpur			15,410	8,595
Udalguri			-	-
<b>Lakhimpur</b>	65,685	88,388		
Lakhimpur			4,410	2,064
Dibrugarh			4,530	2,185
Dhemaji			4,710	2,184
Tinsukia			7110	4,415
<b>Nagaon</b>	136,625	176,294		
Nagaon			43,171	24,258
Marigaon			6,240	3,561
<b>Sibsagar</b>	20,684	29,882		
Sibsagar			1,170	622
Jorhat			1,562	854
Golaghat			1,650	979
<b>Cachar</b>	1,34,159	1,45,361		
Cachar			34,011	22,868
Hailakandi			6,086	3,121
Karimganj <sup>#</sup>			28,568	15,964
<b>United Mikir and North Cachar Hills</b>	12,846			
Karbi Anglong		10,733	5,800	3504
Dima Hasao		2,941	690	444
<b>Garo Hills</b>	8,851	-	-	-
<b>United Khasi and Jaintia Hills</b>	16,745	-	-	-
<b>Mizo Hills</b>	8,523	6,606	-	-
<b>Assam</b>	<b>774,869</b>	<b>903,429</b>	<b>2,88,109</b>	<b>1,64,144</b>

Source: Census of India, Assam Part II-C Table D -II (Place of Birth)

Notes for Table 1.5:

1. Census was not held in Assam in 1981 and the 1941 Census data was not released.
2. Until 1961, Garo Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, and Mizo Hills were districts in Assam, and hence the total number of migrants in the year 1961 includes these areas.
3. Number of migrants in the years 1961, 1971 includes both East and West Pakistan.
4. Districts were reorganized since 1971 and from 9 districts 27 were created up to 2001.
5. 2011 Census data have not yet been released

<sup>§</sup> All districts were reorganized and hence 1991 and 2001 data pertain to newly formed districts.

<sup>#</sup>Karimganj was part of Sylhet district before independence, and hence the population of Karimganj district is not reported by Indian Census office when citing 1921 and 1931 data.

Although migration from Bangladesh to India took centre stage after partition in 1947, one must recognize that it is not an entirely new or even recent phenomenon. The migration from Bangladesh to Assam started long before India's partition. Historically, the migration into Assam started soon after its annexation to India by the British in 1826 through the treaty of Yandaboo with the then Burmese government (Das, 1980). As well, Assam's proximal location as a neighbor to Bangladesh has also contributed significantly to the inflow of migrants from Bangladesh as adjacent creek (Deka, 2011).

In colonial India, both East Bengal and Assam were administered as one single political unit for administrative purposes. The first significant wave of migration in Assam started during the British rule and was due more to meet the demand for labor to cater for the developmental initiatives that the British government undertook after Assam's annexation to India and the introduction of tea industry in mid-1800 (Weiner, 1983).

Both skilled and unskilled workers were required but this demand could not be met from within Assam's indigenous population. Most Assamese population was then self-sufficient and was not accustomed to earning wages as manual laborers. Only about three percent of Assam's indigenous population was part of the labor class (Saikia, 2005). As a consequence, laborers, who were adept at manual labor had to be recruited from outside the state especially from the states of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh to fill the vacuum. This caused the tea plantation labor population to jump from a mere 400 in 1858 to about 1.4 million 1931 (Das, 1980, p. 81).

Since 1931, the labor force tapered off as the development activities and tea industry started to reach a steady-state, and most migrant laborers decided to call Assam their home and settle permanently. In addition, the children of the migrants, too, became eligible to join the labor force (Das, 1980). Thus, a few new niche communities, with distinctive culture and traditions, started taking shape in and around the tea garden areas. Today, these tea garden communities in Assam play a very unique role in cultural, social and political environs of the state. Table 1.6 shows the migrant population compared to the total population of the state of Assam.

Another strong impetus to migration was the introduction of new policies. To cater to the demand for the increase need to food supply, the then British commissioner Sir Henry Cotton decided to bring four-fifths of cultivable "waste land<sup>6</sup>" in the state under cultivation (Saikia, 2005). In order to achieve his goal, landless peasants from East Bengal/Bangladesh were brought into Assam for cultivating the waste land for food production. These peasants from East Bengal were known for their farming skills, and

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<sup>6</sup> Waste land refers to the government land that remained barren with no private ownership titles.

hard work. They introduced the cultivation of jute in Assam, hitherto unknown to the indigenous Assamese population. This new cash crop prompted the start of a jute industry in Assam, creating further pressure on the labor force (Saikia, 2005). What is noteworthy is that the migration of the landless peasants from East Bengal/Bangladesh which was triggered in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century still continues. In terms of religion, the landless peasants who migrated from Bangladesh were mostly Muslims (Mullen, 1931; Bhuyan, 1977).

**Table 1.6: Migrant Population Compared to the Total Population of Assam (1901-2001)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population of Assam (x 1,000)</b>	<b>Migrant Population (x 1,000)</b>	<b>Migrant Population in Total Population of Assam (%)</b>
1901	3,289	600	18.2
1911	3,848	900	23.4
1921	4,630	1,400	30.2
1931	5,560	1,800	32.4
1941	6,694	2,300	34.4
1951	8,028	3,000	37.4
1961	10,837	4,200	38.8
1971	14,625	6,000	41.1
1991	22,414	8,761	39.1
2001	26,655	7,065	26.5

Source: Bhuyan, M.C. 1977, and Census of India, Assam D-Series, 1991 and 2001, 2011 Census data is not yet released.

In 1905 the British Viceroy of India Lord Curzon divided Bengal into two provinces, East and West Bengal. Assam was amalgamated with the Muslim majority state of East Bengal. This move further encouraged the Muslim peasants to move to Assam from East Bengal (Goswami, 2008)

With increasing population and economic activity, there was demand for a simultaneous growth in administrative infrastructure. Bengal being the first-entry point for the British in India, its inhabitants, the Bengalis, had the opportunity to get more acquainted with the British-style administration process, and also to gain proficiency in English language. These two factors made Bengalis the natural "first-choice of British" to depute for various administrative positions (Bhuyan, 1977, Weiner, 1983). As a result, Assam witnessed a large-scale migration of Bengalis to help the British with administration. These office workers were referred to as "Babus" (i.e., clerks). Unlike the other migrant groups, this cohort of migrants was more educated and skilled, and hence, they enjoyed a better standard of living and faced very little hardship in settling in Assam. Bengali Hindus from East Bengal were the most represented migrants in this group of migrants (Bhuyan, 1977). According to Bhuyan (1977), the Muslim-dominated peasant group and the Hindu-dominated administrative group from East Bengal together form the largest migrant group in Assam today.

Pre-partition Indian politics in 1940s (that is, in the last few years of the British Rule in India), too, was a major factor for the influx of a significant number of Muslim migrants from Bangladesh, especially in the late 1930s and 1940s (Borgohain, 2009). Following the partition of India in 1947, about 274,455 people entered Assam as refugees but they were mostly Hindus (Vaghaiwalla, 1951), although most of the Muslims who migrated to East Bengal after partition returned to Assam after the Nehru-Liaquat Pact also known as the Delhi Pact of 1950.

During the sixties due to the pogrom of the Pakistan government and also the India-Pakistan war of 1965 a large number of people from East Pakistan migrated to India. According to Hazarika (2000) their numbers stood around 920,000, most of them being Hindus (Hazarika, 2000, p.30). However, the largest single movement of East Pakistan nationals took place during the 1971 war, which led to the liberation of Bangladesh from Pakistan. This period around the 1971 war is considered the peak period of migration from Bangladesh (Datta, 2004). Table 1.7 presents the number of immigrants in various districts of Assam in the year 1971 and their percentage to the total population of the respective districts.

**Table 1.7: Distribution of Immigrant Population, Assam 1971**

Districts	Immigrant Population	Percent of Total population	Total Population
Goalpara	1,100,000	50	2,200,000
Kamrup	950,000	33	2,878,788
Darrang	850,000	49	1,734,694
Nowgong	900,000	54	1,666,667
Sibsagar	550,000	30	1,833,333
Lakhimpur	130,000	18	722,222
Dibrugarh	800,000	57	1,403,509
Cachar	650,000	38	1,710,526
Karbi angling	50,000	13	384,615
North Cachar Hills	10,000	13	76,923

Source: Bhuyan, 1977

Table 1.8 and Figure 1.5 show the distribution of immigrant population in different districts of Assam in 2001 as well as the distribution of immigrants from Bangladesh (Census, 2001) to the total population of Assam. It is noteworthy that the data presented in Table 1.8 pertain to documented migrants who were born in Bangladesh. It is seen that out of 23 districts in Assam the percentage of documented migrant population from Bangladesh was more than 30 percent in 10 districts. In three districts, notably, Barpeta, Cachar and Karimganj, the migrant population was more than 50 percent of the total population of the district. In reality their population could be even higher in most of the districts as the exact number of irregular migrants cannot be established due to the lack of reliable data.

Table 1.9 presents the Census data on a few prominent migrant groups for 2001. Among the migrants to Assam, certain groups are prominent like migrants from Bangladesh, Bihar

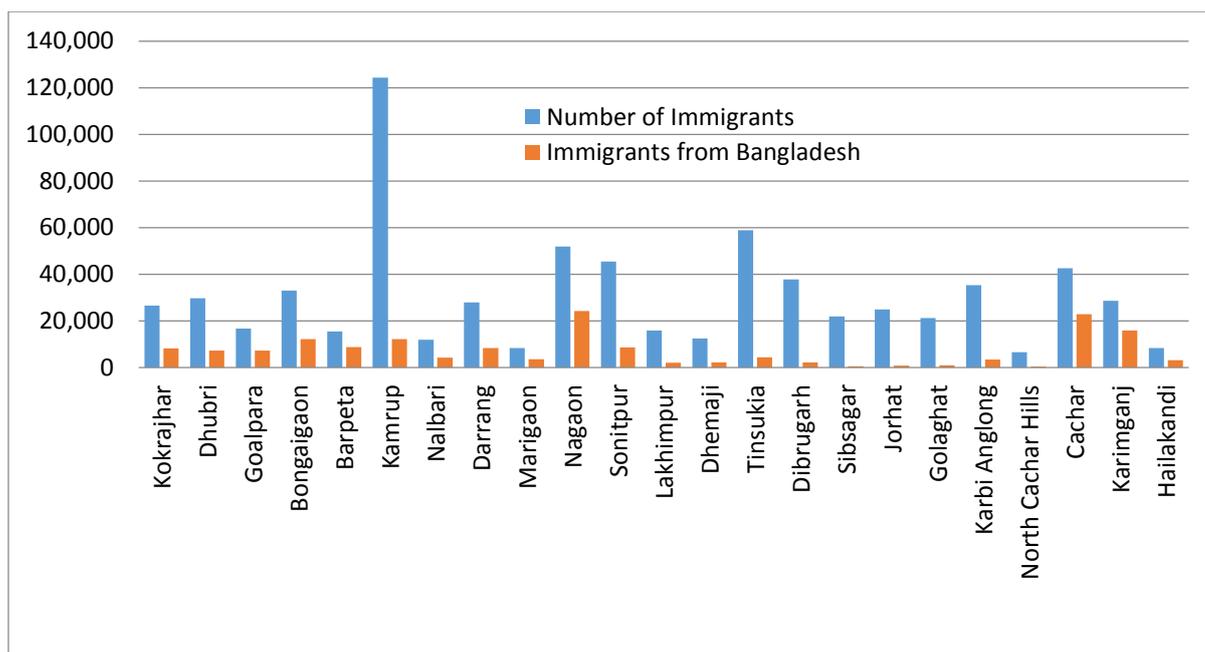
and Jharkhand and West Bengal due to their sheer numbers. The migrants from Bangladesh, Bihar and Jharkhand are mostly manual laborers whereas the migrants from West Bengal are mostly white collar workers mending the railways, banks, post and telegraph etc. and also administrators and Businessmen. Other migrant groups in Assam mainly comprised internal migrants from elsewhere in India like the Marwar district of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and the neighboring country of Nepal. Their migration accelerated with the improved railway connectivity between Assam and the rest of India, and can be traced to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century due to the establishment of the Assam-Bengal Railway in 1902 and the East Bengal Railway in 1903 (Taher, 2011). Among this group, Nepalese migrants started working as ranchers and soldiers, Marwaris from Marwar district of Rajasthan state as traders, and Hindustanis from the Hindi-belt areas of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to work as manual laborers, hawkers, rickshaw pullers, etc. (Bhuyan, 1977), but their numbers were not significant enough to influence the demography, politics or culture of the state.

**Table 1.8: Documented Immigrants Born in Bangladesh Settled in Different Districts of Assam as per 2001 India Census**

<b>Districts</b>	<b>Number of Immigrants</b>	<b>Immigrants from Bangladesh</b>	<b>Percentage of Total immigrant population of Assam</b>
Kokrajhar	26,637	8,183	30.7
Dhubri	29,680	7,320	24.7
Goalpara	16,671	7,222	43.3
Bongaigaon	33,022	12,155	36.8
Barpeta	15,503	8,758	56.5
Kamrup	124,386	12,261	9.9
Nalbari	12,002	4,278	35.6
Darrang	28,009	8,349	29.8
Marigaon	8,359	3,561	42.6
Nagaon	51,922	24,258	46.7
Sonitpur	45,505	8,595	18.9
Lakhimpur	15,911	2,064	13.0
Dhemaji	12,498	2,184	17.5
Tinsukia	58,917	4,415	7.5
Dibrugarh	37,747	2,185	5.8
Sibsagar	21,908	622	2.8
Jorhat	24,960	854	3.4
Golaghat	21,266	979	4.6
Karbi Anglong	35,342	3,504	9.9
Dima Hasao	6,632	444	6.7
Cachar	42,616	22,868	53.7
Karimganj	28,616	15,964	55.8
Hailakandi	8,373	3,121	37.3
<b>Assam</b>	<b>706,482</b>	<b>164,144</b>	<b>23.2</b>

Source: 2001 Census of India, Assam D1 Series

**Figure 1.5: All Immigrants Compared to Immigrants from Bangladesh, 2001**



Source: Indian Census 2001

**Table 1.9: Origin of Immigrants in Assam by Birth, 2001**

Birth Country or State	Immigrant Population	Percentage of Total Immigrant Population
<b>From Countries:</b>		
Bangladesh	164,144	23.2
Nepal	10,608	1.5
Pakistan	7,097	1.0
Other Countries	8,709	1.2
<b>From Indian States of:</b>		
Bihar and Jharkhand	190,708	27.0
Rajasthan	30,478	4.3
Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal	52,188	7.4
West Bengal	99,034	14.0
Orissa	8,106	1.2
Other States	135,410	19.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>706,482</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Census of India, Assam 2001 (D1 Series), 2011 Census data is not yet been released

Analyzing the volume and variety among the migrants, Weiner wrote:

“These various migrations not only transformed the ethnic composition of Assam; they also fostered a political climate in which question of ethnicity and migration become central” (Weiner, 1983, p. 283).

Since the mid-1970s, the issue of migration from Bangladesh has become a vexed issue in the border states of Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and West Bengal. In Assam, migration

from Bangladesh has significantly affected the religious composition of the state, and this in turn, has altered the socio-cultural, economic, and political landscape (Bezboruah, 2005). The outcome of the last state legislative assembly election in 2011 is a testimony to this. A new party, the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) with its grass root level support from migrants from Bangladesh emerged as the second largest party in the state legislative assembly. What's ironic, it relegated the AGP (Assam Gana Parishad), which came into being on the plank of detecting and deporting irregular migrants and had led two earlier governments, was placed third.

The central issue now is the question of legality of the migrants. As per the Assam Accord of 1985<sup>7</sup>, which was signed to end a student-led mass movement, which was centered on the issue of detection and deportation of illegal migrants who entered and settled in India before 25th March, 1971, were automatically granted citizenship based on a consensus decision that was reached in March 1980 among all parties in New Delhi. As per the Assam Accord, only those who entered Assam illegally without documentation on or after that date were to be considered illegal foreigners.

The migrants usually settle in 'char areas'<sup>8</sup>, the river banks and fallow land and also in scantily populated hilly areas. They initially take up odd jobs, (rickshaw puller, push cart puller, gardener, daily laborer etc.) they take up most manual jobs that local people do at a lower wage (Weiner, 1995).

In physique, they look similar and do not appear distinct from the local population especially in the border areas. This helps them to easily assimilate with the local population without being detected; that is, they are easily 'lost' in the greater society unnoticed and undocumented. This is similar to the case of Indonesians in Malaysia.

The migrants are often keen and active participants in the politics of the state, and have already garnered a big say in the political arena especially in the western parts of the state, like in the districts of Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Marigaon and Nagaon. Their political participation has given them clout and recognition with several political parties, whose success at the polls relies heavily on their support. In view of this, they are often referred to as 'vote bank' in Indian political context because they vote in block under the dictum: "*follow the local leader or headman*". Therefore, migrants enjoy enormous political patronage and clout; as a consequence, they receive various favors, like jobs, business opportunities, permanent-residency permits, children's education, and most importantly, protection and security from government (Jai Bihar, 2009).

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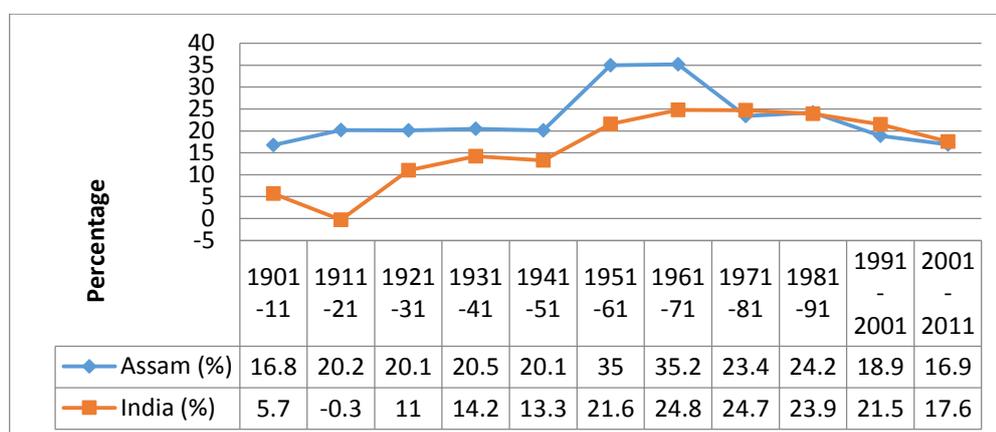
<sup>7</sup> The 1985 Assam Accord was signed on August 15, 1985 in New Delhi between the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) and the Government of India in the presence of the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi.

<sup>8</sup> Char areas refer to areas that are created following floods in riverside areas and/or as river islets due to sedimentation of alluvium material carried in water.

### 1.5 Population Growth in Assam

Assam has consistently recorded higher than the national average population growth since the beginning of 20th century (see Figure 1.6). Although reliable earlier data are not available, the anecdotal data and references made in various journals, government records (Gazettes, notifications, etc.) since Assam’s annexation to India in 1826 by the British, indicate a continued influx of migrants to Assam from other parts of British-ruled India. However, Census data of 2001 and 2011 show a lower percentage increase in population of Assam than the national average. This is mainly due to three reasons: the decline in the birth rate of the Hindu population, the anti-foreigners agitation from 1979 to 1985 followed by the other movements (e.g., the Bodo-land movement together with the violent incidents that occurred at different times) discouraging many to migrate to Assam, and the outmigration to other states and territories (Barthakur, 2012). Figure 1.6 show the decadal population increase in India and Assam since 1901

**Figure 1.6: Decadal Population Increase in India and Assam**



Source: Weiner, 1983, and Census of India various years

Comparing the decadal increase of population of Assam with India, it is evident that since 1901 Assam’s population growth was higher than that of India, and during 1911-1921 when the growth of India’s population was negative due to epidemic, famine, or the effect of World War I, Assam’s population grew by almost four percent and it is reflected in the Census Report of Assam in 1931 (Mullen, 1931). This report is discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. From Figure 1.6 it can also be observe that even after independence in 1947, when the population of India decreased Assam’s population gain remained high up to 1991.

Since 1991, however, the census data show a downward slide with a population gain below the national average for India. This downward trend reported in the decadal population data for 1991-2001 and 2001-11 is questionable because 2011 Census data remain provisional to date and Assam did not have a census operation in 1981 due to the prevailing mass agitation by All Assam Students’ Union (AASU) on the issue of illegal

migration. These population figures are based on projections made by the Census of India based on earlier data. It seems to agree with the 2011 Census' provisional data of 16.9 percent increase in Assam's population, as tabled in Indian Parliament on May 4, 2012 by Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad<sup>9</sup>. Although Assam's population gain appears to be slightly lower than that of the national figure of 17.6 percent, it is noteworthy that, in addition to the districts bordering Bangladesh, several interior districts in Assam and north-east India have also witnessed higher than the national average increase in population; at 111 percent, Kurung Kumey district in Arunachal Pradesh registered the highest percentage increase over the decade in north-east India. The 13 districts in Assam, which have witnessed a sharp population increase include: Dhubri (24.4 percent), Morigaon (23.4 percent), Goalpara (22.7 percent), Nagaon (22.1 percent), Hailakandi (21.4 percent), Barpeta (21.4 percent), Karimganj (20.7 percent), Dhemaji (20.3 percent), Cachar (20.2 percent), Bongaigaon (19.6 percent), Darrang (19 percent), Kamrup (Metropolitan) (19 percent) and Karbi Anglong (18.7 percent).

Some are bordering districts with Bangladesh (Dhubri, Hailakandi and Karimganj). Others (Barpeta, Nagaon and Darrang) have a history of migration since Colonial rule and are discussed in Chapter 2. Dhemaji had original low population base, and Karbi Anglong was carved out of Nagaon district hence it inherited its migrant population.

## **1.6 Environmental factors affecting migration from Bangladesh**

### **1.6.1 Climatic Vulnerabilities for Bangladesh**

"Global assessments indicate that natural disasters in our region would increase in frequency and intensity... This was the reason why in the 64th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and every year thereafter, I have called for a legal framework to ensure social, cultural and economic rehabilitation of climate migrants".

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh in her address on March 4, 2014 at the Third Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)<sup>10</sup> Summit, held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, March 1-4, 2014. (*Reported by The Assam Tribune, March 5, 2013*)

The climate of Bangladesh is changing. Warrick and Ahmed (1996) reported a warming of about 0.5°C in 100 years. However, a later more reliable analysis in 2007 by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2007) suggests a 1°C rise in the average temperature of Bangladesh over a 14-year period from 1985 to 1998. This has also been confirmed by the Climate Change Cell of Department of Environment, Government of The People's Republic of Bangladesh in its September 2007 report. This sharp rise in the temperature has already had its effects on Bangladesh in terms of both the climate process (slow-onset changes such as sea level rise, salinity ingress,

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<sup>9</sup> The Assam Tribune, May 5, 2012

<sup>10</sup> BIMSTEC Member States are Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

desertification, growing water scarcity and food insecurity) and climate effects (sudden and dramatic hazards such as monsoon floods, lake outburst floods, storms, cyclone). Although Bangladesh is no stranger to natural calamities, data show that the frequency and severity of natural disasters are on the increase, like recent severe floods of 1988, 1998, 2004, 2007 and cyclones and tidal surges in 1991, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2007, salinity and water logging in coastal zones, heat stress and also erratic and untimely rainfall (Mallick, 2008), and it is quite possibly attributable to the rise in the average temperature.

The most common natural hazard in Bangladesh is flood, followed by cyclones in southern parts of the country (NAPA, 2005). The severity of floods is exacerbated by confluence of a few major river systems within Bangladesh and human activities in the upstream countries (India, Nepal and China) such as deforestation, construction of levees and dams, green-house gas emissions, etc.

Table 1.10 summarizes the expected spatial vulnerabilities in Bangladesh with reference to climate change, as reproduced from National Adaptation Program of Action, Final report dated November, 2005 from the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of The People’s Republic of Bangladesh.

**Table 1.10: A summary of expected spatial vulnerabilities in Bangladesh with reference to climate change**

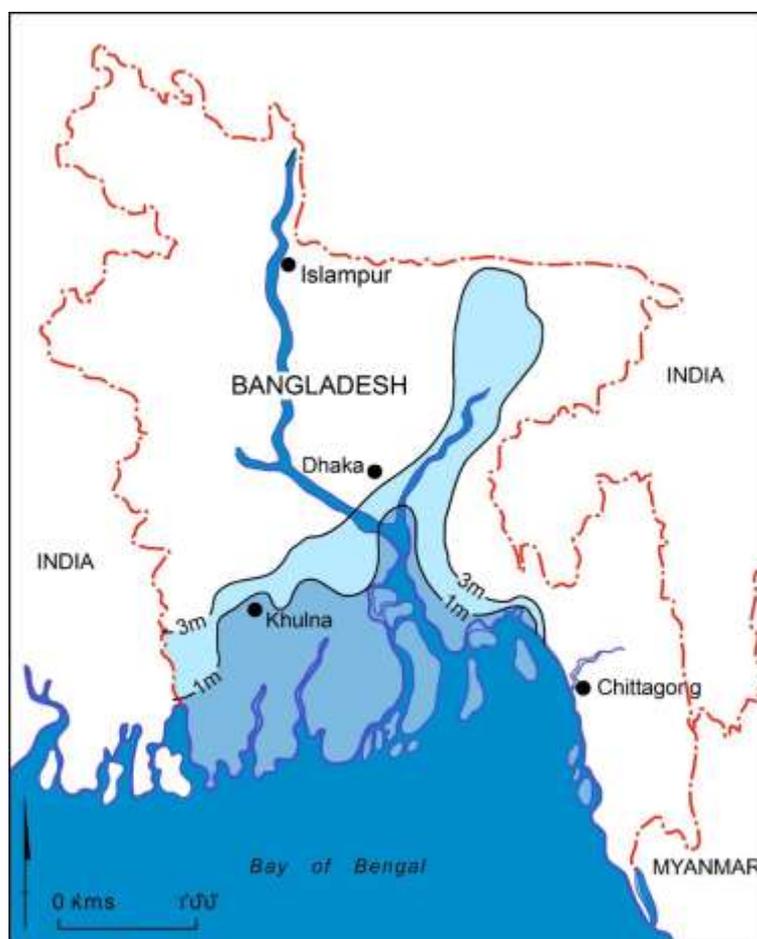
<b>Climate and Related Elements</b>	<b>Critical Vulnerable Areas</b>	<b>Most Impacted Sectors</b>
Temperature rise and drought	North-west	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Agriculture (crop, livestock, fisheries)</li> <li>○ Water</li> <li>○ Energy</li> <li>○ Health</li> </ul>
Sea Level Rise and Salinity Intrusion	Coastal Area Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Agriculture (crop, fisheries, livestock)</li> <li>○ Water (water logging, drinking water, urban)</li> <li>○ Human settlement</li> <li>○ Energy</li> <li>○ Health</li> </ul>
Floods	Central Region North East Region Char land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Agriculture (crop, fisheries, livestock)</li> <li>○ Water (urban, industry)</li> <li>○ Infrastructure</li> <li>○ Human settlement</li> <li>○ Health</li> <li>○ Disaster</li> <li>○ Energy</li> </ul>
Cyclone and Storm Surge	Coastal and Marine Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Marine Fishing</li> <li>○ Infrastructure</li> <li>○ Human settlement</li> <li>○ Life and property</li> </ul>
Drainage congestion	Coastal Area Urban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Water (Navigation)</li> <li>○ Agriculture</li> </ul>

Source: NAPA documents-GOB, 2005. National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA), Final report: November 2005, Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh (GOB), Dhaka, 48 p.

By virtue of its location and topography as well, Bangladesh is at the front line of the receiving end of natural calamities. Bangladesh falls within the tropical climate zone, here a large number of people are killed or affected by natural disasters every year.

Hugo (2003) states that, another form of forced migration will be environmentally induced movement, if global warming results in a significant rise in sea level that submerges large parts of Pacific and Indian Ocean island and highly populated lowlands in nations like Bangladesh, substantial international movement would be necessary. It has been predicted by various climate studies that by 2050 an estimated 26 million people of Bangladesh will be at risk from sea level rise (Brauch, 2002). Figure 1.7, reproduced from a study by Ali and Huq (1989) shows that almost 17 percent of Bangladesh could be submerged by sea water if the sea level were to rise 1.5 m.

**Figure 1.7: Projected Loss of Land in Bangladesh due to Future 1-m and 3-m Sea Level Rises**



Source: Ali and Huq, 1989. Possible areas of innaudation at 1-m and 3-m rise in sea level is shown by the respective contours in the map.

Climate Change in Bangladesh will result in cyclones, flood, riverbank erosion, storm surge, water shortage, drought, salinity problems and as a result will lead to large scale migration and conflicts in the region (Asian Development Bank, 2011, p. 47). Bangladesh's

Soil Resources Development Institute (SRDI) in one of its studies presented clear evidence of the detrimental and expanding influence of salinities with an adverse impact on agriculture and inland fisheries.

### 1.6.2 Climate-Event Drivers in Bangladesh Contributing to Migration

The major climate events that impact Bangladesh significantly are floods and cyclones. There have been several major floods in Bangladesh in the last 25-year period (Table 1.11). Floods that Bangladesh typically experience can be classified into four categories (Ahmad and Mirza, 2000):

- (a) Flash flood
- (b) River flood
- (c) Rainwater flood, and
- (d) Flood due to the tidal surge

The main effects of flood are loss of land due to riverbank erosion and permanent inundation, loss of crops as a result shortage of food, loss of livestock, and disruption in activities for fisherman. Navigation, which employs a sizeable workforce, is another casualty during floods. Flood also causes destruction to roads, bridges, railway embankment and other public properties. Diseases like, dysentery, cholera, diarrhea, typhoid and later malaria and dengue fever are common during and after flood (NAPA, 2005, MoEF, 2008, Ahmed, 2006).

**Table 1.11: Serious Floods in Bangladesh in the last 25-year Period**

Year	Impact
1984	Inundated over 50,000 sq. km, estimated damage US\$ 378 million
1987	Inundated over 50,000 sq. km, estimated damage US\$ 1 billion, 2,055 deaths
1988	Inundated 61 percent of the country, estimated damage US\$ 1.2 billion, more than 45 million homeless, between 2,000-6,500 deaths
1998	Inundated nearly 100,000 sq. km, rendered 30 million people homeless, damaged 500,000 homes, heavy loss to infrastructure, estimated damage US\$ 2.8 billion, 1,100 deaths
2004	Inundation 38 percent, damage US\$ 6.6 billion, affected nearly 3.8 million people. Estimated damage over \$2 billion, 700 deaths
2007	Inundated 32,000 sq. km, over 85,000 houses destroyed and almost 1 million damaged, approximately 1.2 million acres of crops destroyed or partially damaged over \$1 billion, 649 deaths

*(Sources: Government of Bangladesh (2005) National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA), Ministry of Environment and Forest, Dhaka and Government of Bangladesh (2007) "Consolidated Damage and loss Assessment, Lessons Learnt from the flood 2007 and Future Action Plan", Disaster Management Bureau, Dhaka.)*

Tropical cyclones usually hit Bangladesh during the pre- and post-monsoon seasons. In recent years, general cyclonic activity has become more frequent in the Bay of Bengal due to global warming (MoEF, 2008). These cyclones are accompanied by high winds resulting in storm surges up to seven meters high. This causes loss of life and damage to houses and livestock in the coastal areas. Severe cyclones that occurred in 1970 and 1991 are

estimated to have killed 500,000 and 140,000 people respectively (MoEF, 2008). In 2007, cyclone Sidr hit the coast of Bangladesh in November which killed around 3,500 people less than previous cyclones (MoEF, 2008). This was due to better management and an advance precautionary plan adopted by the Government.

### **1.6.3 Climate Process Drivers in Bangladesh Contributing to Migration**

The major climate process drivers that could possibly be contributing to the migration from Bangladesh are:

- a) Drought
- b) Rise in the sea level and salinity ingress
- c) Disease

**Drought** occurs when moisture in the soil is not sufficient to meet the optimum need of crops (Karim, *et al.*, 1990). It can occur in both pre and post monsoon periods due to prolonged dry periods. Drought can also be identified by physical observation like the development of cracks on topsoil due to dryness, yellowish coloration in vegetation and dusty layer in the topsoil (Ahmad, 2006). The north western region of Bangladesh is generally drought-prone. Pre monsoon drought destroys Rabi and Pre-Kharif crops, like HYV Boro, Aus, wheat, pulses, sugarcane, potatoes etc. Post-monsoon drought affects Kharif crops like Aman (Ahmed, 2006).

**Sea level rise:** One of the main threats of climate change is sea level rise caused by thermal expansion of sea water and the melting of ice and snow (Hemming *et al.*, 2007). There is very little reliable data or information regarding sea level rise in Bangladesh. The Khulna region of south western Bangladesh has recorded a 5.18mm per year of sea level rise (Shamsuddoha, IRIN Report, 2008). The reported sea-level rises at some tidal stations in the Bangladesh coast are: Hiron Point: 4mm per year; Char Changa: 6mm per year and Cox's Bazar: 7.8mm per year Metrological Research Centre of South Asian Association for regional Cooperation in the capital, Dhaka (IRIN, 23 October, 2008). According to these reports, the sea has already crept almost 15 km into Kutubdia, one of heavily populated islands off the coastal town of Cox's Bazar in southeastern Bangladesh. Most of the other islands in this region are already shrinking thus making them more "congested" for human habitat; for examples, Bhola, the biggest island has lost about 227 sq km of land in the last 50 years and Hatiya, which once covered 1,000 square km, has been reduced to 21 sq km over the last 350 years (IRIN Report, 2008).

Experts predict that if the current trend in climate change were to continue unabated, within the next two decades Bangladesh may lose as much as 20 percent of its land to rising sea level and melting Himalayan glaciers (IRIN Report, 2008). Sea level rise will lead to the submergence of the low lying coastal areas and cause saline water intrusion up the rivers into the ground water aquifers reducing fresh water availability (MoEF, 2008).

Rise in the river level will also lead to drainage problem or congestion and cause water logging, which, in turn, will affect agriculture (IRIN Report, 2008). The rising sea will also strengthen tidal forces and exacerbate erosion (IRIN Report, 2008). Sundarbans Mangrove forest, a World Heritage site, with its rich biodiversity will be under direct threat of extinction (Climate Change and Bangladesh, 2007).

#### 1.6.4 Possible Impact of Migration on Assam’s Environment

It is, however, not an easy task to estimate the number of current migrants from Bangladesh that could be attributed precisely to environmental factors. Moreover, although environmental degradation causes migration, the migration, on the other hand, also causes environmental degradation in the receiving countries (Hugo, 2008), and Assam is no exception. The uncontrolled migration to the state and their settlement in the foothills and river banks are responsible for causing erosion of the very broad base of the state’s biodiversity (Bhagabati *et al.*, 2006). The environmental impact of migration on Assam is being further discussed in Chapter 8 of this study. As shown in Table 1.12, there has been considerable loss of bio-diversity in Assam and the major causes can be categorized into two broad categories: (1) Proximate Causes and (2) Root Causes.

**Table 1.12: Causes of Environmental Degradation (Loss of biodiversity) in Assam**

<b>Proximate Causes</b>	<b>Root Causes</b>
1. population growth and density	1. lack of understanding and some development activities without adequate environmental risk assessment (tea industries, coal, oil and paper)
2. habitat destruction caused by anthropogenic factors	2. replacing traditional modes of agriculture and exotic and unique plantations with new “foreign” ones
3. overgrazing	3. being exposed to uncontrolled exploitation for quick economic gains
4. poaching	4. Migrants’ lifestyle habits and different traditions at variance to indigenous conditions.
5. flood and bank erosion	
6. application of agrochemicals	
7. bio piracy	
8. political patronizing	

Source Bhagabati *et al.*, 2006

It is argued that the continued high rates of population growth, as well as the high density of population in Assam’s marginal areas like foothills, flood-prone river banks and the fringes of the forest parks and wetlands, and the use of forests for settlement by migrants, has led to the destruction of grazing and wetlands and the natural habitat in many areas of Assam (Bhagabati *et al.*, 2006).

Destruction of the natural habitat is also being aided and abetted through commercial felling of trees, use of forest land for settlement and cultivation. In addition, overgrazing by domestic stocks, especially in grasslands, poaching, application of agrochemicals and bio-piracy are also draining the bio-resources of the region (Chatterjee *et al.*, 2006).

Chatterjee *et al.* (2006) argue that the recent trend of rapid urbanization in Assam is posing another serious threat to the biodiversity of the region. The development activities in the state have not paid the required attention to the environmental aspects. Lack of understanding and to some extent negligence in the stages of formulating and developing plans and programs (Bhagabati *et al.*, 2006. p.231) have caused substantial damage to the environment of the state.

In some areas, age-old traditional social customs and rituals that call for use of excessive natural resources (e.g., burning woods, clearing of land, etc.) are also a matter of concern as they impact state's biodiversity negatively. At present that same space is being used by both traditional and non-tradition migrant communities from elsewhere, there are often conflicts among them with regard to their rights and possessions. Bhagabati *et al.* (2006) argue that migration of people from both within and outside the country with diverse traditions and economic background are to some extent responsible for causing damage to the very broad base of the state's biodiversity. The ongoing political problems like the deportation of foreign nationals, tribal uprising, insurgency, boundary disputes encourage anti-social elements to take advantage of the situation for their own gain; for example, in the Manas National Park, a World Heritage Site, one-horn rhinos and the tuskers were virtually eliminated from the park during the Bodo-Land movement with little or no resistance from the authorities.

### **1.7 Issues related to migration in Assam**

Migration from Bangladesh to Assam traces back to several decades since the British Raj and remains a lingering issue since then on Assam's social, political and economic landscape. An objective assessment of the scale and magnitude of its impact has eluded most social scientists and demographers because of the complexities, ambiguities and controversies surrounding this issue. The difficulties to fully comprehend and analyze the issue of migration from Bangladesh independently (without any bias) have been compounded further by a number of factors, notable among them are:

***Polarization among communities:*** Strong but contrasting and contradictory view points on this issue by various ethnic groups, think-tanks, political circles and diverse groups even within the migrant community from Bangladesh make it difficult to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the underlying issues.

***Lack of credible and sustained data:*** In most cases, it is difficult to substantiate the arguments made because they often lack verifiable and reliable data due to various reasons. For example, earlier many of the areas traditionally occupied by the immigrants were inaccessible; on the other hand many of the migrants declared their birth place as Assam in the Censuses (Pakyntein, 1961) and at present the migrants'

refusal to accept themselves as being of East Bengal origin. In addition, data gathering and analysis are also subject to interpretation along political lines.

***Excessive politicization of the issue:*** This issue provides an effective fodder for politicians to use it to their own advantage, without necessarily being factually correct.

Although migration to Assam has taken place from other foreign countries like Nepal, Bhutan or Myanmar, and also from other states of India (see Table 1.9), the migration from Bangladesh to Assam is of greater significance as it has affected the demographic, political, socio-economic and environmental condition of the state, and therefore the migration and the existence of the migrants is of great significance to the state and its people (Das, 1980).

With the birth of Bangladesh in 1971 and its regime accepting secularism, it was widely believed then, that the new regime would concentrate on the development of the country and would also contribute to the communal harmony among its people to eliminate the factors contributing to the out-migration of its citizens (Bezboruah, 2005). But this did not work out. Overpopulation, political instability, economic hardship, insecurity of life and property together with natural and man-made calamities continue to force many people from Bangladesh (Hindus, Muslims, Buddhist, Christians and others) to migrate through the porous border to the neighboring states of Assam, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura in India in search of good fortune and higher standard of living and most importantly for peace and tranquility (Das, 1980).

All these factors together with perceived fear (although it cannot be supported by reliable statistics) of the indigenous people of losing their identity and culture in their own homeland, like the other north-eastern states of Tripura and Sikkim, due to large scale migration from the neighboring countries and states has further exaggerated the problem (Hazarika, 2000).

With no formal Agreement or Accord between the government of India and Bangladesh regarding repatriation of illegal migrants and also denial by the government of Bangladesh regarding its citizens migrating illegally to India, and hence, refusing to accept them back without proper documentary proof has made the problem hang in limbo for many years (Ramachandran, 2005). As there is no coherent system to deal with the massive inflow and also poor border management coupled with 40.6 km. border un-demarcated and another 6.5 km. in dispute, together with India's geographical contiguity with Bangladesh further aggravates the problem (Pathania, 2003), But the most important problem is the inability of the authorities to distinguish between illegal and legal settlers as racially, culturally and linguistically they are similar to the border areas of Assam and Bangladesh (Weiner, 1983). Thus, the perceived threat to the identity of the indigenous people of the

state and the stability and security of the state has emerged as the single biggest concern to Assam (Sinha, 1998).

In view of the above complexities of issues due to the intrinsic mix of several underlying issues, the issue of migration from Bangladesh to Assam is discussed later in a separate chapter with special emphasis on its impact on demographic transformation within the state. In so doing, the possible causes of migration will also be analyzed.

### **1.8 Motivation for the Study**

The primary motivation for this study was to investigate the relationship between the effects of overpopulation, economic conditions, political status as well as environmental change in Bangladesh and the large scale migration of people from Bangladesh to Assam, a north-eastern border state in India. It was envisaged that findings and analysis could help policy makers to better understand the problem of migration and find an acceptable solution as well as highlight the general issue of undocumented migration in Assam.

Although the lack of a thorough analysis of the migration from Bangladesh to Assam makes it difficult to conclude at this stage the exact causes, as well as the effects of migration from Bangladesh to Assam, it can be said that factors such as economic, social and political combined with the consequences of environmental impacts have forced people to move to India. Therefore, the aim of the thesis will be to obtain a good understanding of the scale, composition, causes and impact of migration from Bangladesh to India, Assam with special focus on migrant's adjustment in their host country.

### **1.9 Organization of the thesis**

The thesis has been organized into 10 chapters including the present one. The organization of the thesis is shown in Figure 1.8.

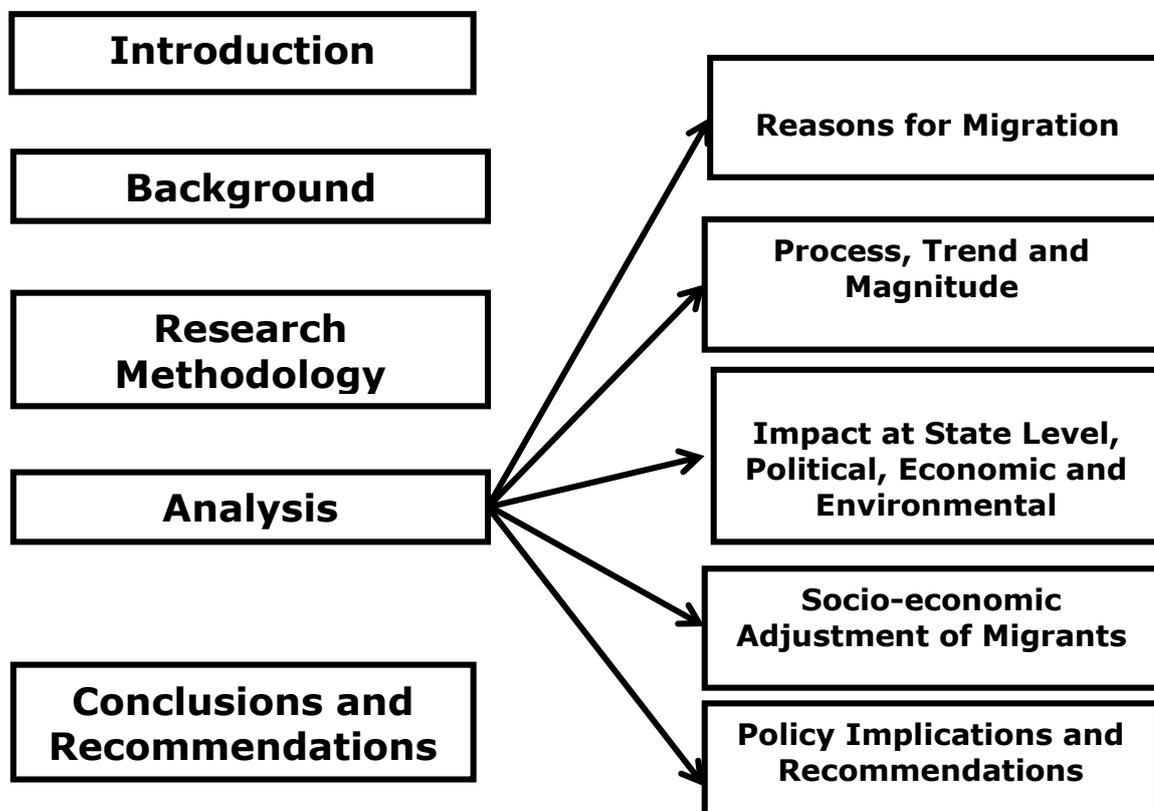
The background to the study is presented in the first two chapters. **Chapter 1** introduces Assam and Bangladesh and briefly states the problem, addressed in the thesis. It then discusses the trends in population growth in Assam and India due to migration starting from the British period.

**Chapter 2** presents a brief history of this migration with emphasis on the push and pulls factors both at the origin and also at the destination. To better understand the topic, a brief history of migration, starting with the introduction of the tea industry during the British period to the partition of India in 1947 and then to the birth of Bangladesh is provided.

**Chapter 3** describes the approach and methods used in this study. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to analyze problems and determine the justifications

for using it. The process of collecting research data and the method used to analyze it is also included in this chapter.

**Figure 1.8: Organization and Layout of Thesis**



The analytical part of the thesis begins with **Chapter 4**. It analyzes the field data collected from Assam and presents the actual causes of both Hindu and Muslim migration and how economic considerations like work on one hand and social consideration like presence of friends and relatives on the other together with security greatly influence a migrant's decision as to where to move and settle.

**Chapter 5** briefly describes the process of migration, the trend of population growth and movement in Assam as a result of migration. The magnitude of this migration is provided from various sources as well as from Census data.

**Chapter 6** analyzes the political impact this migration has had on the state. There are various opinions among scholars regarding this migration and its impact on the state. This chapter discusses some of them such as vote bank politics, the on-going language problem and the policies undertaken by the different government since British India to the IMDT (Illegal Migrants Determination by Tribunal) Act.

**Chapter 7** analyzes the economic impact of the migration. It describes both the positive and negative impact, with the development of the agricultural sector and supply of cheap labor on one hand and the expenses the government has to incur for the development of the immigrants on the other. It also shows the impact on the local population regarding employment and land holding.

**Chapter 8** studies the environmental impact on the state due to migration. To study the impact, Manas National Park a World Heritage site was chosen and a separate field survey was done for this. Here the environmental degradation due to the settlement of people of East Bengal origin together with the local population in the fringe villages of the park was studied and is presented in this chapter.

**Chapter 9** presents a study of the socio-economic status of the migrants in the state (Dhubri district) and compares it with their condition in Bangladesh as well as the total population of the district. Employment, support, education, health care facilities, possession of land and business, family support, and other benefits they enjoy in their country of destination is compared with their condition while they were in Bangladesh and also with the district's total population.

It also probes into the well-being and up-bringing of the second generation that is the children of the migrants who came to Assam and their future in Assam.

The last chapter, **Chapter 10** of the thesis discusses the conclusions arrived at during the course of this study. It also analyzes the policies undertaken by various governments at different periods of time in order to maximize the positive impact for the benefit of the state and to reduce the negative impact, and also provides recommendations for further studies.

## Chapter 2: Genesis of Migration to Assam

"Indeed, as Myron Weiner has remarked, migration is the story of our world. People move internally, within nations. People move externally, to other countries, even to poor and underdeveloped lands, which hold out some promise of a living. This puts pressure on the host communities, more so if they are already poor, fearing marginalization by the new, hardworking and mobile settlers. Often, this in turn, leads to a backlash against the immigrant."

Sanjoy Hazarika in *Rites of Passage*, Penguin Books, 2000, p19.

### 2.1 Introduction and Background

Migration is not new to Assam; it has been going on for centuries. Assam has been mentioned in religious epics like the Puranas, and also in the Mahabharata. In the epic Mahabharata, it was referred to as the land of Kirats with Pragjyotishpur as its capital (Bordoloi, 1991). It is said that Narakasura, one of the earliest mythological Kirat Kings of Kamrupa<sup>11</sup>, brought a large number of Aryan people from Northern India for promotion of Aryan culture in the region<sup>12</sup>. According to historians, the Aryan migration to Assam perhaps started during the first or second century A.D. (Bhuyan, 1977). Huen Tsang, the great Chinese traveler, visited this region in the 7<sup>th</sup> century (640 AD) when the kingdom of Kamrupa was under reign of the powerful king Bhaskarvarmana (594-650 AD). After his demise, there was a gradual decline of this region in term of its political clout due to internal turmoil over power, until the advent of the Ahoms in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (1228 AD) (Barthakur, 2012).

The earliest inhabitants of Assam were the Australoids or the pre-Dravidians. The Mongloids then entered the land through the eastern mountain passes long before the completion of the Hindu religious literature known as the Vedas (Barthakur, 2012). Migration to Assam was also seen from the north east route, Western China and also from South-East Asia (Bordoloi, 1991). The Buddhist from Upper Burma belonging to what is known as Khamyang, Khamti, Phakial and Asitonia communities also settled in upper Assam (Bhuyan, 1977).

The first recorded historical migration to Assam occurred in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (1228 AD) when the Ahom from Siam, now known as Thailand, came to Assam. During the Ahom rule, at around 17<sup>th</sup> century, the region was also subjected to Muslim invasion and many of the Muslims stayed back and later became an integral part of the state's indigenous population (Das, 1980).

In order to understand the current migration process, it is necessary to know and understand the migration history and background. This chapter presents a brief

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<sup>11</sup> **Kamrupa** was the ancient name of Assam comprising the present-day Brahmaputra valley of Assam, Bhutan, Cooch Behar of West Bengal and Rangpur region in Bangladesh

<sup>12</sup> India Heritage & Living Portrait, 2005, [www.indiaheritage.org/history/history\\_assam.htm#top](http://www.indiaheritage.org/history/history_assam.htm#top)

background and history of migration since the British rule in India, together with policies, regulations and various measures taken at different times by different governments in both Bangladesh and India, with particular reference to the migration.

## **2.2 Modern Migration from Bangladesh to Assam: Historical Stages**

Modern migration started in Assam with annexation by the British in 1826. The migration under British rule was of six major types:

1. Tea garden laborers, from the states of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh.
2. The East Bengal (now Bangladesh) Muslim peasants.
3. The Nepalese who came to this region for agriculture and also to work as soldiers and office attendants.
4. Bengali Hindu office clerks and professionals.
5. Marwaris from the Marwar district of Rajasthan as traders.
6. Hindustanis from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh as artisans, porters, office clerks. (Das, 1980)

Several push and pull factors are associated with the migration from Bangladesh to Assam, and they vary with different groups and times of migration. Migration from Bangladesh to India was comprised primarily of Hindus and Muslims. However, there are also small groups of Buddhist, Christian and other religious groups. The underlying factors or reasons for migration by all communities from Bangladesh fall within the following broad categories:

- Historical and Cultural ties
- Economic causes
- Demographic factors
- Environmental factors
- Partition of India in 1947
- India-Pakistan war of 1965
- The war of liberation of Bangladesh 1971
- Religious insecurity
- Political instability

Migration from Bangladesh to Assam has been both forced and voluntary. The forced migration is attributable to certain unforeseen events -- political and/or environmental, like the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, when the Hindus chose to move to India, leaving everything behind, due to fear of religious persecution and also atrocities (Nanda, 2005). The 1971 war, when Bangladesh was separated from Pakistan, millions of people moved to take shelter in India (West Bengal, Tripura, Meghalaya and Assam) to escape the inevitable persecution, some of them did not return after the war ended (Roy, 2003). Again the atrocities reported to have been committed on Chakma Tribes in the Chittagong Hill Tract forced many of them to move to India (Saikia, 2005). These are examples of sudden and forced migration of people from Bangladesh or former East Pakistan to India in order to escape persecution and they are irregular in frequency and intensity.

Natural hazards too have produced both forced and voluntary migration. Forced migration during natural hazards is induced by the sudden need to evacuate from their places of residence. During the evacuation process, most evacuees assume their evacuation as a

temporary relocation of the residence to escape the natural hazards. However, in many cases, their migration ends up being a voluntary “permanent” relocation, particularly when the “newer” place of residence offers them an improved potential for livelihood and amenities (Hunter, 2004).

### **2.3 The British Period and Migration**

The first significant wave of migration to Assam started shortly before the end of 19th century with the introduction of the Tea Industry (Weiner, 1983). With the growing demand for workers for this industry, laborers had to be brought to Assam from the neighboring states of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh resulting in the growing need for more food supply.

To fulfill the need for food for the expanded population base of Assam, the British government planned to improve and augment agricultural production by bringing vast tracts of unoccupied land under cultivation to make Assam self-sufficient in food production. This called for more agricultural laborers which Assam did not have at the time. Therefore, they brought workers from East Bengal (Barua, 2009) for two reasons; one, the source of landless hardworking peasants in Bangladesh who were already acclimatized to work in weather conditions similar to those in Assam, and second, this pool of agro-laborers was available in the immediate proximity.

According to Barua (2009), a retired high-ranking bureaucrat at the federal agriculture ministry of India, networking among the migrants had started during the colonial rule and continues even today. In conversation with the author, he said that the East Bengal Muslims were hardy and hardworking, and once they found a piece of land suitable for cultivation, they would go back to East Bengal and bring with them another 10-20 younger workers to work with them in the field to increase food production. They virtually revolutionized the agricultural sector of Assam through multiple cropping; they not only cultivated crops like rice and jute but also grew vegetables and reared livestock and poultry for commercial purposes.

In addition to agricultural workers, during 1874-1905, a large number of people were also brought in from East Bengal to Assam by the British government to work as laborers in establishing the railway and other development projects. This resulted in large scale chain migration through networks (Taher, 2011).

Observing the trend of an increasing influx from Bengal, Sir E. A. Gait, the then Census Superintendent of Assam in his census report of 1891 stated:

“There has been an enormous influx of foreigners into Assam, but the corresponding exodus is comparatively small. This result is what would be expected as Assam is fertile but sparsely peopled country with large demand for labour” (cited in Bhuyan, 2002, p.71).

The largest influx, however, took place after 1900 when migrants from East Bengal moved further east of the Goalpara district in the Brahmaputra valley. They spread into the Barpeta sub-division of Kamrup district, Nagaon district and to the Mangoldoi sub-division of Darrang district. The Bengali Muslims reclaimed thousands of acres of land, cleared jungles along the south bank of the river Brahmaputra, and occupied flooded lowlands along the river. Among these migrants, the largest group hailed from the Mymensingh district of East Bengal (Mullan, 1931, Weiner, 1983).

In 1905, the British Viceroy of India Lord Curzon divided Bengal into two provinces; namely, East Bengal and West Bengal. Assam was amalgamated with the Muslim majority state of East Bengal. This move further encouraged the Muslim laborers to move to Assam from East Bengal (Goswami, 2008).

By 1911, Assam reverted to being a separate province under a Chief Commissioner, and by this time, as many as 118,000 migrants had already moved into the district of Goalpara alone representing 20 percent of the population. In the next two decades, they moved further up the Brahmaputra valley for settlement (Weiner, 1983).

In the following years, the migration from East Bengal continued unabated. The Assamese nationalists expressed concern over the unchecked migration (Misra, 1981). The British government could foresee the consequences of this population movement, and in 1920, introduced the 'Line System'. Under this "system" a line was virtually drawn to segregate those areas where migration was allowed to take place from the villages and where it was not (Hazarika, 2000). The eligibility of villages to allow settlement of migrants was categorized by the government into three categories: "open", "closed" and "partially open" to migrants.

In 1928, the 'Colonization Scheme' initiated by the British officials and supported by the all party conference was adopted by the Assam Legislative Council. According to the colonization plan, a family was to be given 30 bighas<sup>13</sup> of land against the payment of a lump sum amount. The scheme started in Nagaon in 1928, followed by one each in Barpeta and Mangoldoi subdivisions. As a result of this scheme, a total of 47,636 acres of land were settled with 1,619 Muslims and 441 Hindu families in the district of Nagaon alone (Guha, 2002). As many as 59 grazing villages were thrown open to migrants in Nagaon district alone between the years 1930-1936 (Borah, 1980).

In 1931 the migrant population grew to 475,000 and the impact of their flow was noted by the British government authorities; for, the then Census Superintendent of Assam, C.S. Mullan commented on the migration from East Bengal to Assam as following:

"Probably the most important event in the province during the last twenty five years - an event, moreover, which seems likely to alter permanently the whole future of Assam and to destroy more surely than did the Burmese invaders of 1830, the whole structure of Assamese culture and civilization has been the invasion of a vast horde of land-hungry

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<sup>13</sup> Bigha is a term to refer to an area of land. Each Bigha equals 0.35 acres or 0.15 hectares

Bengali immigrants, mostly Muslims, from the districts of Eastern Bengal and in particular from Mymensingh. This invasion began sometime before 1911, and the census report of that year is the first report which makes mention of the advancing host. But, as we now know, the Bengali immigrants censured for the first time on char lands of Goalpara in 1911 were merely the advanced guard-or rather the scouts-of a huge army following closely at their heels. By 1921 the first army corps had passed into Assam and had practically conquered the district of Goalpara.

The second army which followed them in the years 1921-31 has consolidated their position in that district and has also completed the conquest of Nowgong. The Barpeta subdivision of Kamrup has also fallen to their attack and Darrang is being invaded. Sibsagar has so far escaped completely but few thousand Mymensinghais in North Lakhimpur are an outpost which may, during the next decade, prove to be a valuable basis of major operation.

Wheresoever's the carcasses, there will the vultures be gathered together-where there is waste land thither flock the Mymensinghais. In fact the way in which they have seized upon the vacant areas in the Assam valley seems almost uncanny. Without fuss, without tumult, without undue trouble to the district revenue staffs, a population which must amount to over half a million has transplanted itself from Bengal to Assam valley during the last twenty five years. It looks like a marvel of administrative organization on the part of Government but it is nothing of the sort: the only thing I can compare it to be the mass movement of a large body of ants" (Mullan, 1931, pp. 50-51).

The Governor of Assam, Lt Gen (retired) S.K. Sinha in his report to the President of India in 1998 gave credence to the 1931 Indian Census Report and recognized it as a very important document for three reasons:

1. It contains precious figures of migration from Bengal (now Bangladesh) to Assam even though it was inter-district migration. Unfortunately, now there are no census reports that can accurately define the contours of trans-border movement.
2. After fifty years of independence, the government has chosen to remain virtually oblivious to the danger of national security arising from the migration.
3. The Census Superintendent of Assam in 1931 predicted that, with the exception of Sibsagar district, the Assamese people will not find themselves as the majority community in Assam (Sinha, 1998, p.11).

During 1937-1946, the Muslim League, with Mohammed Saadulla as the Premier, held the power of home-rule governance in Assam. During this period, Mohammed Saadulla and his Muslim league party had encouraged Muslims from East Bengal to migrate to Assam on the pretext of augmenting agricultural output. The scheme they initiated to this effect was named 'Grow More Food', but in reality, their aim was to increase the Muslim population and ultimately merge with the future Muslim-dominated Pakistan during partition (Borgohain, 2009). In order to avoid any scrutiny of their real intent, Saadulla had reported to the British Administration that he was trying his best to meet Allied Forces' need for food during World War II under the scheme 'Grow More food', but Lord Wavell was not convinced. He wrote in the Viceroy's Journal:

"The chief political problem is the desire of the Muslim Ministers to increase this immigration into uncultivated Government lands under the pretext of Grow More Food but what they are really after, is Grow More Muslims" (cited in Hazarika, 2000, p.74).

In 1941 Mohammed Saadulla's party announced the 'Land Settlement Policy' which opened up government lands to immigrants and allowed them to possess as much as 30 bighas (1bigha equal to 1337.8 sq. m in Assam) of land or more for settlement (Hazarika, 2000). In terms of the size of the land allotment, it was similar to the "colonization policy"

introduced in 1928. In 1942, the mounting protest by indigenous landholders led to the scrapping of land development scheme and the eventual resignation of the Saadulla ministry in 1946 (Misra, 1981).

In 1946, with the victory of the All India Congress Party<sup>14</sup> at the poll, a ministry of Assam headed by Gopinath Bordoloi was formed. Soon after the formation of the Bordoloi ministry measures were taken to evict immigrants from the reserved Tribal Belts or Blocks of Assam. To this end, the Assam Land Revenue Regulation Act of 1888 was amended.

In 1946 just months prior to the independence of India, the Cabinet Mission's<sup>15</sup> plan was announced to group different states into three groups as below:

**Group A:** Madras, Bombay, Utter Pradesh, Bihar, Central Province and Orissa

**Group B:** Punjab, North Western Frontier Province, Sindh and Balochistan

**Group C:** Bengal and Assam

According to the plan, the areas with more than 75 percent Muslims would form Pakistan and the other areas would remain in India (Ismail, 2003). Therefore, Group A and Group B provinces were clearly marked for India and Pakistan, respectively, based solely on the prevailing demography. Assam was placed in Group C with Bengal because no such demographic criterion could be established. Bengal was divided into two based on demographic make-up, with the Muslim-majority part going to Pakistan as East Pakistan and Hindu-majority part remaining with India as a province, named "West Bengal".

Both the Congress High Command and the Muslim League accepted the grouping plan but it was opposed by Gopinath Bordoloi, who later went on to become the first Chief Minister of Assam in independent India. Bordoloi argued that Assam decisively belonged to India, not Pakistan. With the support of Mahatma Gandhi, Bordoloi succeeded in his efforts to retain Assam within the confederation of India. One of Assam's districts, Sylhet, however, was acceded to Pakistan based on the result of the Sylhet Referendum<sup>16</sup> held in July 1947. The Sylhet Referendum favored the district going with Pakistan even though its sizeable Hindu population wished to remain within Assam as an Indian province (Sinha, 1998).

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<sup>14</sup> Indian National Congress Party is the national political party of India that led India's movement for independence and Mahatma Gandhi was the most influential personality who guided the party strategies.

<sup>15</sup> The British Cabinet Mission of 1946 to India (commonly referred to as Cabinet Mission) was formed to plan the transfer of power from the British Government to Indian leadership. Appointed by Clement Attlee, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, the mission consisted of Lord Pethick-Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, and A. V. Alexander, the First Lord of the Admiralty.

<sup>16</sup> Sylhet Referendum was conducted in July 1947 to gauge the preference of Sylhet residents to either India or Pakistan.

## **2.4 The Partition of India 1947**

Since Sir Cyril Radcliff who headed the Bengal border commission drew the eastern border that created India and Pakistan in 1947, Nandy (2005, p.23) argues the lives of the inhabitants of undivided Bengal, including Assam have never been the same. The partition of India into two countries -- India and Pakistan -- on the basis of religion was the major cause of migration from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to India during the forties and the early fifties (Vaghaiwalla, 1951).

The border between India and Pakistan was not to separate Hindus and Muslims of the two countries but to create two nations intended to separate Muslim and non-Muslim areas (Schendel, 2005), but this intention had backfired. The problems that arose from the partition continue even today. The emergence of the two nations -- India and Pakistan -- led to:

1. Riots on both sides of the countries between the Hindus and Muslims.
2. Bloody carnage that left millions dead.
3. Three wars.
4. The birth of Bangladesh (Nandy, 2005, p.23).

The main cause of the Hindu-Muslim riots during partition was the institutionalized politics of the Indian National Congress as well as the Muslim League and their participation in the riots. As a result of the riots there was large-scale migration from both sides (Das, 1993).

R. P. Vaghaiwalla, Census superintendent of Assam in 1951, in his Prefatory Note to the report on the Census of 1951 stated that the biggest migration into Assam that took place during the 1940s was the influx of Hindu refugees from Pakistan. Following the Noakhali riots in East Pakistan in October 1946, and the partition of India in 1947, there was a steady and continuous exodus of Hindus from Pakistan to Assam. The district which sheltered the largest number of refugees was Cachar due to its proximity to Sylhet, from which the majority of the refugees came. The Census of 1951 puts the migrant number in Cachar at 93,177. The next largest group of 44,967 refugees came to Goalpara, followed by Kamrup (42,871), Nowgong (38,599), Darrang (18,853), Sibsagar (7,514) and Lakhimpur (13,965). In the hills division, too, there was an influx of migrants from East Pakistan: United Khasi and Jaintia Hills (5,990) followed by Garo Hills (5,072) and United Mikir and North Cachar Hills (1,943) (Vaghaiwalla, 1951).

According to the census of 1951, in July 1949, there were 24,600 families of displaced persons in Assam or approximately 114,500 persons (Census, 1951). These are official recorded figures; however, many may not have registered themselves as refugees for fear of being deported. Others might have taken covert routes to enter Assam undocumented.

As reported by Vaghaiwalla (1951), there were several incidents (or situations) that contributed to the exodus of a sizeable number of Hindu and other minority communities from East Bengal. The 1949 incidents in Soneswar and Habibganj, the oppression of the

Hajongs in North Mymensingh and the atrocities committed on the Santhals in Rajshahi and East Dinajpur in February and March, 1950 are some examples (Vaghaiwalla, 1951). Due to some gruesome incidents reported on sporadic violence from across East Pakistan, including the capital city of Dacca (now spelled as Dhaka), led 500,000 Hindus to leave their homes to seek shelter and security in either West Bengal or Assam, whichever was nearest. According to Vaghaiwalla, more than half of the total refugees in Assam came in 1950 alone. The yearly arrival records of refugees in Assam during the partition period (from 1946-1951), as reported by the Indian Census authority in 1951, is presented in Table 2.1. As the total number of refugees from elsewhere (e.g., West Pakistan and other unidentified districts in India) was small, they were reported as a lump sum for the whole period.

**Table 2. 1: Record of refugee arrivals in Assam, 1946-1951**

Refugees from East Pakistan		Number of refugees from West Pakistan	Number of refugees from unidentified districts	Total Number of refugees, 1946-1951
Year	Number			
1946	6,860	647	1,733	<b>274,455</b>
1947	42,346			
1948	41,740			
1949	33,138			
1950	144,512			
1951 <sup>#</sup>	3,479			
<b>"Origin" Total</b>	<b>272,075</b>	<b>647</b>	<b>1,733</b>	

<sup>#</sup> **1951 Data** include refugees from only in the first two months; i.e., January and February; Source: From Table D-V (1) Census of India, 1951

On April 8<sup>th</sup> 1950 an agreement was signed between Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India and Liaquat Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan to safeguard minorities in each country and to discourage and check the exodus of minorities from them. This agreement known as the "Nehru-Liaquat Pact" or "the Delhi Pact of 1950" restored some confidence among the minorities in both countries and the number of refugees decreased thereafter. The Pact provided a 'bill of rights' to minorities of India and Pakistan with three broad objectives (Nandy, 2005). They were:

1. To alleviate the fears of religious minorities on both sides,
2. To elevate communal peace, and
3. To create an atmosphere in which the two countries could resolve their differences.

According to this Pact, both governments agreed to grant their minorities' complete equality of citizenship, irrespective of religion, and the rights of full security, culture, property and personal honor. It also guaranteed fundamental human rights to minorities, such as, freedom of movement, speech, occupation and worship. The pact also provided for the minorities of both countries to participate in public life, to hold political or other offices and to serve in their country's civil and armed forces (Nehru-Liaquat Agreement, 1950). This pact was broadly acknowledged as an optimistic beginning to improve relations

between India and Pakistan. The implementation of the 1950 Delhi Pact had an impact in that around 600,000 migrants were sent back to East Pakistan, largely from Assam (Nandy, 2005).

### **2.5 Atrocities in 1964-1965 and 1965 India-Pakistan War**

During 1964, brutal anti-Hindu riots erupted across East Pakistan which forced Hindus to flee assault, murder, kidnapping, robbery and also atrocities on women. These people settled in different parts of North-East India and in West Bengal (Hazarika, 2000). According to Hazarika, there were anti-Muslim backlashes in these parts of India and it also spread to the state of Bihar in northern India.

The riots in both countries were so severe that the Home Ministers of India and Pakistan had to hold talks in New Delhi on the issue. In the meantime, the deportation of migrants from East Pakistan in Assam was in full swing (Hazarika, 2000). The then Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru requested the then Chief Minister of Assam Bimala Prasad Chaliha to slow down deportation or even to stop it, but Chaliha refused to do so by arguing that if deportation was stopped, the demography and culture of Assam would be changed permanently. This led to the breakdown of the Delhi talks. Fortunately, however, the violence stopped eventually (Hazarika, 2000).

In 1965, a full-scale war broke out between India and Pakistan over Kashmir which led to a large number of refugees fleeing to India from East Pakistan. For these refugees, two bordering states in India, Assam and West Bengal in the immediate proximity, were the logical destinations. Moreover, they were accorded the comfort of cultural and linguistic similarities. It is estimated that due to the pogroms of late 1960s in East Pakistan and the 1965 war, one million people came illegally to India, of which 920,000 were Hindus (Hazarika, 2000, p., 30).

Soon after the war of 1965 the government of Pakistan enforced the Enemy Property Act, now known as the Vested Property Act in Bangladesh. This Act gives the right to the state to confiscate the properties of the minorities who they deem to be an enemy of the state. The Act had a devastating effect on Hindus resulting in out-migration on a large-scale (Prothom Alo, 2004).

### **2.6 Liberation of Bangladesh and 1971 India-Pakistan War**

The central political power structure in West Pakistan was designed to make East Pakistan a subservient region of the West and there was widespread economic and political discrimination, as well as suppression of the Bengali culture and linguistic heritage in the East (Pramanik, 2005). The people of East Pakistan were dissatisfied with the central government as they felt that they were being neglected and discriminated against by West Pakistan. Out of frustration they joined forces with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (who later became the first Prime Minister of Bangladesh) and his Awami League party, which won a landslide victory during the election of 1970. However, the then political leadership was

reluctant to accept a Prime Minister from East Pakistan even though Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League party had secured an absolute majority in terms of the elected members. This led to a civil war in Pakistan in 1970, with its East Pakistan wing demanding a greater autonomy (Nandy, 2005). This demand soon culminated in civil unrest and Pakistan reached a point of no return as a unified country. Samantha Power in her book 'A Problem from Hell' wrote that the civil war in East Pakistan resulted in genocide, about one to two million people in Bangladesh were killed and 200,000 girls and women were ill-treated and about 10 million people crossed the border and took refuge in India (Power, 2003). This was then the largest refugee group in the world.

Table 2.2 shows the seriousness of the situation created by Pakistan's army during different periods in 1971. There are inconsistencies in the number of Bengalis killed by the Pakistani Army, and most probably the actual figure will remain unknown and unconfirmed.

**Table 2. 2: Number of Bengalis Killed during Liberation of Bangladesh**

<b>Who Reported</b>	<b>When Reported</b>	<b>Number in Millions</b>
The Baltimore Sun	5/14/71	0.5
The Momento, Caracus	6/13/71	0.5-1.0
Washington Daily News	6/30/71	0.2
World Bank Report	June, 71	0.2
Die Zeist, Bonn	7/09/71	0.5
New York Times	7/14/71	0.2-0.25
Wall Street Journal	7/23/71	0.2-1.0
The Christian Sci. Mon.	7/31/71	0.25-1.0
Newsweek	8/02/71	0.25
Time	9/02/71	0.2-1.0
Newsweek	3/27/72	1.5
National Geographic	Sept. 1972	3.0

Source: Virtual Bangladesh: History: The Birth of Bangladesh, The Bengali Holocaust, 1971, June 13 at [www.virtualbangladesh.com /history/holocaust.html](http://www.virtualbangladesh.com/history/holocaust.html)

The government of India was faced not only with security issues but also with the problem of the inflow of refugees from East Pakistan. By May 1971, about 300 camps for refugees were established in the bordering states of West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura.

Table 2.3 shows the total number of refugee camps in different states of India between the months of March 1971 to December 1971 during the Bangladesh war. By June 1971, as reported by the government in the parliament, there were about 4.7 million refugees taking shelter in India; and by the middle of July that year there were 1,000 camps with 6.9 million refugees (Lok Sabha Debate, Government of India, 1971).

**Table 2. 3: Number of Refugees in India, 1970-72**

State	No. of Camps	No. of Refugees	No. of Refugees on their own	Total
West Bengal	492	4,849,786	2,386,130	7,235,916
Tripura	276	834,098	547,151	1,381,249
Meghalaya	17	591,520	76,466	667,986
Assam	28	255,642	91,913	347,555
Bihar	8	36,732	-	36,732
Madhya Pradesh	3	219,218	-	219,218
Uttar Pradesh	1	10,619	-	10,619
<b>Total</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>6,797,615</b>	<b>3,101,660</b>	<b>9,899,275</b>

Source: Bangladesh Documents, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1972

According to the government of India the number of refugees was 8.3 million. According to other sources, the numbers varied from 6-12 million (see Table 2.4).

**Table 2. 4: Number of Refugees in India in 1971**

Who Reported	When Reported	Number in Millions
Washington Daily News	6/30/71	6.0
Die Zeit	7/9/71	6.0
New York Times	7/14/71	6.0
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	8/1/71	6.5
Newsweek	8/2/71	7.5
Time	9/2/91	7.5
Sen. Kennedy	8/15/71	12.0
The UN in Bangladesh	1972	10.0
Newsweek	3/27/72	10.0

Source: Virtual Bangladesh: History: The Bangali Genocide, 1971, June 13 at [www.virtualbangladesh.com/history/holocaust.html](http://www.virtualbangladesh.com/history/holocaust.html)

The liberation of Bangladesh and the 1971 India-Pakistan war caused an influx of refugees into the different states of India. Tables 2.5 and 2.6 present data compiled by two sources and there are significant discrepancies between them; for example, New York Times put the total number of refugees in Assam around 147.5 thousand as opposed to over 300 thousand estimated by Bangladesh Genocide Archive. Likewise, the discrepancy for West Bengal, too, is quite significant. Overall, the New York Times estimates are smaller.

**Table 2. 5: Number of Refugees in Different States of India**

State	In Reception Centers	With Friends/Relatives
Assam	81,800	65,677
Tripura	381,373	<b>363,464</b>
Meghalaya	186,052	<b>49,332</b>
West Bengal	2,707,947	<b>2,022,570</b>

Source: New York Times, July 4, 1971 Bangladesh Genocide Archive ([http://www.genocidebangladesh.org/?page\\_id=39](http://www.genocidebangladesh.org/?page_id=39))

**Table 2. 6: Number of Refugees in Different States of India**

<b>Name of the State</b>	<b>Total Influx</b>
West Bengal	7,493,474
Tripura	1,416,491
Meghalaya	667,986
Assam	312,713
Bihar	8,641
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,899,305</b>

Source: Bangladesh Genocide Archive, <http://www.genocidebangladesh.org>

India made an all-out effort to ensure self-determination for Bangladesh or East Pakistan. In December 1971, India along with the allied force of Mukti Bahini (freedom fighters) defeated the army of Pakistan in a two-week war, and Bangladesh, a new country, was born out of Pakistan. Its leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was in a Pakistani prison was released. Eventually Pakistan, too, recognized the new state of Bangladesh as an independent sovereign country in 1974.

Soon after the birth of Bangladesh in December 1971, the problem of repatriation of the refugees arose. As per the Indira-Mujib pact of 1972, all refugees who entered India before March 25, 1971 (the day Sheikh Mujibur Rahman called for an independent Bangladesh) were allowed to stay in India (Upadhyay, 2001). As a result, as many as 7,000,000; that is, about 80 percent of the total refugees, returned to Bangladesh (Nandy, 2005). Some of the refugees who returned to the new country found to their dismay that their properties had been occupied by someone else. This forced them to return to India within one or two years (Pramanik, 1990).

In the absence of any effective mechanism to prevent further infiltration, the Indira-Mujib pact could not be implemented and the large-scale influx of Bangladesh nationals to various states of the country continued unabated. Occasionally the Union Ministers would express concern on this issue, but no serious effort was ever made by any of the leaders to stop the infiltration (Upadhyay, 2001).

## **2.7 Migration of Chakmas**

India was partitioned into India and Pakistan under the 'Two-Nation' doctrine, taking only Muslims and Hindus into consideration, but, there were other communities, and some of these communities were the victim of the circumstances of partition. One such community in Bangladesh was the indigenous tribal population in the Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT). Chakmas, (usually Buddhists by religion) were the majority among the tribal in the CHT. Other notable ethnic CHT groups were: Marma, Tripura, Tonchungya, Chak Paukho, Mru, Murung, Bawn, Lushai, Khyang and Khumi (Friends of The Chakmas, 2005). More than 85 percent of CHT population was Buddhists and another 10 percent were Hindus at the time of partition of India (Indigenous Jumma People's Network, USA) and had a land link with Assam, yet CHT was awarded to Pakistan. The people of CHT hoisted the Indian flag on August 15, 1947 to celebrate the Independence Day, but later, to their dismay they

discovered that they had been awarded to Pakistan (Chakma, 2009). The Chakma leaders opposed the division; they sought help from India, but were refused by Prime Minister Nehru (Chakma, 2009).

The first constitution of Pakistan in 1956 had recognized Chittagong Hill Tract as 'Special Area', but later in 1964, the influx of Bengali Muslim settlers took place as a part of the 'state policy' (Chakma, 2009). Eventually, the special autonomous status was revoked by the government of Pakistan and the area was then made open to all (Chakma, 2009). Thus, distinctive tribal identity had started to erode in the CHT. Several ethnic riots that followed led to about 60,000 Chakmas fleeing to India and Burma (Saikia, 2005). Among them, about 20,000 were settled in the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), a district of Assam then by the government of India (Saikia, 2005). NEFA is now a separate full-fledged state in India, named Arunachal Pradesh.

After liberation of Bangladesh, people of CHT had hoped for political recognition and demanded some autonomy within the state of Bangladesh, but were refused by the new government (Chittagong Hill Tract Tribes of Bangladesh, 2008). There were confrontations between the government and the indigenous people that lasted for 22 years, until the signing of a peace treaty in 1997 (Parveen and Faisal, 2002). As a result of violence a large number of people from CHT fled to Eastern India, especially Tripura for shelter.

In 1987, an agreement was reached between India and Bangladesh to repatriate the refugees, but acting on various pleas from international human rights organizations, the government of India suspended the planned repatriation (Chittagong Hill Tract Tribes of Bangladesh, 2008).

## **2.8 Laws and Acts in Bangladesh**

### **2.8.1 Vested Property Acts of 1965 and 1971**

Soon after the 1965 India-Pakistan war, the Enemy Property (Land and Building) Administration and Disposal Order came into effect in 1966 in East Pakistan (Trivedi, 2007). This Order gave the right to the state to confiscate the properties of the minorities who they deem an enemy of the state.

After its liberation, Bangladesh renamed the same Act from Enemy Property Act to Vesting of Property and Asset Act, and under clause 3 of this Act added a statement that the content of the order cannot be questioned or challenged in any court on any ground whatsoever (Ghosh, 2001). Thus, the Act legitimizes the confiscation of minority property by the state if it deems as "enemy property" without any compensation or notice (Trivedi, 2007).

The consequences of the Act have been devastating. According to Professor Abul Barkhat of Dhaka University 5,000,000 people of Hindu community lost 2,000,000 acres of land and about 40 percent Hindu families were affected by this Act (Prothom Alo, 2004). The Association for Land Reform Development (ALRD), a Dhaka-based NGO, has estimated

that a total of 1,048,390 Hindu households were affected by the Vested Property Act and 1.05 million acres of land were disposed and about 30 percent of Hindu household were victims of the Act (Attacks on Hindu Minorities in Bangladesh, 2001).

The ultimate consequence of the Act was out-migration of Hindus in large numbers.

### **2.8.2 Amendment of the Constitution of Bangladesh**

After liberation, Bangladesh adopted a secular constitution. The four pillars of the constitution were nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularity. After the assassination of the first Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in August 1975 there was a change in leadership and with the change in the leadership on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1977, the Fundamental Principles of State Policy was altered by the 5<sup>th</sup> amendment. Then, by a decree the Principle of secularism was removed from the permeable of the constitution; instead, the preamble was preceded by Islamic religious principles (Raman, 2004). Again on June 7, 1988 by the 8<sup>th</sup> amendment of the constitution 'Islam' was declared as the state religion (Bhattacharyya, 2008). Although Islam was declared as the state religion, there were no interferences by authorities in Hindu religious activities although the atmosphere of insecurity and harassment has continued by criminal elements of society, forcing minorities to flee from Bangladesh (Raman, 2004).

On August 29, 2005 the High Court in its landmark verdict declared the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution illegal as it undermined the very sovereign character of the republic (Shakhawat, 2010). Again the Supreme Court in February 2, 2010 upheld the High Court verdict with some modifications and observations thus the Fifth Amendment was annulled in 2010 (Shakhawat, 2010).

### **2.9 Environmental Causes of Migration**

Environmental factors play a role in the movement of people from their place of settlement. Due to environmental hazards, people try to move or are forced to move. However, some prefer to stay within the area of vulnerability for emotional and unavoidable reasons; others try to move mostly within the country at the initial stage or migrate out of the country to take shelter in another country (Asia Development Bank, 2011, p. 5).

The most common natural hazards in Bangladesh are floods followed by cyclones in the southern part of the country (NAPA, 2005). The severity of the floods is exacerbated by confluence of several major river systems within Bangladesh and human activities in the upstream countries (India, Nepal and China), such as deforestation, construction of levees and dams etc.

Environmental changes, both gradual and sudden, do influence population movement in different ways; for example, repeated floods may cause more people to migrate permanently than one-off floods and the other example is cyclones where the effects on the livelihoods of families influence migration (Walsham, 2010). Furthermore, man-made environmental disasters such as, dams, barrage, levees etc. induce involuntary migration

from the area to either another area within the country, or to another country for example, the Farakka Barrage, the Kaptai Dam etc. in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is a country where despite ongoing development, more than 50 million people still live in poverty and many of these people live in remote and ecologically fragile parts of the country; such as flood plains and river islands (char) or coastal zones where cyclones are a major threat (Walsham, 2010, p. 8). The people of Bangladesh not only have to cope with the existing vulnerabilities but have to also face the consequences of growing pressure on their environment due to shortages of water, inadequate management of the environmental protection measures and often rapid and unmanageable urbanization and industrial development, which in turn may create risks of new environmental problems like fast growing urban slums with inhuman living conditions (Walsham, 2010, p.21). All these effects contribute to desperate economic situations for most migrants to survive in their native place, and as a consequence, they become resilient to a certain degree to cope with them to the extent possible. When they are unable to bear it any longer they try to migrate (Hunter, 2005).

Although environmental degradation may be one of the factors resulting in migration (Push factor) there must be certain underlying factors like economic, political or social (Hugo, 1996), on one hand and certain facilities the migrants enjoy or perceive to enjoy in the destination (Assam), so as to encourage them to migrate (pull factor). Large areas of unoccupied land in Assam, the presence of relatives and friends from whom the first hand information can be gathered, facilities enjoyed in Assam and security at the place of destination are some of the factors considered to be important in the case of migration from Bangladesh (Field Survey, 2009-2012).

Millions of poor people in Bangladesh who live in deltaic regions are exposed to severe environmental hazards, with flood risk from sea surges, river flow, and local rainfall events, as well as coastal and riverbank erosion (Asia Development Bank, 2011, p. 47) Some of the environmental factors that have led to migration from Bangladesh are attributed to the Kaptai Dam, Farakka Barrage and the famine in 1974, and hence, are briefly discussed in the following sub-sections.

### **2.9.1 The Kaptai Dam**

Popularly known as the Kaptai Dam, the project was constructed on the Karnaphuli River in early 1960's for the purposes of industrialization and power generation (Samad, 1994). The dam was meant to benefit the local areas with the objectives of supplying hydropower, irrigation, drainage and navigation, flood control and to harvest forest resources (Parveen and Faisal, 2002), but the Kaptai Dam project has had a devastating effect on the indigenous people of Chittagong Hill Tract. The dam inundated 253 square miles, including 10 square miles of reserved forest, almost 54,000 acres of plough-land that accounted for about 40 percent of the district's total cultivable area, homestead of 18,000 families and

approximately 100,000 people were displaced from their homes of which 70 percent were Chakmas (Government of Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Chittagong Hill Tracts, 1975).

An attempt was made to relocate the displaced people (Parveen and Faisal, 2002). The majority of them were relocated to the low lying areas of Langdu, Barkal and Bhaghaichari on the advice of the project officers. Unfortunately these areas also sank under water as the reservoir gradually filled up thus causing the people to be displaced for a second time in 1962 (Parveen and Faisal, 2002). However, this time no resettlement was provided on the pretext that the displaced people were nomadic type. Thus the people in the CHT were left with no adequate compensation whatsoever (Samad and Saleem, 2005).

Many displaced persons left the country; according to some estimates about 40,000 of them went to the sparsely populated states of Mizoram, Tripura, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh of North East India, another 20,000 may have migrated to Burma (Samad, 1998). The Chakma people call this event 'Bara Parang' or the 'Great Exodus'. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IMDC), large numbers of people were also internally displaced and no proper estimates of the IDPs are available either.

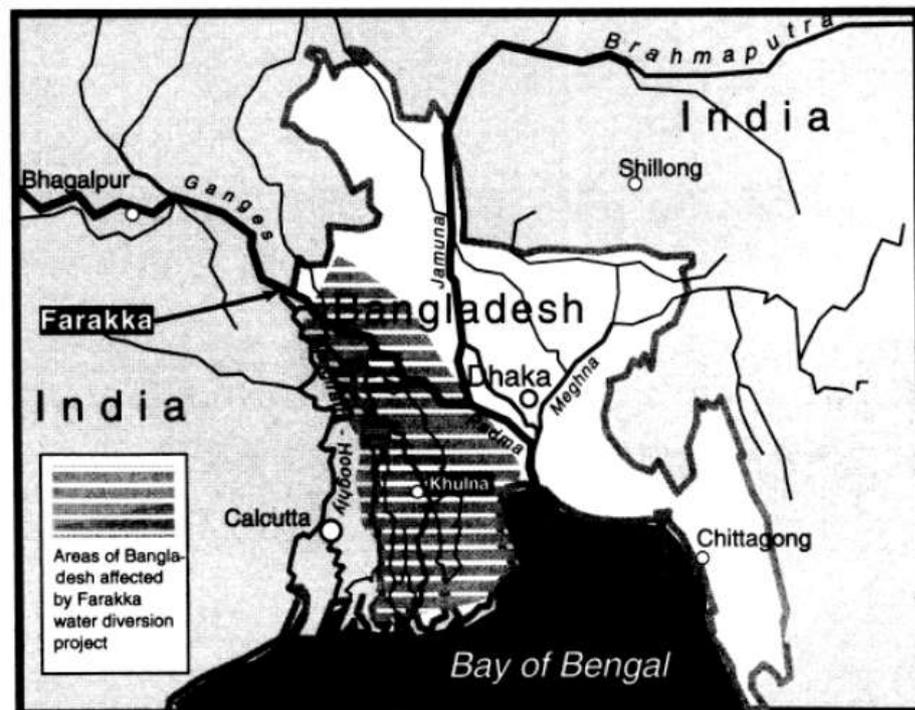
### **2.9.2 Farakka Barrage**

The Farakka Barrage, commissioned in 1975, was built at Farakka about 160 miles north of Kolkata on the Bengal-Bihar border near Rajmahal primarily to improve the navigation capability of Kolkata port, water supply to the city of Kolkata and to enhance inland water transport (Iqbal, 2008). The location map for the Farakka Barrage and the areas of Bangladesh it has affected due to water diversion are shown in Figure 2.1.

The ecological impact of diversion of Ganges water caused by the Barrage has been severe on both sides of the border. Submergence in upstream and soil erosion in downstream are consequences in India and the reduction of water flow in Bangladesh. In the Murshidabad district of West Bengal, India alone more than 600 Sq. Km of fertile land was swept away and more than 500,000 people were displaced. Besides water pollution and destruction the barrage has wrecked a havoc to fishery (Prakash, 2014).

The decrease in river flow in Bangladesh led to an increase in salinity causing soil damage and devastated the fishing industry (Roy, 1997). It has also reduced irrigation capacity and the inland water transport on which Bangladesh is so dependent for transporting passengers and goods of around 11 million tons. However, Roy (1997) notes that the greatest impact was on the fishery and agricultural sector.

**Figure 2. 1: Areas of Bangladesh Environmentally Affected by the Farakka Barrage**



Source: Swain, Ashok: "Displacing Conflict: Environmental Destruction in Bangladesh and Ethnic Conflict in India", *Journal of Peace Research*, 1996, Volume 33, p. 192

With the loss of the agricultural sector and the destruction of fisheries, most agro-based population lost their livelihoods, and was forced to move elsewhere. Initially most migrated to urban areas within Bangladesh but its urban economy was unable to accommodate them all, this left them with no other option but to migrate to India (Swain, 1996). Due to the consequences of the Farakka Barrage an estimated two million people may have migrated since the 1970s to the neighboring regions of West Bengal and Assam (Roy, 1997).

### **2.9.3 Famine in 1974**

The famine of 1974 in Bangladesh was the result of combination of several factors, such as floods, inflation, lack of proper distribution of food grains, hoarding, rise in food price in the world market, a decrease in rural employment and a delay in food aid were some of the major contributing factors of the famine that occurred immediately after independence.

Several cycles of flood that occurred within a year was one of the main causes of famine in Bangladesh in 1974. The floods essentially destroyed both main rice crops, Aus and Aman. Aus is a variety of rice that is harvested in July-August, whereas Aman is another variety planted in July-September and harvested in November-January (Etienne, 1977). The July-August flood of 1974 caused extensive damage to the jute crop also, a major

source of income as well as employment of the rural population, and most importantly, it affected the planting of the next cycle of the Aman crop (Hossain, 1999). As a result there was a shortage of rice in the market. Also due to the flood, landless laborers who otherwise would have been employed in harvesting rice were jobless, with a rise in rural unemployment and the rising price of rice which doubled in three months between July to October in affected areas, the laborers were unable to sustain themselves, there was mass starvation and in late September the Government officially declared it a famine (Tabarrok, 2005).

Inflation was another factor. The process of famine started as early as 1972 when inflation took off in an otherwise price-stable country (Hossain, 1999). Due to the lack of social security and nominal wage rate adjustment to rising price level, the incidence of poverty increased, and by 1974, when inflation exploded a large section of people, especially the lower middle class, fell below the poverty level.

Again the government's failure to procure food timely from abroad was another cause of mass starvation. The failure to procure food was partly due to its own limited foreign exchange resources and the increase in the price of rice in the world market. The delay in the commitment of the US aid also contributed to procurement difficulties (Sobhan, 1984). Over a million people possibly died in the famine from July 1974 to January 1975, although the government's estimate is only about 26,000 (Pilger, 2009). After the famine both Hindus and Muslims started migrating to India in larger numbers, Muslim migration to India outnumbered Hindus at the ratio of 1:3 (Nandy, 2003).

### **2.10 Anti Foreigners Movement in Assam (1979-1985)**

In July of 1979 the All Assam Student Union (AASU) and the newly formed body All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) launched a mass movement in Assam with three broad objectives 1) detection of illegal immigrants 2) deletion of their names from voters lists 3) deportation of illegal immigrants (Assam Background, 2001).

An unusually long movement, which lasted for six years, began with the allegation that about 45,000 immigrants were enrolled in the revised voters' lists in the Mangaldoi Lok Sabha Constituency by-election after the death of its sitting member. The All Assam Student Union demanded deletion of these immigrants' name from the voters list and also wanted them deported from the country (Ahmed, 2006).

The AASU together with the AAGSP launched a mass movement against the foreign nationals in 1979, the agitation gained ground towards the end of the year when the entire administration of the state came to a halt due to the government employees joining the agitation (Assam Background, 2001). There were meetings, picketing, strikes and a mass signature campaign.

The parliamentary election of 1979-80 was boycotted by the people, except in the Cachar district of Assam. The flow of oil to the rest of India was obstructed, schools and colleges

were shut down. Guha (1980) noted that the movement mobilized hundreds and thousands of people without any violence over the months. A militant organization, The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) was formed on April 7, 1979. At the beginning ULFA adopted an anti-foreigners platform of deportation and detection and operated within AASU and AAGSP, but later a secessionist turn was seen in their ideology as they demanded independence of Assam from India. In December 1979 Assam was declared a disturbed area and was put under presidential rule, and the army was deployed to crush the movement (Assam Background, 2001).

In spite of opposition from local people, an election was held in 1983. Only the tribal population and minorities participated in the election. In retaliation to their participation in the election, a large number of people of the minority community, about 1,753 were killed in Nellie a place in Morigaon district north east of Guwahati the capital of Assam in February 1983 (Hazarika, 2000). Other areas also were affected by violence such as Gohpur and even in Nalbari district where Hindus were killed (Guha, 1980). After the election with the victory for the Congress party peace was brought to a certain extent in Assam.

There were a number of talks between the central government and the movement leaders over the foreigners' issues; the primary disagreement was on the cut-off date for detection and deportation of illegal migrants. Although the center had agreed on deportation of illegal migrants with the movement leaders, it was, however, firm on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1971 as the cut-off date for deportation as against the 1951 cut-off date as demanded by the movement leaders.

In 1983 the Foreigners Act of 1946 was replaced by the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, commonly known as the IMDT act in Assam. This Act further complicated the detection of illegal migrants as the burden of proof of citizenship lied on the complainant and the police, but not on the accused which was contrary to the Foreigners' Act (The Assam Tribune, 2005).

In the meantime Assam saw the birth of militant groups like, NDFB (National Democratic Front of Bodoland), ULFBA (United Liberation Front of Barak Valley), MULTA (Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam), UPDS (United People's Democratic Solidarity), DHD (Dima Halim Daogah), ACF (Adivasi Cobra Force), KLO (Kamatapur Liberation Organization), HPC-D (Hmr People's Convention-Democracy), UPDS (United People's Democratic Solidarity), Black Widow, All Adivasi National Liberation Army, KLNLF (Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front) and other inactive terrorist/insurgent groups<sup>17</sup>. This led to a serious deterioration of law and order in the state with incidence of violence, killings and other anti-social activities.

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<sup>17</sup> South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2011 at [www.satp.org/.../states/assam/terrorist\\_outfits/index.html](http://www.satp.org/.../states/assam/terrorist_outfits/index.html)

On August 15, 1985 the Assam Accord<sup>18</sup> was signed between the central government, and the Agitation leaders and 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1971 was agreed as the cut-off date on both sides for detection and deportation of foreign nationals. Several issues were discussed in the Accord, such as: the base year for detection and deletion; deportation of illegal migrants; speedy economic development of the state; safeguard of culture, language, identity and heritage of Assamese people; improvement in education, science and technology; issuance of citizenship certificate; secured international border to prevent infiltration; introduction of relevant laws to prevent encroachment of tribal lands in tribal belts and blocks, and to maintain the birth and death registries.

Soon after the accord election was declared in Assam and a new political party known as the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) was formed by the agitation leaders who contested the election and captured power in the state in 1985, but the new government of AGP could not do much on the foreigners issue due to several reasons (Ahmed, 2006). "The formation of new government at Dispur apparently sealed for good any prospect for reviving the movement" (Ahmed, 2006, p.2). After the anti-foreigners movement, migration from Bangladesh to Assam have somewhat been reduced.

### **2.11 Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983**

The salient features of the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983, more commonly known as the IMDT Act are:

- This Act was implemented only in Assam by Parliament of India
- The responsibility of detecting and deporting foreign nationals was shifted from the executive and vested to quasi-judicial tribunals
- The credentials of citizenship of a person in question lies not on the accused, but with the complainant and the police (Bezboruah, 2004)

The act replaced all previous acts such as Entry into India Act, 1920, Foreigners Act, 1946 or the immigration (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950 or the Passport Act of 1967, or any rule or order made under any of the said Acts in force for the time being (The IMDT Act, 1983).

The Act defines an Illegal Migrant as the one who is a foreigner who entered India on or after 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1971 without valid documents such as Passport or valid travel documents or any other lawful authority on their behalf. The Act was discriminatory as it had been made applicable only to the state of Assam; while other Indian states like West Bengal, Tripura or Meghalaya who were facing similar problems were not enforced with this law (The Assam Tribune, 2005).

In contrast to the 1946 Foreigners Act where the burden of proof of citizenship if question arises lied upon the person accused of being a foreigner (The Assam Tribune, July, 2005),

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<sup>18</sup> The Assam Accord was an accord signed between All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) on one side and the Government of India on the other side in New Delhi on August 15, 1985 with the then Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi as the witness.

in the IMDT Act the credentials of citizenship of a person in question lies not on the accused, but with the complainant and the police (Saikia, 2002).

The IMDT Act and the rules under it were burdensome for anyone to point out the illegal immigrants as every application made requires (i) a declaration by another person residing in the same jurisdiction as the applicant, (ii) declaration that the particulars mentioned in the application are true to his knowledge, information and belief, and (iii) a fee of 10 rupees. Once a complaint is made the case goes to the Tribunal. The introduction of the IMDT Act slowed down the process of detection and deportation of foreigners in Assam. Since the enforcement of the Act only 1,494 illegal migrants had been deported from Assam (Saikia, 2005).

The Act was nullified by the Supreme Court of India on July 7, 2005 and the Foreigners Act of 1946 was reinstated and made applicable to Assam as in the rest of the country (The Assam Tribune, 2005).

## 2.12 Conclusion

In closing, the genesis of migration from Bangladesh to Assam is very complex. Therefore, it is not adequate to look at migration from Bangladesh to Assam superficially purely as an inherent human aspiration for better economic situation for the self, there is a need to look at both direct and indirect causes affecting it. Recently, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and the National Population Research and Training Institute (NPRTI) of Bangladesh have officially reported that over 900,000 Hindus left the country during 2001-2011 (The Assam Tribune, August 29, 2013). This probably explains why the percentage of the population in Bangladesh who are Hindus has declined to 8.5 percent in 2011 from 9.2 percent in 2001 (see Table 2.7). In contrast, the Muslim share of the population in Bangladesh increased from 89.7 percent to 90.4 percent and the other 1.1 percent belongs to other religious groups such as Buddhist, Christian etc. The BBS data further indicated that the decline in the percentage of the Hindu population has continued since the birth of Bangladesh in 1971. It used data since 1974 to highlight this trend (see Table 2.8).

**Table 2. 7: Population of Bangladesh by Religious Groups, 1971-2011**

Group	1971 (percent)	1981 (percent)	1991 (percent)	2001 (percent)	2011 (percent)
Muslim	85.4	86.6	88.3	89.7	90.4
Hindu	13.5	12.1	10.5	9.2	8.5
Others	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Bangladesh Statistical Bureau, 2001 and 2011, Population Census, 1981 and 1991, Hazarika, 2000

**Table 2. 8: Population Trend for Hindu and Muslim in Bangladesh, 1974-2011**

Year	Percentage in Total Bangladesh's Population		
	Muslims	Hindus	Others
1974	85.4	13.5	1.1
2001	89.7	9.2	1.1
2011	90.4	8.5	1.1

Source: Bangladesh Statistical Bureau, various years

The migration that started with the inclusion of Assam to British India in 1820 resulted in a large scale chain migration which led to an established migration corridor between Bangladesh and Assam which has influenced the present day migration. The various events that contributed to the migration are presented in Table 2.9.

**Table 2. 9: Various Events that contributed to Migration and their flow**

Events	Remarks
<b>The Colonial Period</b>	According to 1931 Census, Part I Report, total number of migrants in this period was 475,000.
Agricultural labourers	
Labourers in development project	
Colonization Scheme, 1928	
Total migrants according to 1931 Census	
<b>Grow more food scheme</b>	Documented record of the number of migrants unavailable.
<b>Land settlement Policy, 1941</b>	
<b>Partition Period</b>	Total number of refugees due to partition from 1946-1951 (according to Census 1951, Table D-V[1]) was 272,075
Noakhali Riots in 1946	
Partition of India 1947	
1950 sporadic Violence across East Pakistan	
<b>Post Partition Period</b>	
<b>1965 India-Pakistan War (to Assam and West Bengal)</b>	1 million (Hazarika, 2000)
<b>Liberation of Bangladesh in 1971</b>	347,555 (Bangladesh Documents, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1972)
<b>Migration of Chakmas in the 1980s</b> (India-wide)	70,000 (Seabrook, 2000)
<b>Farakka Barrage</b> (to West Bengal and Assam)	2 million (Roy, 1997)
<b>Kaptai Dam</b> (Assam, Mizoram, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh)	40,000 (Samad, 1998)
<b>Post-1971 Economic and political causes</b>	Not available

The events listed in the table triggered the flow of population from Bangladesh and helped set up an established migration corridor. Being part of the same country before independence, plus the presence of kin and friendship on both sides of the border helped form an established network. With the presence of an established network along with economic inequality and poor border control this migration both temporary and permanent is likely to continue.

This chapter has provided a brief history of migration from Bangladesh to Assam since the British period and its causes both direct and indirect is presented. In addition, its relevance to this study is justified. In the next chapter, a brief description of the methodology used in this study will be presented.

## Chapter 3: Research Methodology

“When we talk of research methodology we not only talk of the research methods but also consider the logic behind the methods we use in the context of our research study and explain why we are using a particular method or technique and why we are not using others so that research results are capable of being evaluated either by researcher himself or by others.”

Prof. KTS Sarao, Visiting Professor, Maison des Sciences de L’Homme, Paris, France, 2009, P.8

### 3.1 Introduction

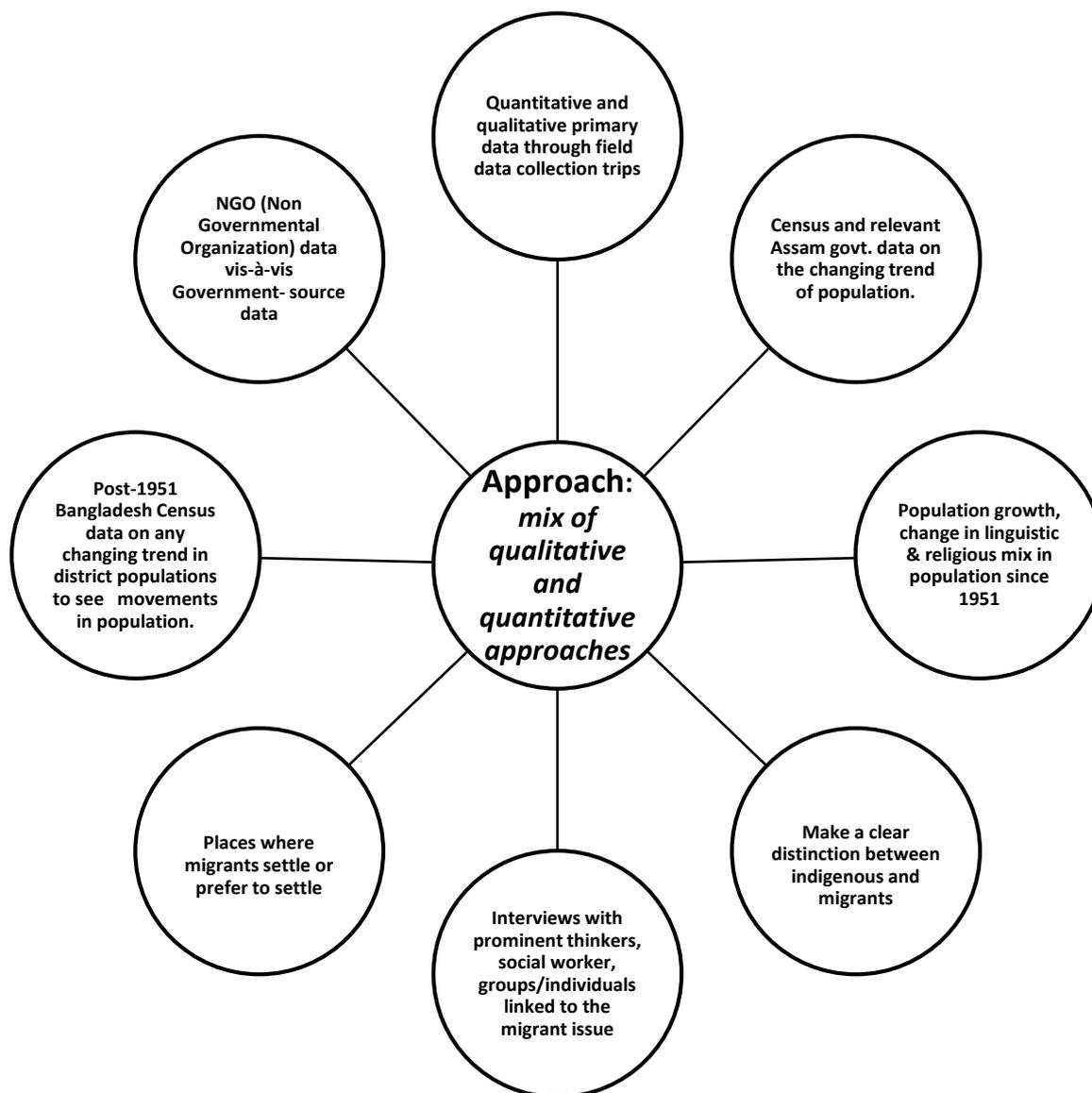
This study combines “a set of principles, outlook and ideas (methodology) with a collection of specific practices, techniques and strategies (method of inquiry)” to analyze various aspects of migration from Bangladesh to Assam (Neuman, 2004, p.2).

A major challenge of this study was to gather reliable data. Migration from Bangladesh to India, including Assam has become a highly charged political, social and economic divisive issue not only at the state and federal level but also at the international level. The statistics on migration vary depending on the sources, and are controversial and skewed often reflecting the biases of the entity publishing them. To make matters worse, the results from the 2011 census were not available at the time of writing. In addition the 1981 census could not be conducted in Assam, and widely divergent estimates of migrants are found for this period (Saikia *et al.*, 2003, p. 1). Also during the 1961 census, most of the Muslim migrants stated their birthplace as Assam rather than their actual birthplace (Dey, 1971) further complicating the migration analysis. Therefore, a key component of this study was to conduct quality assurance and quality control for all primary and secondary data. Gathering first hand data through an independent survey, although a potentially logistical challenge, was essential to establish the credibility of the study. A number of field trips were undertaken during the period 2009-2012 and the data collected helped fill a vacuum of primary data on the subject. The methodology adopted for this research is a ‘Mixed Methodology’, which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods. The objective of using mixed methodology was to draw on the strengths of both methods and minimize their weaknesses (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Mixed methods were used to obtain and analyze primary data together with other sources of data from the public domain to gain an understanding of the migration process, its causes and impact. Sources of data are presented in Figure 3.1. Primary data were collected via field surveys among migrants in particular locations in Assam using a specially developed and structured questionnaire. In addition in-person interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were also undertaken. Secondary data were collected from the public domain, such as government census records, statistical records, journals, publications,

articles, newspapers, etc. and interpreted. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed, compared and incorporated to obtain valid conclusions. Additional background data used in this study are presented in Appendix 4 as Tables A4.1 to A4.7.

**Figure 3. 1: Conceptual Depiction of Use of Data from Various Sources in the Analysis**



### 3.1.1 Quantitative Data

“Quantitative analysis normally involves a large amount of objective data arranged in pre-defined categories making for relatively straightforward analysis.” (Parker, 2010, p. 97).

Based on existing knowledge, structured questions were formulated for developing new knowledge which would help policy makers and other researchers.

“Embedded within these questions are the concepts that need to be translated into research entities” (Bryman, 2004, p. 8).

Therefore, all concepts that were identified as relevant to this study were transformed into questions for fieldwork. Because this survey is centered on people and their lives, sensitivities and circumstances, one had to be very careful in formulating questions. To ensure that no ethical boundaries would be crossed or violated in the questions, the questionnaire was approved by the University of Adelaide Ethics Committee. A sample of the questionnaire used in the survey is provided in Appendix 5. The following concepts were addressed in the survey:

- **Migrants’ motivation to move from Bangladesh to Assam:** As conditions at the place of origin as well as destinations play a role in motivating migration, the survey explored the micro level factors involved in the decision to migrate. The results are discussed in Chapter 4.
- **Patterns and trends in mobility from Bangladesh to India, and particularly to Assam:** Factors associated with unforeseen events as discussed in Chapter 2 created conditions that led to large scale migration. In addition, economic, social, political and environmental factors together with established network and a porous border, created the conditions to facilitate movement. The questionnaire assessed the pattern of mobility and the results are discussed in Chapter 5.
- **The political, economic and environmental impacts of migration on the state as a whole:** Here the impact of migration on the political and economic fields was investigated. Also a separate questionnaire was developed to investigate the effect of environmental changes on the National Park due to settlement and the results are presented in Chapters 7 and 8.
- **Migrants’ adjustment at their destinations:** The questionnaire incorporated questions pertinent to migrants’ experiences after they entered Assam, and how they were faring in terms of their livelihoods, standard of living, successes and failures. Equally important was, how their offspring have fared in India. An attempt was also made to gather quantitative data on their family characteristics, financial status, and land holdings and/or any other tangible achievements and the details are presented in Chapter 9.

### **3.1.2 Qualitative Data**

Qualitative research utilizes open-ended interviews to explore and understand attitudes, opinions, feelings of individuals or groups regarding the subject being studied (Wolcott, 1990). It was realized that some aspects of the topic could not be obtained through quantitative study without detailed qualitative information; as a result, both quantitative and qualitative methods, were considered suitable for this study. A major goal of qualitative analysis is to explore a number of variables from a single subject, in order to obtain a detailed and comprehensive understanding of an event including how variables relate to and influence one another (Parker, 2010, p. 98).

The perceptive analysis together with in-depth interviews, discussions and observation have special value in qualitative research as it helps generate more in-depth information about complex and sensitive subjects, such as the migration from Bangladesh to India. As mentioned earlier, in-depth interviews were conducted with a few selected individuals who are aware and associated with the issues related to the subject. Therefore, the purposive sample method, as proposed by Patton (1990) was used. To this end, for the research to be more meaningful, appropriate respondents have to be identified. However, the most important aspect in qualitative methods is the researcher's ability to distinguish between factual statements that are either demonstrated or empirically verified.

In this study, quantitative data gathered through field surveys have been complemented by supportive qualitative data that were collected by interviewing prominent persons who have been dealing with the migrants and their problems; such as, Administrative Officers, Local Police Officers, Block Development Officer, Census Personnel, Journalists, Border Security Force Persons, Members of the Gaon Panchayat (Village Governing Body), Student Leaders, Minority Student Leaders, Leaders from the Migrant Community, Leaders of Political Parties, Educationist, Business People, Other Research Scholars, NGO's and also some key people belonging to both majority and minority communities who have lived in the migrant areas for an extended period. After the initial interviews, a few follow-up interviews were conducted for clarification and for further information from some key respondents.

In addition to the collection of information, the qualitative research also allowed the respondents to express their inner feelings about issues and concerns that are important to them, and it led to more information and a better understanding of migration and its effect on the State.

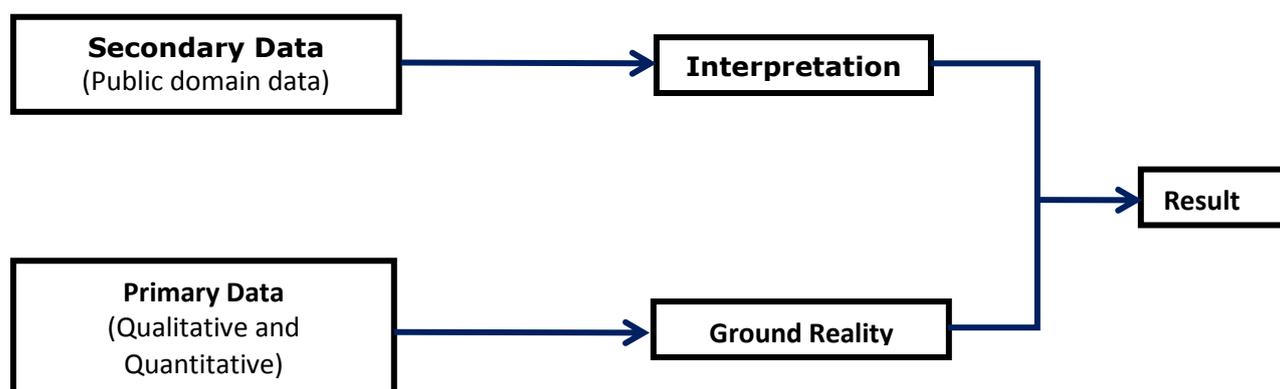
### **3.1.3 Secondary Data**

The Censuses of India (Assam), Directorate of Economics and Statistics (Assam), Directorate of Char Areas Development Assam, and other Government Documents are useful sources of recent information about population growth, the socio-economic characteristic of respective areas, the religious composition of population in various districts and the state as well as sex ratios, population density and linguistic

demographics. Information collected by these entities were used as a starting point to better understand the various aspects of the state’s demographic, socio-economic, as well as development as a whole, that could link to migrants and migration.

Information gathered through the above sources has certain limitations. As stated earlier the Census could not be conducted in Assam in 1981, and the 2011 Census results were not fully available at the time of writing. On the other hand, many migrants, especially the Muslims, have declared their birthplace as Assam in Censuses (Pakyntein, 1961, Dey, 1971), further complicating the data analysis process during the census. In addition, the Socio-Economic Survey Report of Char Areas of Assam has not been updated since 2002-2003. To compensate for such inadequacies of data, updated information was collected from the Directorate of Char Areas Development, Census Assam, Directorate of Economics and Statistics (Assam), and from Political Leaders and Leaders of Minority Communities, as well as recent Government Documents. Information was also gathered from newspapers, articles, journals, research publications, etc. to fill the vacuum. These various sources of data provided useful complementary information about migration from Bangladesh to Assam. Results were obtained by interpreting secondary data and combining them with the primary data collected, as conceptualized through Figure 3.2.

**Figure 3. 2: Data synthesis and analysis approach**



This chapter rationalizes the choice of the research approach adopted in the study, and then, explains the theoretical framework followed by description of the process of data collection and analysis. Finally, it concludes with a reflection of the author’s experience in the data collection process and the limitations faced.

### **3.2 Research Methodology**

#### **3.2.1 Ontological, epistemological and methodological issues in research**

The three elements – ontology, epistemology and methodology shape and define the conduct of an inquiry (Popkewitz *et al.*, 1979), and together are the central theme of discussion in Social Science research. The appropriate choice of research approach is the basis of a research study and different approaches have been identified and discussed by

different authors in different periods of times; such as, Bryman 2004, Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, and Blaike 1993. However, there is no single methodology that can be applicable to all research problems (Schulze, 2003). The selection of a research methodology for a particular study depends on the paradigms, ontology, epistemology and methodology that guide the research activity (Tuli, 2010).

As shown in Table 3.1 “quantitative” researchers mostly work within a positivist/post positivist paradigm and are more interested in numerical analysis (Blaike, 1993). A positivist oriented researcher regards reality to already exist and can be discovered by using conventional scientific methodologies (Bassegy, 1995). They do not consider themselves as an important variable in their research studies and choose to remain detached from what they study (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). Here research findings are usually represented quantitatively in the form of figures, tables, graphs, charts, diagrams which speak for themselves (Bassegy, 1995, Cohen *et al.*, 2000, Mutch, 2005). Therefore, their study is based on external reality (ontological position) and is objective (epistemological position) as shown in Table 3.1.

On the other hand, qualitative researchers view their subjects as research participants; they use an inductive method of study and see the reality as a human construct (Mutch, 2005). They adapt interpretive approach to investigate, interpret and describe social realities (Bassegy, 1995, Cohen *et al.*, 2000). The findings in qualitative research are usually written in descriptive form (Mutch, 2005).

Both positivism/post-positivism and constructivist-interpretive paradigms were used in this study.

### **3.3 Rationale for Choosing a Mixed Method Approach**

“The ultimate goal of any research project is to answer the questions that were set forth at the beginning of the project. Mixed methods are useful if it provide better opportunities for answering our research questions. Also, mixed methods are useful if it helps researchers to meet the criteria for evaluating the goodness of their answers.” (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, p. 14).

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used in this study as shown in Figure 3.3. Face-to-face interviews in the house of the respondent, community centers or in the courtyard of influential people, markets, healthcare centers were undertaken by using questionnaires to collect quantitative data. In-depth interviews, focus group discussions, group discussion, observations and literature review were also conducted on issues related to the study topic. The process of data collection and analysis is conceptualized as shown in Figure 3.3.

“A major advantage of mixed research method (quantitative and qualitative) is that it enables the researcher to simultaneously answer confirmatory and exploratory questions and therefore verify and generate theory in the same study” (Punch, 1998, p. 15).

**Table 3. 1: Different paradigms that could guide the study**

<b><i>Paradigm</i></b>	<b><i>Ontology</i></b>	<b><i>Epistemology</i></b>	<b><i>Methodology</i></b>
Positivism / Post positivism	Reality exist out there and needs to be discovered	Most objective method to get close to reality, to remain independent of the study, see things in terms of the laws of cause and effect	Explaining through measurable data by using highly standardized tools like questionnaire and SPSS etc.
Constructivism / Intepretivism	Views reality as socially constructed, it holds that people make their own sense of social realities, it treats its subjects as research participants and not an object, it tries to discover internal realities	Nature of inquiry is interpretive and purpose is to understand a particular phenomenon, the knower and the known are inseparable	In-depth discussion, interviews, focus group discussion, observation, literature review
Pragmatism	Realities that is socially constructed	Constructionist	Experimental research, analysis etc.

Compiled from Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Bassey, 1995; Neuman, 2003; Tuli, 2010. Ukwatta, 2010

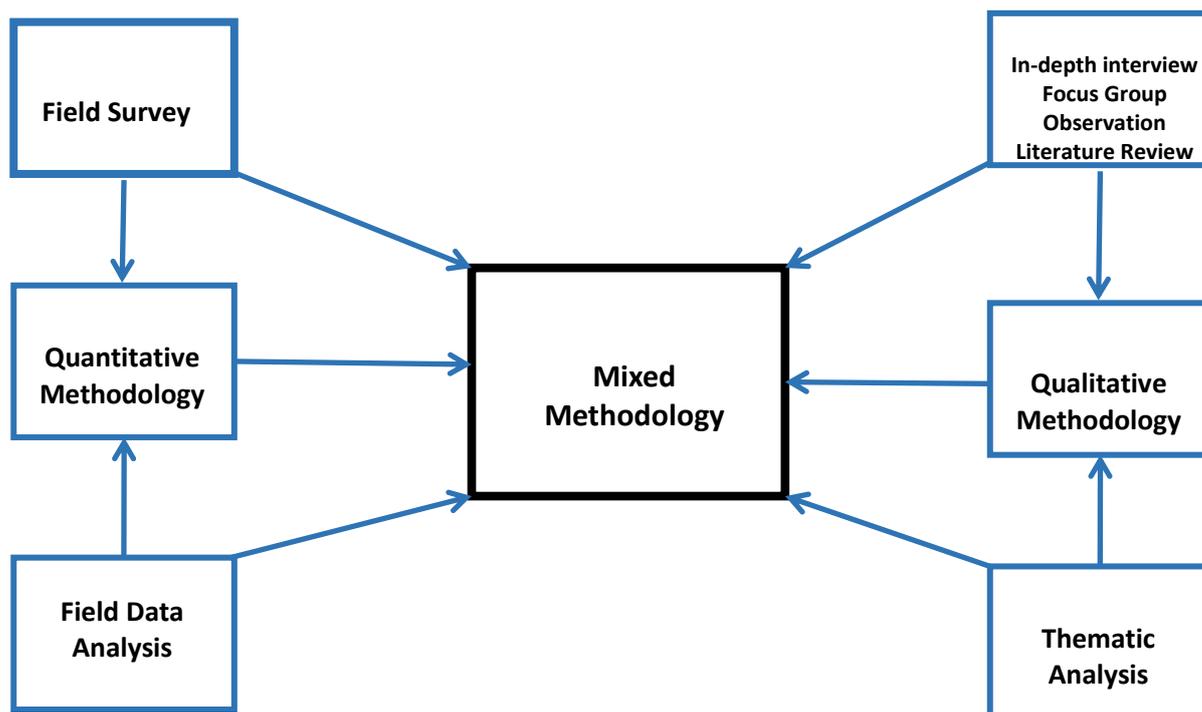
The objective of using a mixed methodology in this study was not to combine or replace both approaches (Quantitative and Qualitative), but rather to draw on the strengths of both and to minimize their weaknesses in a single study (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

According to several researchers (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, p.14 and Axin and Pearce, 2006, p.2), the mixed methodology is appropriate to migration studies because:

- It can answer research questions that a single methodology cannot.
- It provides better (stronger) inferences.
- It provides the opportunity for presenting a greater diversity of divergent view.
- It counterbalances the weakness of one method by the other method.
- It provides a comprehensive empirical record about the research topic.

Combining both methods was more useful for this research as it helped to simultaneously answer confirmatory and exploratory questions and therefore verify and generate theory in the same study (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003).

**Figure 3. 3: Research Methodology Used**



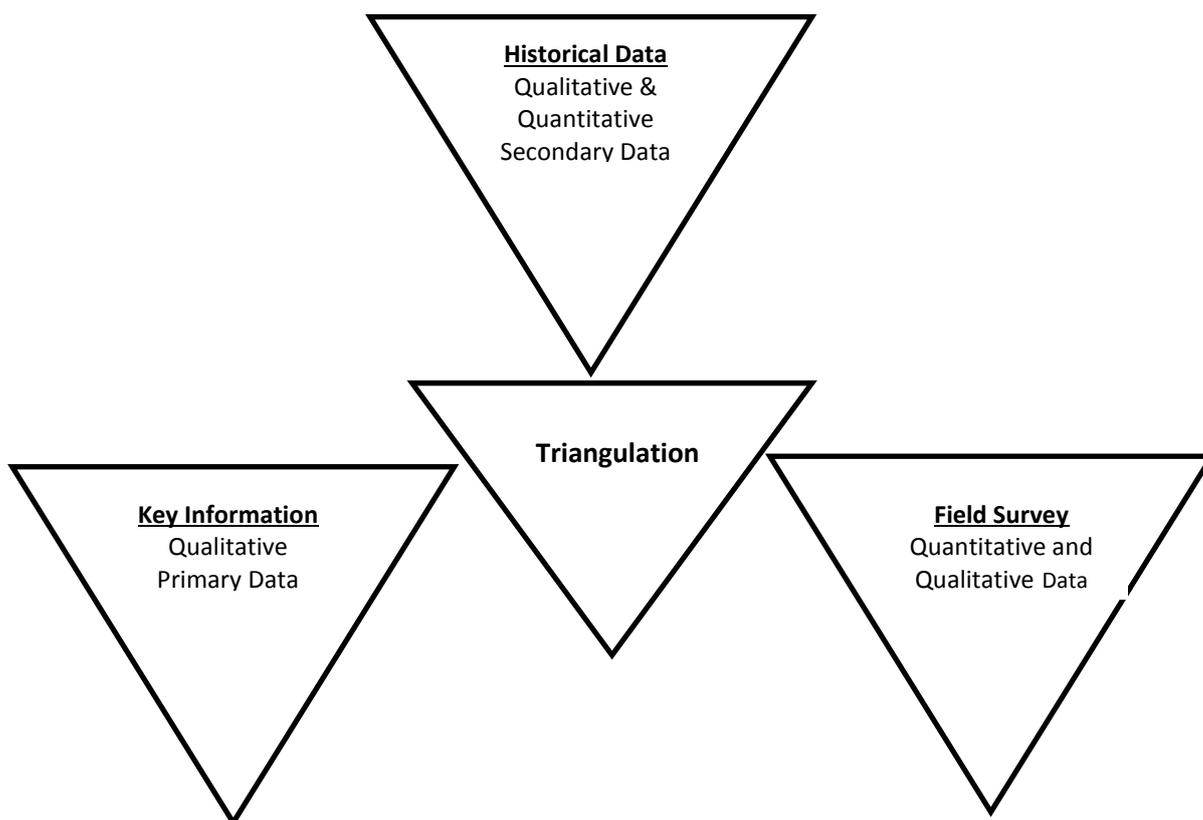
### 3.3.1 Triangulation

Triangulation is observing something from different angles or from multiple viewpoints in order to improve accuracy (Neuman, 2006). Triangulation is one of the elements of mixed methodological approach. It is selected as a design when a researcher uses a number of different methods in an attempt to confirm, cross-validate or corroborate findings within

a single study (Green, 1989; Morgan, 1998). Figure 3.4 outlines the method adopted in this research.

- In this study both qualitative and quantitative methodology was used and therefore the method triangulation was used.
- Data triangulation had occurred at the collection and analysis phases since the questionnaire contained both closed and open-ended questions, and also data was collected from two different religious groups, and from key persons in the community.

**Figure 3. 4: Mixed Methodology Triangulation**



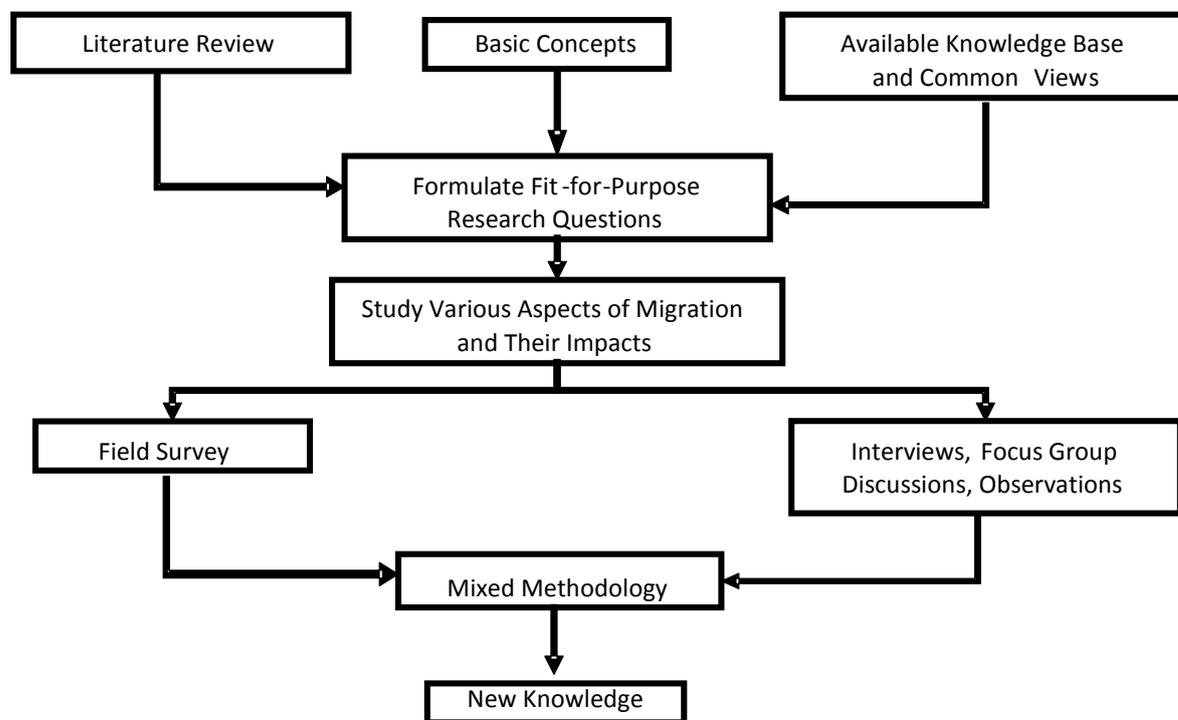
### **3.4 Theoretical Framework**

As shown in Figure 3.5, the concepts that were identified as relevant to this study were transformed into questions to be asked of respondents during fieldwork. Key questions were included in the questionnaire, like the underlying causes of migration, respondents places of origin, the route they took in migrating to Assam, whether they still maintained any links with their country of birth, their current social status at the place of destination compared to the economic and social conditions they enjoyed at their original home at the time of migration. They were also asked about their settlement process in Assam. In addition, questions relating to environmental factors in Bangladesh at the time of

migration were asked to establish if there was a link between environmental disasters and migration.

A semi-structured questionnaire was developed for collecting information regarding the research questions for interviews, focus group discussion, and group discussion

**Figure 3. 5: Summary of Methods and Data Sources for the Study**



### 3.5 Data Collection

#### 3.5.1 Survey Research

This involved obtaining information from individuals, both Muslim and Hindu migrants from Bangladesh residing in Assam, India. The type of information collected followed the approach suggested by Neuman in 2004. Following are some salient features of this approach:

- **Facts:** The front-end of the questionnaire dealt with factual information like age, ethnic composition, educational level, number of family members and respondent's occupation. These questions helped determine the socio-economic impact of this migration.
- **Behavior:** Questions regarding migrants' children and family members and how they were faring in Assam, what links they maintained with Bangladesh and the duration of their stay in Assam was among the typical questions asked to study the behavioral aspects.
- **Attitudes/opinions:** Some questions were posed addressing issues pertinent to attitudes and opinions.

The migrants that the researcher approached were generally friendly and answered questions but with certain apparent limitations and hesitation. In some cases, they were

not accustomed to such questioning, and hence were, hesitant at the beginning of the conversations. Invariably in all cases, the author noted that the interviewees were very measured in their responses with no off-the-cuff type responses. When in doubt, they asked for an explanation or elaboration of the question.

Survey Research offered some definite advantages (Creswell, 2003; Dane, 1990):

- As a researcher, it offered an opportunity to work with the respondents more effectively. It also helped to clarify any issues in doubt on the spot first hand.
- Any unclear questions or answers could be further probed either in the same or in another mutually-agreed upon session.
- Obtaining information directly is a more efficient method of data collection than through mail delivery, which is very poor in migrant areas. It also allowed the possibility of interviewing more individuals than planned. On several occasions interviewees themselves introduced more migrants to the author for the interview.

### **3.5.2 Selection of Study Areas**

The first step in the selection of study areas was to identify the districts to be studied by using the following criteria:

***Concentration of migrant population and their spatial distribution from Census data:*** Census migration tables (see Appendix 4, Tables A4.1, and A4.2) for the years 1991 and 2001 were studied and compared. The districts with a large number of migrants in the two consecutive decades of 1991 and 2001 were identified and selected. It was seen that the migrant population per census data were not evenly distributed in all 23 districts (certain districts have been further reorganized for administrative purposes resulting in the formation of 4 more new districts, totaling 27 districts at present).

Tables A4.1 and A4.2 in the appendix show that more than 50 percent of the migrants resided in the districts bordering Bangladesh and their adjacent districts. By studying the census migration table of 1991 by birthplace, 10 districts in the Brahmaputra valley were identified initially as migrant dominated areas: Kokrajhar, Dhubri, Goalpara, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Kamrup, Darrang, Marigaon, Nagaon and Dhemaji. A similar analysis of the migration tables of 2001 by place of birth, the districts of Kokrajhar, Dhubri, Goalpara, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Kamrup, Darrang, Marigaon, Nagaon and Sonitpur showed more migrants than the other districts in the Brahmaputra Valley. Comparing the districts with the higher number of migrants in 1991 and 2001, the districts of Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Morigaon and Nagaon were considered initially for field work.

***Analysis of the population growth rate in the districts of Assam from Census Records:*** By analyzing and comparing the latest available data from the 2001 Census with those from the 1991 Census, while also by taking into account the records of births and deaths during 1991-2001, the natural population growth in a district was estimated. The

occurrence of migration in a district was assumed when its recorded population increase was higher than the rate of natural increase. However, according to a concept paper on *Birth and Death Registration* in India by Pria, only about 39 percent of births and 20 percent of deaths were registered in Assam in 2000<sup>19</sup>. The percentages of births and deaths registered were much less in previous years. With such a differential under-registration of births and deaths, where the extent of registration of deaths was about half of those of births, it is possible that the rate of natural increase would be highly overestimated. Consequently, this could lead to an underestimation of migration.

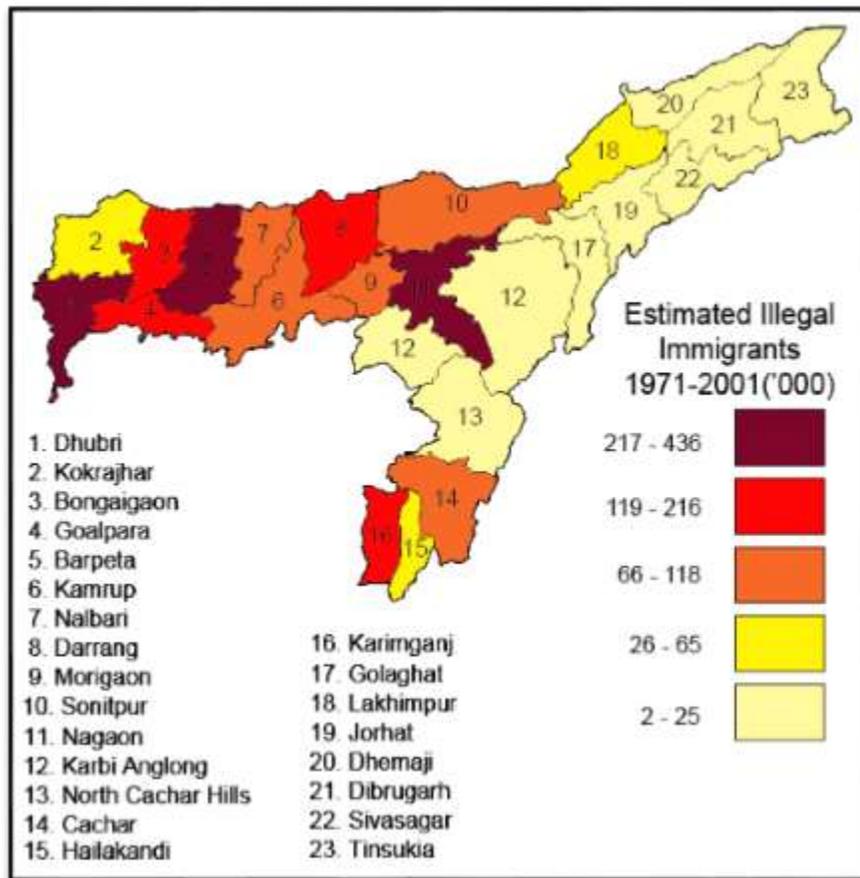
The districts where the population growth was higher than the average population increase for Assam, it was estimated that the excess growth in that particular district was due to migration, and they were identified as districts to be considered for study. In the subsequent analysis, a more thorough study was conducted specific to the selected districts to ensure that a clear distinction is made between in-country migrants and migrants from Bangladesh, because the excessive population growth could also be due to in-country migration rather than from Bangladesh. This was done by comparing the number of in-migrants from the Census data and subtracting it from the total number of migrants to estimate the number of migrants from outside. Again from the total number of migrants calculated, the total number of overseas migrants, other than from Bangladesh was subtracted to obtain the number of migrants from Bangladesh. Based on the 1991 and 2001 census data, the number of Bangladesh nationals by birth residing in Assam was studied and the districts with more migrants from Bangladesh were identified. It was seen that the districts identified with a larger number of migrants were also the districts with higher population growth. Therefore, the districts that matched these two criteria were identified.

**Demographic Makeup in the Area:** The 2001 Census breakdown of Assam's population on the basis of religion showed two-third Hindus, 31 percent Muslims and only 3.7 percent Christians (see Table 3.2). The religious composition of the population of a particular district was analyzed to ascertain that the study area was relevant; that is, it has an area occupied by large concentration of migrants from Bangladesh, as depicted in various population maps (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7) were used to screen and select the study areas. Figure 3.6a shows the estimated district-wise distribution of illegal migrant population during 1971-2001, whereas Figure 3.6b presents the overall district-wise population increase during 1991-2001. Notice that the districts surrounding Bangladesh or in close proximity to it had registered a higher population increase.

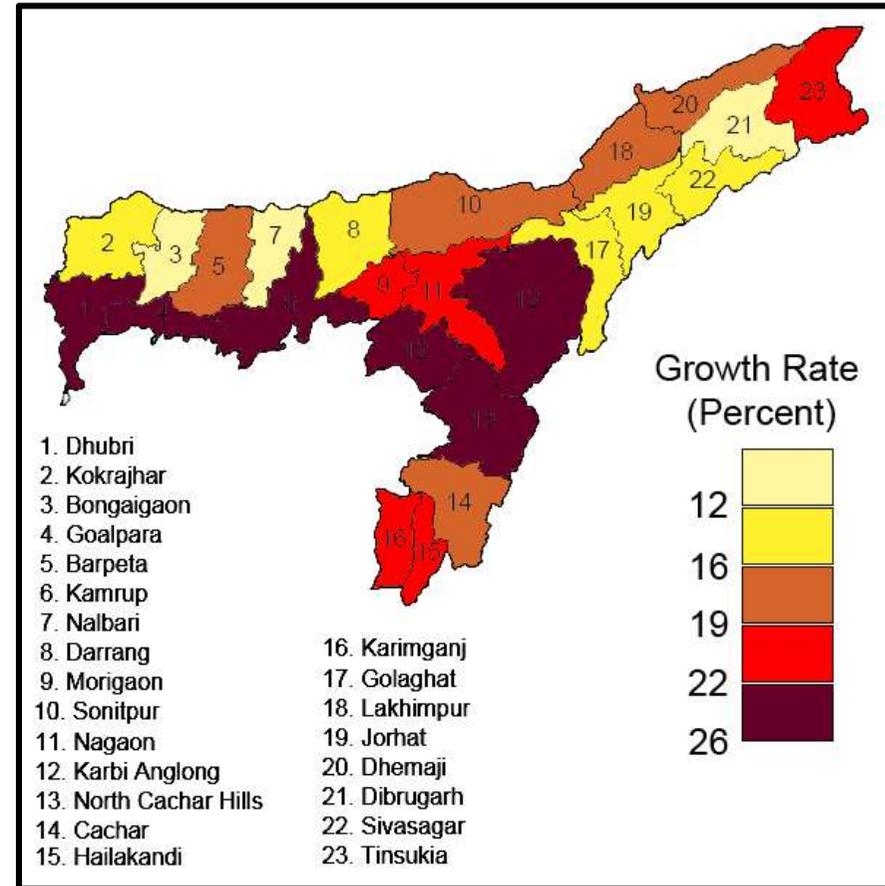
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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.mponline.gov.in/quick%20links/pdfdocs/Birth%20and%20death.pdf> by Anil B. Pria, as viewed on July 25, 2015

**Figure 3.6: (a) Estimated Illegal Migrant Population Distribution in Assam, 1971-2001; (b) Overall Population Increase, 1991-2001**



**(a)**

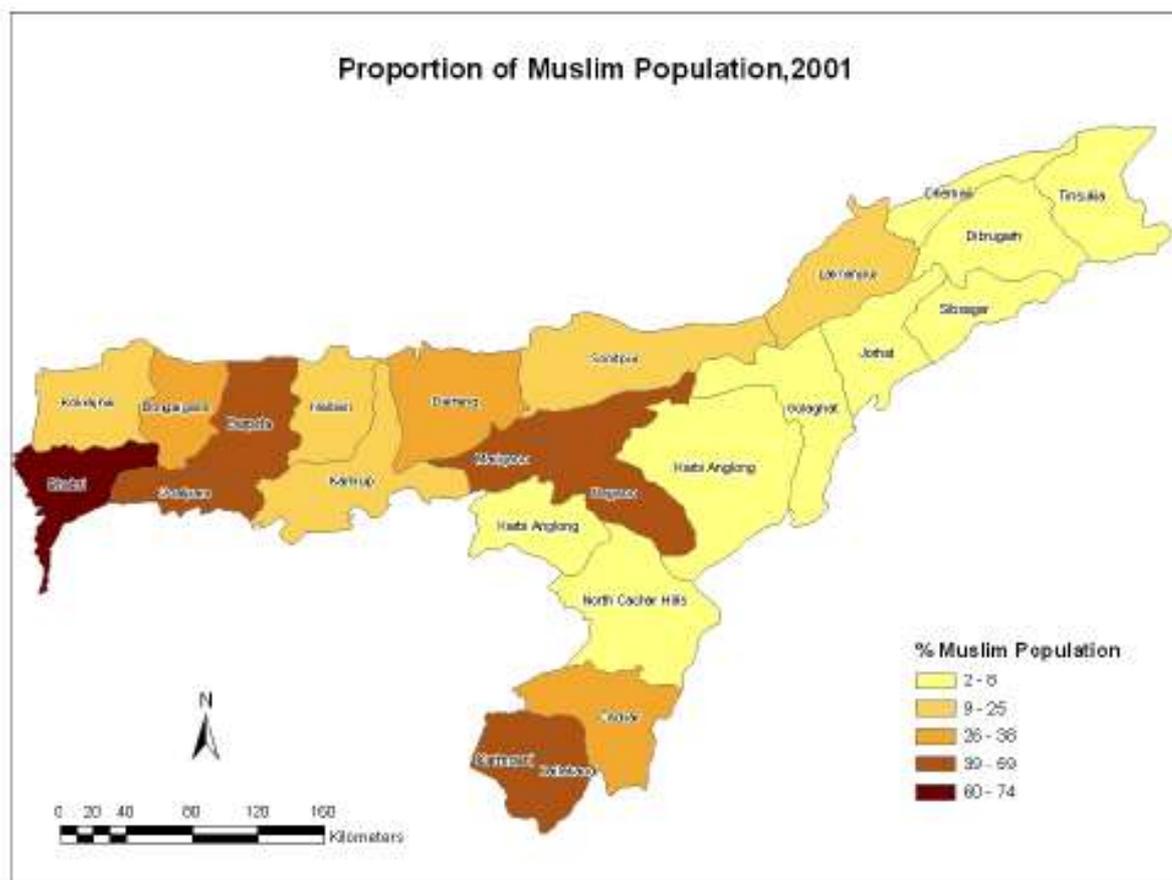


**(b)**

Source: Saikia, 2005

Field surveys were targeted specifically in the districts known to have established migrant pockets, where the population growth had been high and the proportion of Muslim population was above 50 percent. Unlike in the other Indian states of West Bengal and Tripura, where Hindu migrants from Bangladesh far outnumber the Muslim migrants, in Assam the Muslim migrants far outnumber the Hindu migrants.

**Figure 3. 7: Proportion of Muslim Population in Assam**



Source: Saikia, 2005

In an interview with the Commandant of the unit of the Border Security Force (BSF) of India stationed in Assam in 2009, he had estimated that 85 percent of migrants from Bangladesh to Assam were Muslims. His statement supports the trend observed through the 2001 Indian Census, where the six administrative districts bordering Bangladesh or are in close proximity to Bangladesh (Dhubri, Goalpara, Nagaon, Barpeta, Karimganj and Hailakandi), the Muslim population formed the majority (over 50 percent) and exhibited significant decadal increases (see Table 3.2 and Figure 3.7).

Similar data extracted from the earlier 1991 Census records are presented in Table 3.3 for comparison. From a comparative analysis of 1991 and 2001 population statistics of Assam, it is evident that the Muslim population is the highest in the districts that share its border with or are close to the border of Bangladesh, particularly the districts of Dhubri (74.3 percent), Goalpara (53.8 percent) Karimganj (57.6 percent) and Hailakandi (54.8 percent)

reflecting a continuing influx from Bangladesh. Barpeta, another district close to the border and bordering the Dhubri district also has a large proportion of Muslim population.

**Table 3. 2: Population by Religion (Census 2001)**  
(Muslim-majority districts are shown in shaded rows in **bold** font)

District	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Sikhs	Buddhist	Jains.	District Total
<b>Dhubri</b>	<b>405,065</b>	<b>1,216,455</b>	<b>12,477</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>2,119</b>	<b>1,636,567</b>
	<b>24.8%</b>	<b>74.3%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>0.01%</b>	<b>0.02%</b>	<b>0.13%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
Kokrajhar	594,168	184,441	124,270	133	1,574	639	<b>905,225</b>
	65.6%	20.4%	13.7%	0.01%	0.2%	0.1%	100.00%
Bongaigaon	535,464	348,573	18,728	512	330	882	<b>904,489</b>
	59.2%	38.5%	2.1%	0.1%	0.04%	0.1%	100.00%
<b>Goalpara</b>	<b>314,157</b>	<b>441,516</b>	<b>64,662</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>821,055</b>
	<b>38.3%</b>	<b>53.8%</b>	<b>7.9%</b>	<b>0.01%</b>	<b>0.02%</b>	<b>0.05%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Barpeta</b>	<b>662,066</b>	<b>977,943</b>	<b>5,267</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>1,646,418</b>
	<b>40.2%</b>	<b>59.4%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.02%</b>	<b>0.01%</b>	<b>0.04%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
Nalbari	873,749	253,842	18,495	117	899	907	<b>1,148,009</b>
	76.1%	22.1%	1.6%	0.01%	0.1%	0.1%	100.00%
Kamrup	1,836,153	625,002	44,257	4,797	1,709	8,897	<b>2,520,815</b>
	72.8%	24.8%	1.8%	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%	100.00%
Darrang	868,532	534,658	97,306	520	1,871	888	<b>1,503,775</b>
	57.8%	35.6%	6.5%	0.03%	0.1%	0.1%	100.00%
Sonitpur	1,287,646	268,078	115,623	1,451	3,864	1,210	<b>1,677,872</b>
	76.7%	16.0%	6.9%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	100.00%
Lakhimpur	702,881	143,505	36,667	680	1,362	148	<b>885,243</b>
	79.4%	16.2%	4.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.02%	100.00%
Dhemaji	548,780	10,533	6,390	142	1,199	203	<b>567,247</b>
	96.7%	1.9%	1.1%	0.03%	0.2%	0.04%	100.00%
Morigaon	405,302	369,398	759	69	84	308	<b>775,920</b>
	52.2%	47.6%	0.1%	0.01%	0.01%	0.04%	100.00%
<b>Nagaon</b>	<b>1,106,354</b>	<b>1,180,267</b>	<b>21,473</b>	<b>3,055</b>	<b>1,058</b>	<b>1,246</b>	<b>2,313,453</b>
	<b>47.8%</b>	<b>51.0%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
Golaghat	813,263	74,808	52,277	1,063	3,230	403	<b>945,044</b>
	86.1%	7.9%	5.5%	0.1%	0.3%	0.04%	100.00%
Jorhat	927,858	47,658	18,610	1,562	2,385	675	<b>998,748</b>
	92.9%	4.8%	1.9%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	100.00%
Sibsagar	927,706	85,761	28,488	1,563	4,020	267	<b>1,047,805</b>
	88.5%	8.2%	2.7%	0.2%	0.4%	0.03%	100.00%
Dibrugarh	1,075,878	53,306	45,040	2,638	4,152	877	<b>1,181,891</b>
	91.0%	4.5%	3.8%	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%	100.00%
Tinsukia	1,029,142	40,000	62,403	2,328	13,692	953	<b>1,148,518</b>
	89.6%	3.5%	5.4%	0.2%	1.2%	0.1%	100.00%
Karbi Anlong	670,139	18,091	117,738	379	6,402	226	<b>812,975</b>
	82.4%	2.2%	14.5%	0.1%	0.8%	0.03%	100.00%
N.C. Hills	131,492	4,662	50,183	220	857	15	<b>187,429</b>
	70.2%	2.5%	26.8%	0.1%	0.5%	0.01%	100.00%
<b>Karimganj</b>	<b>470,708</b>	<b>527,214</b>	<b>8,746</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>1,007,645</b>
	<b>46.7%</b>	<b>52.3%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>0.01%</b>	<b>0.03%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Hailakandi</b>	<b>223,191</b>	<b>312,849</b>	<b>5,424</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>542,144</b>
	<b>41.2%</b>	<b>57.7%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.02%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
Cachar	886,761	522,051	31,306	628	742	1,385	<b>1,442,873</b>
	61.5%	36.2%	2.2%	0.04%	0.05%	0.1%	100.00%
<b>Assam</b>	<b>17,296,455</b>	<b>8,240,611</b>	<b>986,589</b>	<b>22,519</b>	<b>51,029</b>	<b>23,957</b>	<b>26,621,160</b>
	<b>65.0%</b>	<b>31.0%</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Statistical Hand Book, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam

**Table 3. 3: Religion-based Population Distribution in Districts in Assam, 1991**

District	Population in Numbers				Population in Percentage		
	Hindus	Muslims	Other Religions	Total Population	Hindus	Muslims	Other Religions
Dhubri	382,817	938,789	10,869	1,332,475	28.7	70.5	0.8
Kokrajhar	531,477	154,801	114,381	800,659	66.4	19.3	14.3
Bongaigaon	511,968	264,393	26,162	802,523	63.8	33.0	3.3
Goalpara	266,499	335,275	66,364	668,138	39.9	50.2	9.9
Barpeta	557,925	776,974	50,760	1,385,659	40.3	56.1	3.7
Nalbari	787,485	202,653	26,252	1,016,390	77.5	19.9	2.6
Kamrup	1,486,476	467,544	46,001	2,000,021	74.3	23.4	2.3
Darrang	786,332	415,323	97,205	1,298,860	60.5	32.0	7.5
Sonitpur	1,142,228	189,859	92,200	1,424,287	80.2	13.3	6.5
Lakhimpur	598,946	109,010	43,561	751,517	79.7	14.5	5.8
Dhemaji	449,482	7,114	22,214	478,810	93.9	1.5	4.6
Marigaon	348,989	289,835	858	639,682	54.6	45.3	0.1
Nagaon	979,395	893,322	20,454	1,893,171	51.7	47.2	1.1
Golaghat	713,131	58,859	56,106	828,096	86.1	7.1	6.8
Jorhat	815,320	37,651	18,235	871,206	93.6	4.3	2.1
Sibsagar	810,445	69,260	28,278	907,983	89.3	7.6	3.1
Dibrugarh	951,763	46,814	43,880	1,042,457	91.3	4.5	4.2
Tinsukia	867,825	30,095	64,378	962,298	90.2	3.1	6.7
Karbi Anglong	562,102	10,421	90,200	662,723	84.8	1.6	13.6
N.C. Hills	109,957	3,340	37,504	150,801	72.9	2.2	24.9
Karimganj	414,731	406,706	5,626	827,063	50.2	49.2	0.7
Hailakandi	196,269	246,016	6,764	449,049	43.7	54.8	1.5
Cachar	770,803	419,150	25,432	1,215,385	63.4	34.5	2.1
<b>Assam</b>	<b>15,042,365</b>	<b>6,373,204</b>	<b>993,684</b>	<b>22,409,253</b>	<b>67.1</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>4.4</b>

Source: Census of India, 1991

Similarly, the district of Nagaon saw a high growth of Muslim population from 47.2 percent in 1991 to 51 percent in 2001. The Census results of 1991 and 2001 show a lower population growth in Assam compared to that of India. Although population increase was lower in Assam, the increase of Muslim population in nine districts of Assam, however, were far higher than non-Muslim population (see Table 3.4 and Figure 3.8).

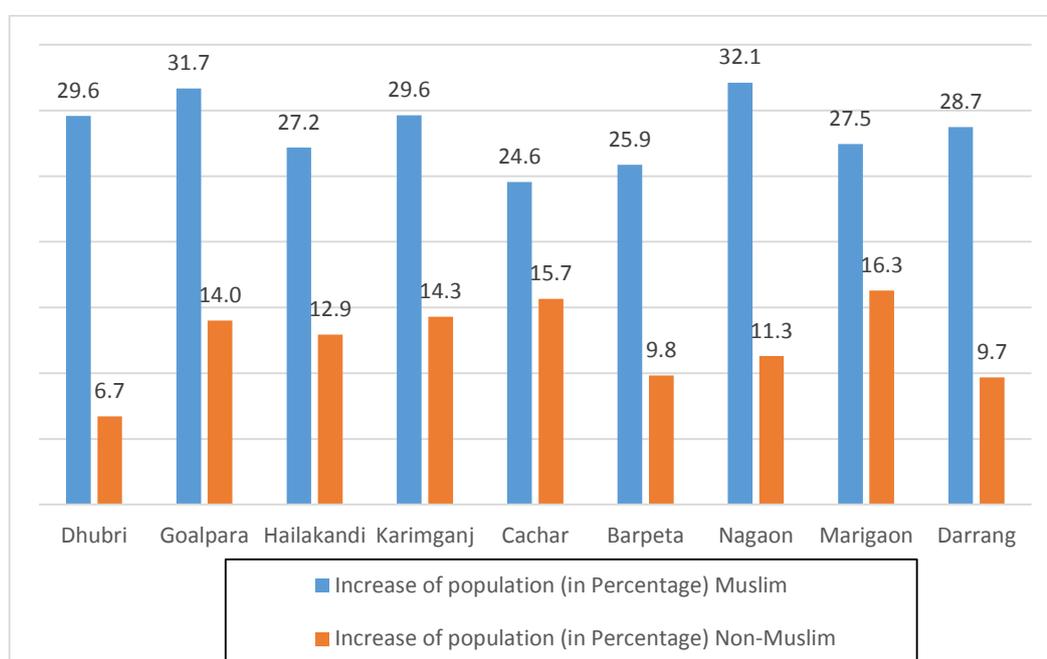
The districts with the higher number of migrants were also the districts with higher population increase when compared to the average increase of Assam, and also were hosts to the larger Muslim population.

**Table 3. 4: Increase of Muslim Population in the Border and their adjacent districts in Assam (1991-2001)**

Districts of Assam	Increase of population (in Percent)		
	Muslim	Non-Muslim	Total
Dhubri	29.6	6.7	22.8
Goalpara	31.7	14.0	22.9
Hailakandi	27.2	12.9	20.7
Karimganj	29.6	14.3	21.8
Cachar	24.6	15.7	18.7
Barpeta	25.9	9.8	18.8
Nagaon	32.1	11.3	22.2
Marigaon	27.5	16.3	21.3
Darrang	28.7	9.7	15.8

Source: Appendix VIIIA, Page 232 of the book 'Illegal Migration from Bangladesh', edited by Kumar, B.B., 2006, Concept Publishing Company.

**Figure 3.8: Comparison of Muslim and Non-Muslim population increase (in percentage) in the Border Districts of Assam during 1991-2001**



Taking into consideration the above statistics, three districts, Dhubri, Barpeta and Kamrup Metropolitan in the Brahmaputra valley were selected as the areas focus for this study. In addition, limited field surveys were also conducted in Nalbari, Marigaon and Kamrup (Rural) districts because these districts, although not bordering Bangladesh, are known to have a number of hamlets with sizeable migrant population.

The newly formed district of Kamrup Metropolitan was selected for study of the urban migrants, as well as the manual workers who were hired either from the established pockets of migrants of Bangladesh origin, or were directly hired as laborers from Bangladesh via middleman. Most of these migrants were not permanent settlers in the city. The district also appears to serve as a shelter for migrants whenever some natural disasters occur or during ethnic conflicts (Taher, 2011). Some of them were transitional

in that they migrated back to their respective previous location in Assam after the normalcy returned. However, a sizeable number of them chose to stay back and make a living in the metropolitan area. They took up manual jobs as domestics, daily wage earners at construction sites, vendors and hawkers on the streets or daily laborers and rickshaw or push-cart puller. Taher (2011) argues that these classes of people have given rise to an informal labor market in Kamrup Metropolitan district, which is also the capital city of the state of Assam.

### **3.5.3 Description of the Study Areas**

Presented in Table 3.5 are the basic demographic profiles of the districts in Assam where most of the field work was undertaken.

***Dhubri District:*** The Dhubri district, as shown in Figure 3.6 is a bordering district of Assam with Bangladesh. It is a major point of entry for Muslim migrants from Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2009; Mirza, 2012). It is to this district that migration of East Bengal Muslim peasants started in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Taher, 2011). The 2001 Census data records its population density at 585 person/sq. km, making it one of the highest among the districts of Assam. However, its literacy rate stood at only 48.2 percent, the lowest among all districts. The 2001 Census recorded a Muslim population comprising 74.3 percent, compared to a Hindu population of only 24.7 percent. In terms of occupational distribution, the district of Dhubri recorded the second highest number of agricultural laborers at 111,890 and cultivators at 174,991 out of 470360 workers in the district.

***Barpeta District:*** Barpeta district shared a common border with the Dhubri district in the west. It is another district of Assam where the Muslim population was 59.4 percent whereas the Hindu population was 40.2 percent (Census, 2001). This is the place where a 'Colonization Scheme' was implemented during the British Rule in 1928 and landless Muslim peasants were brought in from the former East Bengal and were settled for agricultural purposes. The population density, according to the 2001 Census stood at 508 persons per sq. km and with a higher literacy rate of 56.2 percent than of the Dhubri district. The number of agricultural laborers stood at 81,929, whereas, 209,834 were recorded as cultivators in the 2001 Census which is 56 percent of workforce of the district.

***Kamrup Metropolitan District:*** The Kamrup Metropolitan District was formed in 2003 by bifurcating the Kamrup district to better streamline administration and improve the security situation in the metropolitan area which hosts Assam's capital, Dispur. It has the largest urban population (1,037,011) as recorded in the 2011 Census. It is an urban area with the primary occupation being the service and business sector. Because it is an urban area, it has a more developed infrastructure in terms of roads, healthcare and education. It can be termed as one of the most developed districts in Assam. According to the 2001

Census, its population density stood at 836 persons per sq. km with a literacy rate of 83.3 percent.

**Table 3. 5: Demographic Profiles of Dhubri, Barpeta, Kamrup Metropolitan and Nalbari Districts**

Statistics	Dhubri			Barpeta			Kamrup Metropolitan		Nalbari		
	1991	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011
No. of Household	222195	297121	414674	218196	290494	337929	n/a	293112	164942	202708	155248
Population	1324404	1637000	1949258	1385659	1647201	1693622	1059578	1253938	1016390	1148824	771639
Sex Ratio	950	946	953	939	941	953	n/a	936	936	939	949
Density/ Km <sup>2</sup>	473	585	1001	427	508	742	836	679	450	509	733
Decadal percent increase	56.5	23.6	24.4	43.0	18.9	21.4	n/a	18.3	49.3	13.0	12.0
Literacy Rate, percent	38.4	48.2	58.3	43.2	56.2	63.8	83.3	78.2	55.9	67.2	78.6
Muslim Population, percent	70.5	74.3	n/a	56.1	59.4	n/a	n/a	n/a	19.9	22.1	n/a
Hindu Population, percent	24.7	28.7	n/a	40.3	40.2	n/a	n/a	n/a	77.5	76.1	n/a

Source: Statistical Handbook, Assam, 2010 and Census, Assam ([www.census2011.co.in/census/state/districts/assam.html](http://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/districts/assam.html))

\* n/a means not available, as it is not yet published by Census of India, Assam

**Nalbari District:** Bordering the Barpeta district on the west and Kamrup on the south and east, the Nalbari district lies in the western part of Assam. According to the 2001 Census, its Hindu population was higher than its Muslim population (Hindu 76.1 percent, Muslim 24.8 percent). The district literacy rate was 67.2 percent. Total population in the 2001 census was 1,148,824, among which 146,246 were recorded as cultivators and 53,781 as agricultural laborers. Together cultivators and agricultural laborers constituted 52 percent of the total work force of the district.

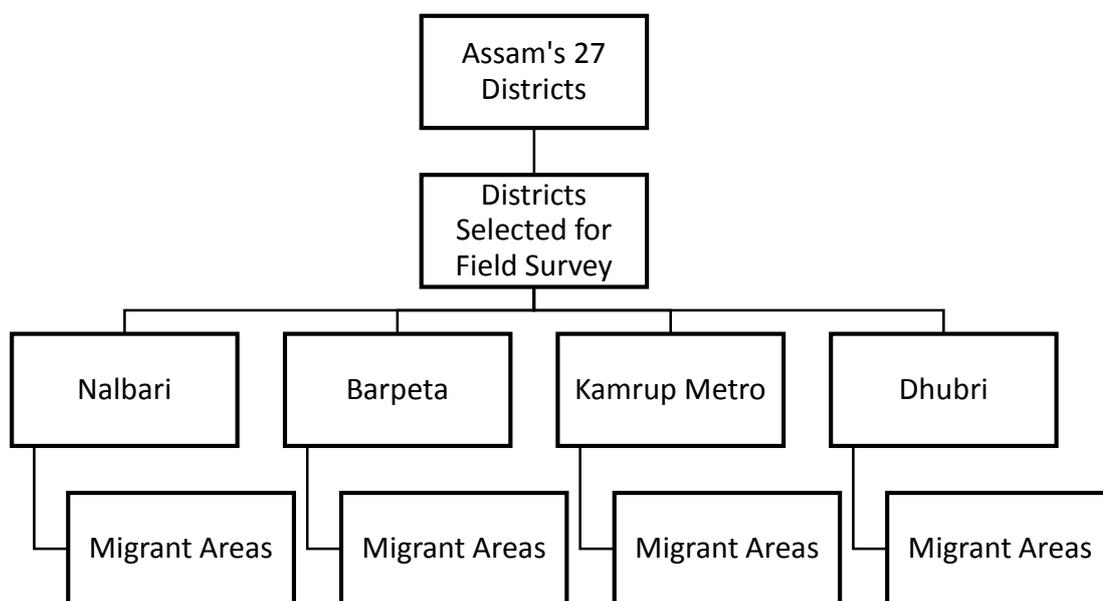
**Marigaon District:** Carved out of the Nagaon district it lays in the central part of Assam. It is another district with high growth in the Muslim population with 47.6 percent Muslims and 52.2 percent Hindus according to 2001 Census. About 58.5 percent of its population was literate and the number of cultivators was 138,083 with 51,855 agricultural workers which was 72 percent of the total work force of the district (Census 2001).

The second step was to select a number of villages or towns from the sample from the districts. The migrants in Assam, especially those from Bangladesh often refuse to accept publicly the fact that they are from Bangladesh for fear of being detected and deported. As noted by Hazarika (2000) in his book 'Rites of Passage' after travelling to the char areas of Dhubri district by boat, and in spite of being accompanied by the then local Member of Parliament, Nurul Islam, he could not find anyone who would claim to be from Bangladesh.

He told the Member of Parliament that “*none of those we had met would proclaim anything but their Indian-ness*” (Hazarika, 2000 p. 120). The migrants simply refuse to accept that they are from Bangladesh.

Based on details collected and confirmed from the village headman, or from the members of migrant community and NGO’s, local residents and leaders of the communities, government officials, a village or a town with significant migrant population were surveyed in four districts; namely. Dhubri, Kamrup Metropolitan, Barpeta and Nalbari and to a limited extent Marigaon and Kamrup districts (Figure 3.9 shows these areas surveyed).

**Figure 3. 9: Selection of Field Survey Areas**



The following modes were adopted to gather data:

- a.** Door to Door survey with a structured questionnaire (see Appendix 5).
- b.** Gathering information via questionnaires from and through public places/venues:
  - i. immigrants who came to primary healthcare centers,
  - ii. in the courtyard of prominent persons in the community, and in villages where the subjects were asked to assimilate,
  - iii. local marketplaces where small business vendors frequent, and
  - iv. building construction sites in urban areas where a sizeable portion of the work force comprises migrants from Bangladesh
- c.** Personal contacts with friends, relatives, retired government officials, NGOs working in the areas where migrants are settled.

In total, there were 193 respondents, representing both Muslim and Hindu migrant communities. The Muslim respondents numbered 123 (63.7 percent) and Hindus 70 (36.3 percent). This breakdown between Hindu and Muslim respondents was reasonable as the pool of Muslim migrants is much larger than that of Hindus. The locations of the survey areas are indicated in the following district maps presented in Figures 3.10 through 3.13.

#### **3.5.4 Sample Selection**

In collecting the primary data through field survey and questionnaire, efforts were made to take into account the following so as to make the study more complete and comprehensive. It included:

- Both rural and urban areas,
- Different ethnic and religious groups (Hindus and Muslims),
- Rich, middle and underprivileged classes
- From different districts and villages.
- Single and family migrants
- Old and recent migrants

It was not possible to use random sampling in this study due to the lack of any sampling frame and also due to the limited cooperation of migrants. Anyone who agreed to talk and answer questions was included. One of the problems that most migration researchers face in adapting probability sampling methods is the lack of comprehensive and accurate sampling frames (Neuman, 2006). Hence, the respondents in this study were selected using 'snowball sampling' procedures where individuals were selected on the basis of information obtained from other individuals or other selected members. Such a technique is suitable when dealing with sensitive topics and when a population is hidden and difficult to identify (David and Sutton, 2004).

#### **3.5.5 Preparation for Field Survey**

Before commencing the work, two sets of questionnaires were prepared based on the theme of the research – one for field survey and the other for in-depth interviews or discussion with key informants. As usual, open-ended questions were used for in-depth interview (Bailey, 1978), and as a guide, a questionnaire with 25 questions was prepared for such interviews. The questionnaire included questions related to various aspects of migration and its impact. This, however, did not preclude additional follow up or relevant questions being put to the respondents during the interview. Most of the interviews took one to two hours to complete.

For the field surveys, local field assistants from the districts surveyed were selected and trained. The questionnaires were translated into the local language and the two most important components of the study - the selection of the study areas and individuals for initial interviews were arranged.

### **3.5.6 Ethical Considerations**

As mentioned earlier, this study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Adelaide, Australia. The respondents and the village head were mostly contacted by mobile phone, and if permitted, were met for discussion. In addition interviewees were also approached personally or through NGOs and personal contacts. First, the survey was explained to them, and they were made aware of the purpose of the study. The information sought from them through the questionnaire was clearly explained to them.

The above method was adopted because most of the respondents were not well-educated and many could not read or write. All respondents were assured that all data collected were confidential, and that in no case, data or their source would be given or divulged to anybody except the researcher and her Research Supervisor. The researcher's Principal Supervisor's '*Letter of Reference*' was very helpful in this regard as it was more valued by the respondents than the researcher's word of assurance (see Appendix 5.2). The respondents were made aware that they had every right to withdraw from the study during the interview or even later. Certain questions in the questionnaire required information on the status of migrant's children and these questions were answered by the parents.

**Figure 3. 10: Map of Dhubri District and Locations in Dhubri District Surveyed for Data Collection**



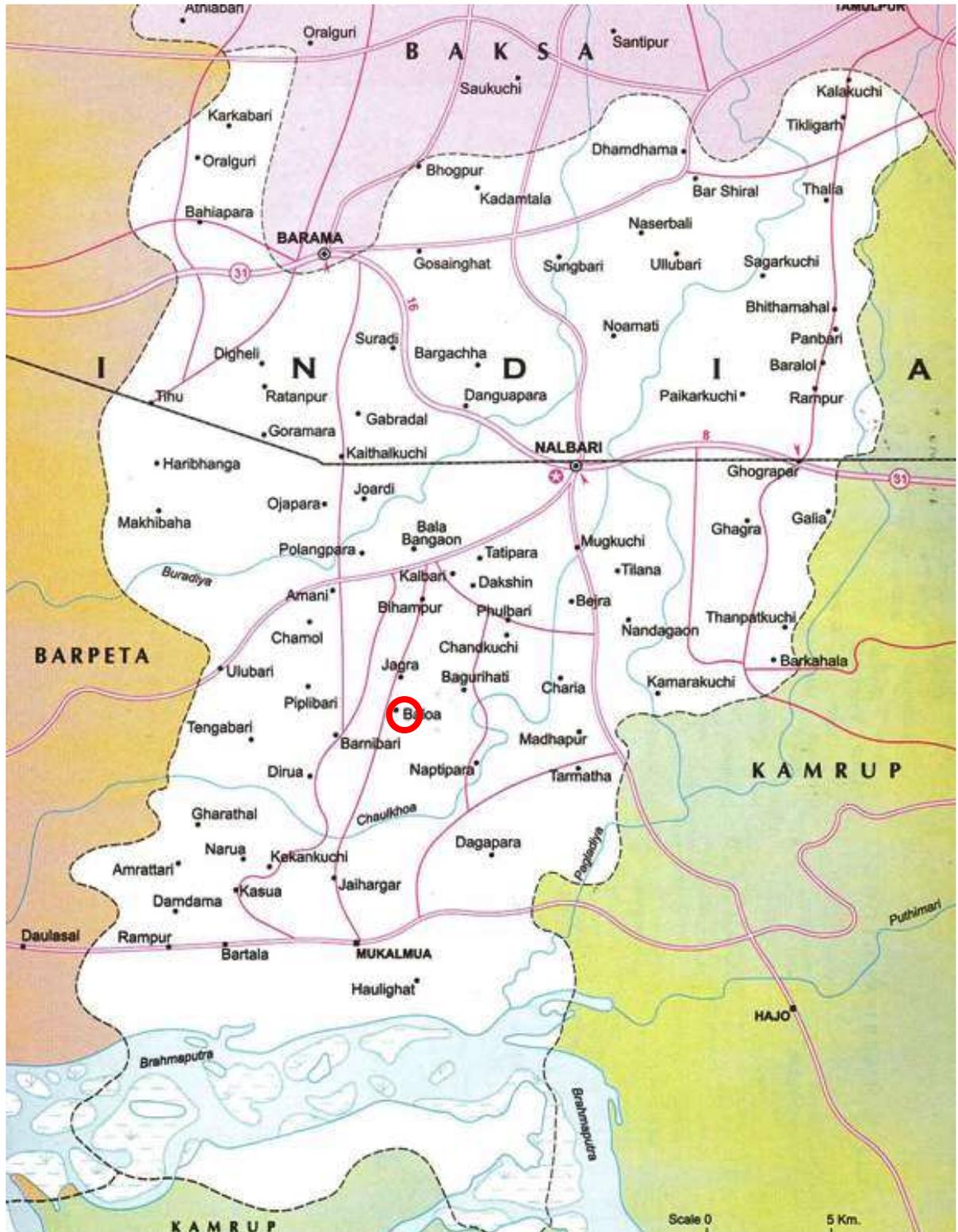
Survey locations are indicated by the red circle [●]. (Smaller constituent villages are also included in these locations.) Map Source: "Assam Tourist Road Atlas", published by Indian Map Service, Jodhpur, 2012, p.18

**Figure 3.11: Barpeta District Locations Surveyed for Data Collection**



Survey locations are indicated by the red circle . Smaller constituent villages are also included in these locations. Map Source: "Assam Tourist Road Atlas", published by Indian Map Service, Jodhpur, 2012, p.13

Figure 3.12: Nalbari District Locations Surveyed for Data Collection



Survey locations are indicated by the red circle (●). Map Source: "Assam Tourist Road Atlas", published by Indian Map Service, Jodhpur, 2012, p.31



strategy for the survey was that the researcher would personally interview all respondents, but this strategy had to be changed.

Although 50 interviews were conducted by the researcher herself, in certain cases it was also necessary to conduct the interviews using the help of the field research assistant. The topic is so sensitive that any outsiders other than the migrant community are looked upon with suspicion, and writing down information was definitely not acceptable to the migrants. Although a number of attempts were made to interview people of East Bengal origin to be followed by filling in the questionnaire, in the majority of cases it was declined and the researcher was turned back, and hence, the strategy had to be changed. The field assistants were from the migrant communities, living in the areas or nearby, and as a result, they had thorough knowledge of those areas and inhabitants. They were introduced to the author by social workers and Non-Governmental Organizations working in those areas, and through other personal acquaintances. Some of them also had worked on similar surveys with various government and NGO agencies.

The author briefed her field assistants on the objective of the field survey and also informed them of the guidelines to be strictly followed with regard to ethics and the way they would need to interact with respondents. The following commonsensical **DOs** and **DON'Ts** were clearly stated as shown in Table 3.6.

**Table 3. 6: Code of Conduct to be followed by Field Surveyors**

<b>Do</b>	<b>Don't</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be polite</li> <li>• Be patient</li> <li>• Use simple words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't try to answer questions for villagers</li> <li>• If one cannot answer a question, skip it</li> <li>• Don't use technical words</li> <li>• Don't argue with anyone</li> <li>• If things go wrong, end the meeting and leave</li> </ul>

Source: NAPA, 2005: A Survey of Rural Cambodian Household

At the end of the briefing, their feedback was sought, including any suggestions they might have had to suit the prevailing local factors better. Based on their feedback and suggestions, a few questions were slightly reworded or altered for enhanced clarity in the migrants' language (Bengali); this helped elicit more definitive answers from the respondents.

The author had also organized a separate detailed briefing on the guidelines before the field assistants set out for certain interior areas to talk to the migrants. They were instructed to ask all the questions in the same sequence and using the same wording, but to be polite to the respondents regardless of their answers and, they were not to answer any of the questions on the respondents' behalf or force any of them to answer them. They were also instructed to leave the space for the answer blank if the respondent chose not to answer a particular question. In case of any disagreement, the instruction was to

stop the interview and leave the site immediately. Under no circumstances, they would enter into any heated arguments with the respondents nor would they speak to respondents in a patronizing manner.

### **3.5.9 Field Work**

Field work could not be completed within a set period of time due to a lack of respondents, as very few people were willing to participate in the study for fear of being detected and deported. At times, the accessibility to migrant areas was also difficult due to bad weather conditions and floods. The researcher had to take a number of trips to Assam to convince people that data collected would be used only for research purposes. Eventually, 123 Muslims and 70 Hindus were interviewed. It is worth mentioning here that the Hindus were more reluctant than the Muslims to be interviewed for various reasons; such as, fear of deportation, harassment from various sources (mainly, by police and anti-migrant groups), and other residents.

Some refused to be interviewed as “migrants” simply because they did not consider themselves as “foreigners” and firmly claimed India to be their own homeland like any other Indian citizens. They were the most vocal group and posed a big hurdle on some of the field survey trips.

Overall, the field work was very tedious, laborious and it involved physically demanding road and boat travel to remote areas with no well-developed transportation networks. Therefore, the author is truly indebted to the field assistants for their dedication and hard work; without their assistance, some of the field survey trips would not have been possible.

### **3.6 Qualitative Data Collection**

As mentioned earlier a separate set of semi-structured questionnaires were used for this purpose and the following methods were applied to obtain further information related to the topic:

- In-depth Interviews
- Focus Group Discussion
- Observation
- Existing literature
- Group discussion with migrants

**In-depth Interviews:** A number of key persons from different backgrounds were selected. People with diverse backgrounds and ethnicity, and who were acquainted with the subject or the topic were selected; and for this snowball sampling methodology was used.

**Focus Group Discussion (FGD):** A few selected people with adequate knowledge of the area and the migrants and their day-to-day activities, such as, the village headman, school

teachers, businessmen, students, influential residents and even housewives and members of NGOs who live or work in a particular area, were selected for discussion on various aspects of migration, migrants and their way of life. In-depth information regarding cause, remittances, landownership, the process of migration, support of various political parties, the process of obtaining documents, crime and their solution, facilities enjoyed by migrants and also the relationship between the old and recent migrants were some of the topics discussed.

**Observation:** This was done by living in the community (from a few days to a week) and by discussing various aspects of the migration and their way of life with the people. The other way was by visiting the same place more than once.

**Group Discussion:** Usually this was conducted while visiting places where the respondents gathered in a particular place, either in the courtyard of the local influential person, or in the open spaces near the housing areas. The usual welcoming tradition to break the ice in such a gathering was to first accept the offer of a cup of tea and betel-nut from the host, followed by some informal small talks, which would gradually lead to the more focused discussions on the topic.

**Existing Literature:** Published articles, journals, government records were studied and analyzed to find existing information on the topic.

The most important aspect in qualitative methods is researcher's ability to distinguish between factual statements that are either demonstrated or empirically verified and the opinions which are non-verifiable, beliefs or attitudes.

### **3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation**

The ultimate goal of a researcher is to analysis data, present it and finally to come to conclusion from the results of data collected by either or both methods --qualitative and quantitative.

"Raw data have no inherent meaning, the interpretive act brings meaning to those data and displays that meaning to the reader through the written report" (Marshall and Rossman, 2006 p. 157).

In this study statistical indicators were used for quantitative data analysis and explanation and thematic analysis was done for qualitative data.

#### **3.7.1 Quantitative Data Analysis**

Data collected via survey were in a raw form. These data were transformed into a systematic format for analysis. In particular, the open-ended questions were transformed into numeric form and coded for computer analysis.

### 3.7.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

In this study the 'thematic framework' was considered appropriate for data analysis. Thus, the qualitative data were analyzed to develop themes that could summarize narrative data. As Huberman and Miles (1994) stated:

"Qualitative studies ultimately aim to describe and explain (at some level) a pattern of relationships, which can be done only with a set of conceptually specified analytical categories. Starting with them (deductively) or getting gradually to them (inductively) both are legitimate and useful paths" (Huberman and Miles, 1994, p. 431).

Here, information collected was in the form of transcripts, so the first step in this analysis was familiarization with the data. To this end, the transcripts were carefully reviewed to identify the main theme in them. Thereafter, the themes so identified were judged with respect to their meaning, relevance and importance to this study. The analytical framework used in the process is shown in Table 3.7.

**Table 3. 7: Framework for Thematic Analysis**

Process	Description of Process
Familiarization	Familiarizing with the data from interviews, documents or observation
Identifying a thematic framework	Recognize emerging themes or issues in the data set
Devising and refining	Making judgments about meaning, relevance and importance to the issue
Indexing	Identifying portions or sections of the data that corresponds to particular themes
Charting	Specific data that were indexed were arranged in charts consisting of headings and sub-headings that were drawn during thematic framework
Mapping and interpretation	Analysis of key characteristics laid out in the charts leading to interpretation of the data set

Source: *Srivastava and Bruce Thomson (Framework Analysis: A Qualitative Methodology for Applied Policy Research, 2009) Ritchie and Spencer, 1994 p. 186)*

Table 3.8 provides the themes identified for qualitative analysis during the course of this study.

**Table 3. 8: Themes Identified for Qualitative Analysis**

#	Themes
1	Reasons for migration
2	Trend, process and magnitude of migration
3	Political Economic and Environmental Impacts of migration
4	Socio-economic characteristics of the migrants and their adjustment in Assam
5	Policy implications and suggestions

### **3.8 Limitations**

It is important to acknowledge that the research had limitations. As mentioned earlier, the political sensitivity of the study topic made it difficult to obtain authentic information from participants. The migrant population was cautious in providing information due to fear of being detected and deported and also organizations were very cautious while providing information. However, continued effort by the researcher through persistent queries to various government agencies, NGOs and societal associations, and a change in strategy to engage local field assistants finally yielded results, and the researcher was able to get firsthand information that was relevant to the study from the migrants, as well as the officials concerned.

The interviews had to be conducted in a number of villages and towns spread over a large area. It was not possible to obtain random sampling for this study because of no appropriate sampling frame. Due to the lack of cooperation from the migrants, the data gathering process obviously was a more time demanding task for the researcher.

### **3.9 Conclusions**

Both quantitative and qualitative or mixed methodology approaches have been used to study the various aspects of migration from Bangladesh to Assam and the relevance of using this approach has been outlined. The justification for the choice of mixed methodology has been discussed based on the different ontological, epistemological and methodological positions. Details of data collection and procedures, as well as analysis, and its limitations are presented to better understand the research technique that was applied in this study. In the next chapter, Chapter 4 the causes of migration from Bangladesh will be discussed based on data collected from the field survey.

## Chapter 4: Motivation for Migration

“Factors motivating migration are complex and intertwined. Motives for migration are frequently multiple. People move for a combination of several reasons, and they are not always aware of all the factors motivating their moves.”

(Datta, p., 2004, Push-Pull Factors of Undocumented Migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal: A Perception Study, p. 346, The Qualitative Report, Volume 9, Number 2, accessible at [http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR\\_9-2/datta.pdf](http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR_9-2/datta.pdf))

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter migrants’ motivation to move to a neighboring country is analyzed based mainly on primary data collected via field survey and by in depth discussion with key informants. All data were collected during 2009-2012. During this period, Assam saw a number of violent incidents, most of them linked to migration from Bangladesh. There was protest against the Government of India’s measure to introduce ‘National Registrar of Citizenship (NRC) card in 2011 (The Sentinel, 2011), election for State Legislature in 2011 (Assam Times, 2011), several incidences of bomb explosions in different towns and cities (see Table A4.9 in the appendix) and the violent incidences in 2012 in the BTC<sup>20</sup> areas which resulted in the displacement of almost 500,000 people from both indigenous and minority communities (Times of India, 2012, December 31). These will be discussed in Chapter 6.

The reasons for migration comprise specific push-pull, demand-supply and networking forces (Martin, 2003, p.6) in addition to other factors, such as illegal trade across the border, proximity of the region with favorable geographic factors, countries’ foreign policies, stability and security at the origin and destination (Haas, 2008). Although there is a vast literature regarding migration, there are no common accepted theoretical frameworks regarding the causes and consequences of migration because

“Social scientists do not approach the study of immigration from a shared paradigm, but from a variety of competing theoretical viewpoints fragmented across disciplines, regions and ideologies” (Massey *et al.*, 1994, p.700).

However Massey (1993) argued that migration cannot be looked at individual levels. International migration might operate on multiple levels simultaneously, and therefore, sorting out relevant explanations is an empirical process in addition to a logical task.

The decision to migrate is complex and multi-dimensional (Hugo, 1994). Inequality between regions or countries is the most obvious determinant for migration to take place (Hugo, 1992, 1993). Other equally significant factors are political and socio-cultural related

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<sup>20</sup> BTC is the acronym for Bodoland Territorial Council which administers Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) with some degree of autonomy within the umbrella framework of Assam as the administrative state. The BTADs are Baksa, Chirang, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon and Udalguri.

determinants (Sukandi and Haris, 2003, p.3). In addition, existing networks that started during the colonial period, as well as facilities and opportunities for a better life at the destinations, also play a major role in migration. During the last few decades a large number of people have migrated from Bangladesh/East Bengal to India and Assam due to economic disparity between the countries. In addition, there are causes (factors) such as the continuation of the tradition of migration that originated as early as the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as certain unforeseen events, notably the partition of India, the 1965 India Pakistan war or the War of liberation of Bangladesh, etc.

Bangladesh is among the most economically underdeveloped countries in the world. Although Bangladesh's official unemployment rate in 2012 stood at 5 percent, almost 40 percent of its population is underemployed and many in its labor force work only a few hours a week at very low wages<sup>21</sup>.

The CIA 2012 report states that 31.5 percent of country's total populace are below the below poverty line (BPL), and in terms of BPL, Bangladesh ranks 98<sup>th</sup> in the world in the Gini index<sup>22</sup>, and 37<sup>th</sup> in terms of the industrial production growth rate. It is a country with a population of 152.5million<sup>23</sup> coupled with high unemployment and underemployment. As a consequence the family income is very low leading to poverty in several regions; therefore, for many the migration to other countries appears to be the only viable option for survival.

"Recent trend of migration indicates that most migrants have been coming from the extremely poor segment of the Bangla society. Some are jobless, some are poorly educated and others are uneducated. Many of them leave their native place as very uneconomic holding of land do not provide them sustenance of life. The others do not have even that much of land. The literacy and employment rate of the districts from where there is a flow of population towards India or to their own cities like Dhaka is revealing. The literacy rate in those districts is invariably low and unemployment rate is high" (Deka, 2011, pp. 40-41).

Table 4.1 presents a comparison between basic key economic indicators of Bangladesh and Assam, although strictly speaking it does not depict a fair comparison between them because Bangladesh is a sovereign nation, whereas Assam is a state within another sovereign nation, India. Nevertheless, in the context of migration, the significant differences in the population growth rates and densities between them are relevant. Lower population density in Assam implied that there was more land available for migrants in

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<sup>21</sup> Source: CIA, 2012, at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2129.html>

<sup>22</sup> **Gini index** measures the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption expenditure among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI>). Gini index was proposed by Italian statistician and sociologist Corrado Gini in 1912.

<sup>23</sup> According to Population and Housing Census of Bangladesh, 2011

Assam. The higher population growth rate in Bangladesh would make the availability of land increasingly scarce to its populace.

**Table 4. 1: Basic Economic Indicators of Assam compared to Bangladesh**  
(Reference years for which data are reported appear within parentheses)

Indicators	Assam <sup>24</sup>	Bangladesh <sup>25</sup>
Population, million	31 (2011)	154.7 (2012)
Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	US\$9.5 billion (2009-10)	US\$115.6 billion (2012)
Gross National Income (GNI) <sup>26</sup> per capita	US\$475 (2010-11) <sup>27</sup>	US\$840 (2012)
Poverty headcount ( percent of population)	34.4 (2004-05) <sup>28</sup>	31.5 (2010)
Employed Persons	1.17 million(2007) <sup>29</sup>	54.1million (2010) <sup>30</sup>
Unemployment Rate ( percent)	6.4 (2011) <sup>31</sup>	5 (2012) <sup>32</sup>
Population Increase (2011)	17.07 (Census, 2011)	22.63 (BBS)
Population Density per Sq. Km	397 (Census, 2011)	1,015 (BBS)

Sources: see the footnotes below for respective sources. US\$ figures, as per conversion rates on August 3, 2015.

## 4.2 Causes of Migration

The decision to migrate is a complex phenomenon; it involves a host of factors both at origin and destination and to some extent the characteristics of the migrant.

“Migration is the outcome of a series of factors which as in the case of Bangladesh... appear to be disconnected. Some of these factors are slow to develop, like land degradation; others are dynamic and immediately visible, such as devastating floods. The reasons for migration thus range from population density, land pressures and land-carrying capacity, erosion of river banks, to even a drop in fish catch and the pull of those who have gone before. There are religious anxieties among smaller groups. These are multidimensional issues. People may also move because they are attracted by the prospects of a better life, not necessarily because they believe they will actually have one. They know that while life may be better, it may not be easier, at least as far as social interaction with the host community is concerned” (Hazarika, 2000, p. 4).

<sup>24</sup> Source: UNDP in Economic and Human Development Indicators Report in <http://www.undp.org.in>

<sup>25</sup> From the World Bank data site: <http://data.worldbank.org/country/bangladesh>

<sup>26</sup> As per the World Bank, “GNI per capita (formerly GNP per capita) is the gross national income, converted to U.S. dollars using the World Bank Atlas method, divided by the midyear population. GNI is the sum of value added by all resident producers plus any product taxes (less subsidies) not included in the valuation of output plus net receipts of primary income (compensation of employees and property income) from abroad.” [Source: <http://data.worldbank.org/country/bangladesh>]

<sup>27</sup> Per Capita Income as reported by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, 2012; as such this is a “state-level” data as opposed to GNI reported for Bangladesh as a nation. Prevailing INR/USD exchange rate during fiscal year 2010-11 varied within the range of US\$0.0225-US\$0.0212 per INR as per <http://www.oanda.com/currency/historical-rates/>

<sup>28</sup> Tendulkar Committee Report 2009, Planning Commission of India ([http://planningcommission.gov.in/reports/genrep/rep\\_pov.pdf](http://planningcommission.gov.in/reports/genrep/rep_pov.pdf)) as reported by the UNDP Economic and Human Development Indicators Report in <http://www.undp.org.in>

<sup>29</sup> Economy of Assam- Assam Online Portal at [online.assam.gov.in/economy\\_of\\_assam](http://online.assam.gov.in/economy_of_assam)

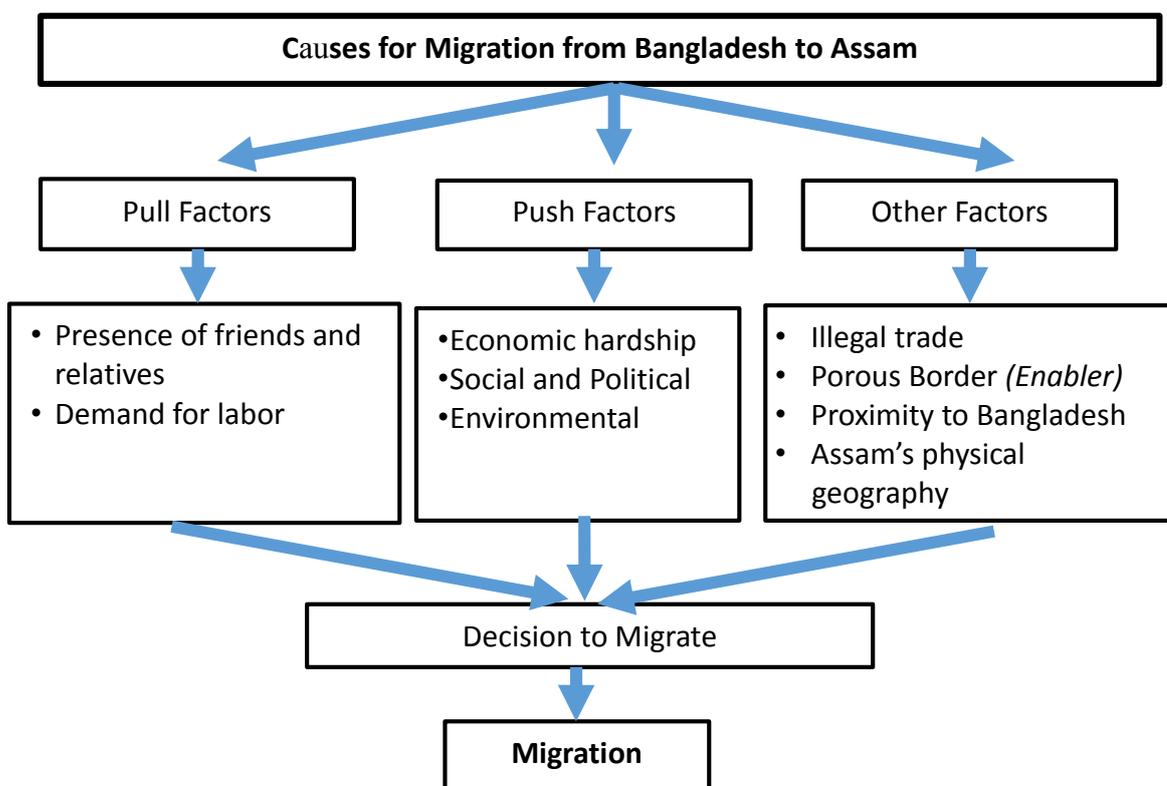
<sup>30</sup> Source: <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/bangladesh/indicators>

<sup>31</sup> Source: The Assam Tribune, September 3, 2011

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2129.html>

The causes of migration from Bangladesh to Assam are summarized in Figure 4.1. Several pull and push factors are associated with migration from Bangladesh to Assam.

**Figure 4. 1: Causes of Migration from Bangladesh to Assam as Identified in Field Surveys**



Pull factors include demand for labor, and more importantly, the existing network in Assam. On the other hand economic hardship, unemployment, and excess labor force, together with social, political and environmental factors in Bangladesh have led to the movement of people from Bangladesh to Assam. In addition illegal trade, the physical geography of Assam, porous border and also its proximity to Bangladesh, are among the other causes of migration. From the field survey, as shown in Table 4.2, the most notable cause of migration was networking among the migrants that seemingly have linkages between their points of origin in Bangladesh and their current location of their settlement in Assam. Many of the migrant respondents decided to move to Assam because of “kinship and familiarity” in their intended residence in Assam in the future. This is because they already knew certain family members or close friends who had migrated from Bangladesh earlier and settled there.

According to Network theory, each act of migration creates the social structure necessary to sustain additional movement.

“Migrants are linked to non-migrants through social ties that carry reciprocal obligations for assistance based on shared understanding of kinship, friendship,

and common community origin. Non-migrants draw upon these ties to gain access to employment abroad. Every new migrant reduces the costs and risks of migration for a set of friends and relatives, and with these lowered costs and risks, they are induced to migrate, which further expands the set of people with ties abroad.” (Massey *et al.*, 1994, p.734).

**Table 4. 2: Factors Motivating Migration**  
(Some respondents cited more than one reason)

Causes	Assam Migration Survey Respondents (193)					
	Muslims (123)		Hindus (70)		Total Number of Respondents to the Question	Percent of Total (193) Assam Migration Survey Respondents Answering the Question
	Number of Respondents Answering the Question	Percent among Muslim Respondents	Number of Respondents Answering the Question	Percent among Hindu Respondents		
Presence of Relatives, Friends and Fellow Country Men in India	54	43.9	38	54.3	92	47.7
War of 1971	48	39.0	25	35.7	73	37.8
Famine	34	27.6	11	15.7	45	23.3
Financial Gain	31	25.2	14	20.0	45	23.3
Porous Border	27	22.0	15	21.4	42	21.8
Employment	26	21.1	13	18.6	39	20.2
War of 1965	23	18.7	4	5.7	27	14.0
Social Acceptance and Freedom in India	21	17.1	37	52.9	58	30.1
India Economically Bigger and Stable	13	10.6	4	5.7	17	8.8
Business Opportunities	12	9.8	14	20.0	26	13.5
Insecurity in Bangladesh	9	7.3	30	42.9	39	20.2
Lack of equality in Social and Political Life in Bangladesh	6	4.9	11	15.7	17	8.8
Children's Education	5	4.1	1	1.4	6	3.1
Freedom Fighters	4	3.3	0	0.0	4	2.1
Close to Bangladesh	3	2.4	6	8.6	9	4.7
Environmental Causes	13	10.6	9	12.9	22	11.4
Partition of India	0	0.0	2	2.9	2	1.0
Marriage	0	0.0	3	4.3	3	1.6

Source: Assam Migration Field Survey, 2009-12

Other major causes as listed in Table 4.2 are War of Liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, famine of 1974-75, war of 1965 and the porous border. In many cases loss of livelihood

due to natural calamities such as flood, cyclone, and drought were also cited as causes of migration by the respondents.

Security and the feeling of belongingness was stated as an important cause for migration by Hindus. Migration, especially of Hindus, was due to partition of India in 1947 because of atrocities, religious persecution and riots. The India-Pakistan war of 1965, and the War of liberation of Bangladesh, was stated by respondents as other reasons for migration.

The flow of migration to India from Bangladesh continued even after the formation of Bangladesh due to changes that have taken place in Bangladesh like (i) assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the first prime minister in 1975, (ii) declaration of Islam as the state religion in 1988, (iii) massive communal disturbances in 1990, (iv) Begum Khaleda Zia's debut to power in 1991 and massive communal pogrom/violence in 1992, (v) consequences of Enemy Property Act (Vested Property Act) (vi) atrocities on minorities in 2001 after begum Zia led 4-party alliance came to power (Pramanik, 2007, p. 1 of Article 8). These incidents led to feelings of insecurity, especially among the Hindus, and this is one of the causes of migration as stated by the respondents.

As evident from Table 4.2 the top seven reasons for migration established from the field surveys are:

1. An existence of a familiar socio-cultural environment already in place together with initial shelter and assistance from their near and dear ones, who had migrated to Assam earlier. This group, who had helped migrants upon their arrival in Assam, includes friends, relatives, and fellow countrymen. A total of 48 percent of the respondents cited this as their primary reason for migration to Assam.
2. The war of liberation of Bangladesh 1971 was stated as the next most prominent cause for migration by 38 percent of respondents. During the war and in the period leading to the war, there was a huge influx of refugees across the border and many of them chose to stay back in India after the war was over (Guha, 1980).
3. Social acceptance and freedom in India is an important reason for 53 percent of Hindus to migrate to Assam, whereas it was the case for only 17 percent of Muslims.
4. Around 23 percent of respondents stated famine in Bangladesh and the likely financial gain across the border in Assam, were the reasons for their migration. The famine that followed after the liberation of Bangladesh in 1974-75 led to large scale migration from Bangladesh. During this period, Muslims in a larger number started to migrate to India along with Hindus (Pramanik, 2005).
5. About 22 percent of the respondents said that the porous border encouraged and facilitated their migration.
6. Better employment opportunities in Assam, as well as in India, were stated by 20 percent of respondents as a reason for their migration.
7. The fear factor along with the uncertainty of their future in Bangladesh played an important role in migration. About 20 percent of respondents stated insecurity as one of the reasons of migration

Although the partition of India was a major cause of migration in the late forties and early fifties, only one percent of respondents stated it as a cause for migration. As revealed in

the census analysis of 2001 most of the migrants may have died due to old age as the partition took place more than 65 years ago in 1947 (Migration Data Abstract on Data Highlights, 2001, p. 4).

With the above as a background, the different causes and motivations for migration from Bangladesh for both Hindus and Muslims are explained below. These findings are based on the field survey done in Assam. As the causes of migration for Hindus and Muslims are different, they are explained separately in this chapter, followed by a comparative analysis between them.

#### 4.2.1 Economic Causes

The neoclassical macro-economic theory focuses on the wage differences between sending and receiving areas as a cause of migration.

“Traditional economics views international migration as a simple sum of individual cost-benefit decisions undertaken to maximize expected income through international migration” (Massey et al., 1994, p.701). The neoclassical micro-economic theory on the other hand states that “individuals rationalize their decision to migrate based on cost-benefit calculation. According to this theory, individuals’ move from lower income to higher income areas if the expected return, usually in terms of the monetary aspects shows a net gain” (Massey, 1993, p.434).

This phenomenon is also true to a certain extent in the case of migration from Bangladesh to India.

Although the annual population growth rates according to UNFPA (State of World Population, 2011) are 1.3 percent for both India and Bangladesh, there exists a vast disparity between the per capita Gross National Incomes (GNI) as reported by the World Bank (Figure 4.2 and Table 4.3).

**Table 4. 3: Population, Growth Rate and GNI Per Capita of selected Asian Countries**

Country	Population (Million)	Avg. Projected Population Growth in 2010-2015 ( percent)	GNI, Per capita (US\$)
Sri Lanka	21.0	0.8	2,580
Myanmar	48.3	0.8	n/a
Indonesia	24.3	1.0	2,940
Bangladesh	152.5	1.3	770
India	1,214.5	1.3	1,420
Bhutan	0.7	1.5	2,050
Malaysia	28.7	1.6	8,420
Nepal	30.5	1.7	540
Pakistan	176.7	1.8	1,120

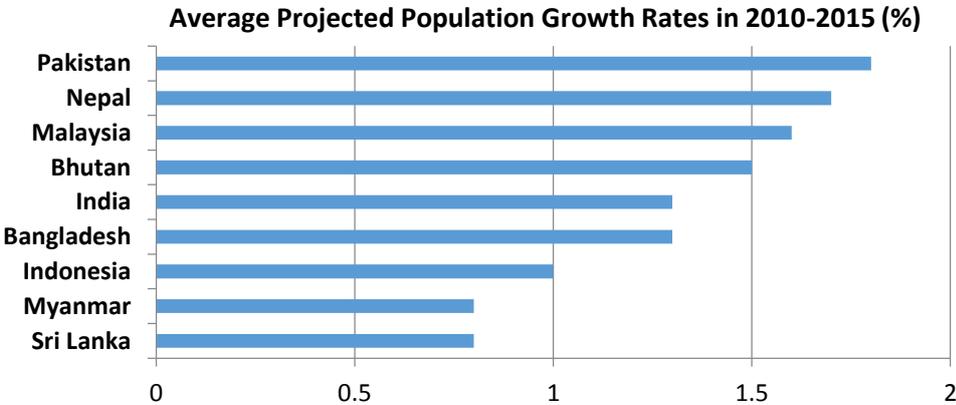
Sources: State of the world population, 2011, UNFPA; [http:// www.unfpa.org/swp](http://www.unfpa.org/swp) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_GNI\\_\(nominal,\\_Atlas\\_method\)\\_per\\_capita](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GNI_(nominal,_Atlas_method)_per_capita)

The reported per capita GNI by UNFPA in 2011 stood at \$770 for Bangladesh, whereas for India it averaged to almost double that at \$1,420<sup>33</sup>. Therefore, the per capita GNI difference of \$650 itself may act as one of the pull factors for migration to India because it promises much better economic prosperity across the border.

According to data from the 2011 Population and Housing Census of Bangladesh, the population of Bangladesh is 152.5 million within its total area of 147,570 sq. Km. It recorded a population density increase from 285 persons per sq. km in 1951 to 1,015 per sq. km. in 2011, an increase of over 256 percent.

The Agricultural Census of Bangladesh conducted in 2008 found that there are 4.5 million landless households in the country of which 1.22 million are in rural areas. Also 21 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country came from the agriculture sector, while also providing employment to 50 percent of the total labor force and feeding its 140 million people. Out of total households, 15.6 percent (i.e., 4.5 million) were absolutely landless, and among these households, 4.4 percent lived in urban areas and 11.4 percent in rural areas (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics [BBS], 2010). The World Bank also found that 50.5 percent of its people were below the poverty level. The foregoing economic and human situations in Bangladesh have contributed much to the continuing migration.

**Figure 4. 2: Average Projected Population Growth in Select Asian Countries**



Deka (2011) argues that economic conditions in Bangladesh together with positive pull factors in India and Assam attract migrants from Bangladesh, and as long as a disparity in economic conditions in Bangladesh and India remain, the migration is likely to continue. The desire to earn more and to have a better life seems to attract both Muslim (123) and Hindu (70) migrants. Table 4.4 shows the various economic factors that encourage migration to Assam as stated by the respondents in the field survey. Out of 123 Muslim

<sup>33</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_GNI\\_\(nominal,\\_Atlas\\_methodper\\_capita](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GNI_(nominal,_Atlas_methodper_capita)  
93

respondents, 82 (66.7 percent) of them responded Economic factors as a cause of migration whereas, among Hindus, 45 out of 70 had responded it as a cause of migration.

**Table 4. 4: Economic Reasons for Migration Given by Respondents (more than one reason)**

Reasons	Muslims (123 Respondents)		Hindus (70 Respondents)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Financial Gain	31	25.2	14	20.0
Employment Opportunities	26	21.1	13	18.6
Bigger and Stable Economy	13	10.6	4	5.7
Business opportunities	12	9.8	14	20.0
Total Respondents	82	66.7	45	64.3

Source: Assam Migration Field survey, 2009-2012

From Table 4.4, it is clear that 67 percent of Muslim respondents and almost equal number of Hindus (64.3 percent of Hindu respondents) indicated that they moved for economic reasons to have a better and more secured financial future and higher earnings.

“The growing mobility of people is due to their response in differences in economic opportunities.” (Abella, 2005, p. 2).

Among the above factors the opportunity to earn more is the most dominant one followed by employment opportunities for both groups. Thus employment or earning opportunities and potential is one of the major reasons for migration.

Nandy (2005) argues that although neoclassical theory states that people move from less developed to more developed countries or from lower earning to higher earning areas, it is only partially applicable to the migration from Bangladesh to India. In addition to economic reasons people also moved due to political and social reasons. Therefore, in addition to economic factors, other factors such as political, social, and environmental, also characterize the phenomena of migration from Bangladesh to India.

#### **4.2.2 Political Causes**

In the words of Weiner (1995, p.29):

“Most of the worlds’ population flows since World War II did not merely happen; they were made to happen. For the governments of sending countries, emigration may serve a variety of political objectives. Emigration can be a solution to the problems of cultural heterogeneity. It can be a device for dealing with political dissidents, including class enemies. And it can be a mechanism for affecting the domestic and foreign policies of other states”.

Migration is generally of two types – forced and voluntary “*Bangladesh is an extraordinary example of a nation that has seen both trends*” (Hazarika, 2000, p. 7). Forced migration is attributed to certain unforeseen events – political and/or environmental that took place in the sub-continent. Some of the events that took place were the partition of India in 1947, when the Hindus chose to move to India leaving everything behind due to fear of religious persecution and also atrocities (Nanda, 2005). The 1971 war, when Bangladesh

was separated from Pakistan, millions of people moved to take shelter in India to escape the inevitable (Roy, 2003), and also the 1965 India-Pakistan war. These are examples of sudden and forced migration of people from Bangladesh to India in order to escape persecution. Such persecution takes place in irregular frequency and intensity. The other group, the unforced migrants, move out voluntarily in search of a better livelihood and cultural benefits (Hazarika, 2000). Table 4.5 presents the Political reasons that have caused both forced and voluntary migration from Bangladesh to Assam as stated by the survey respondents.

The survey found that one of the most important reasons for migration from Bangladesh for Muslim migrants is the war of 1971, as 39 percent of respondents stated it as their main reason for migration. This was followed by the war of 1965. Lack of security was stated by 7 percent of the respondents as the third political reason for migration. Other reasons were: lack of equity in social and political life, others migrated as they were "freedom fighters", (for reasons of their personal security). A few stated that the political stability that India offered as a secular, democratic country with a well-functioning political process, was their prime reason for migration.

**Table 4.5: Political Reasons for Migration given by Respondents**  
(Some respondents cited more than one reason)

Causes	Muslims		Hindus	
	Number	percent	Number	percent
War of 1971	48	39.0	25	35.7
War of 1965	23	18.7	4	5.7
Insecurity in Bangladesh	9	7.3	30	42.9
Lack of Equity in Social and Political Life	6	4.9	11	15.7
Freedom Fighters	4	3.3	0	0.0
India, Secular, Democratic and Politically Stable Country	2	1.6	6	8.8
Partition of India	0	0.0	2	2.9

Source: Assam Migration Field Survey 2009-2012

Insecurity in Bangladesh was one of the major reasons for migration of 43 percent of the Hindu respondents. The war of 1971 was stated by 36 percent of them followed by lack of equity in social and political life where 16 percent stated it as one of the reasons for migration. Other factors were the war of 1965 and also the partition of India.

Table 4.5 shows that 39 percent of Muslims and 36 percent of Hindus stated the war of liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 as one of the reasons for migration. According to the government of India, about 8.3 million people left Bangladesh during the 1971 war due to "internally generated economic and political instability or both, followed by externally induced pressure or intervention intended either to exploit or to reverse that growing instability" (Teitelbaum, 1984, p. 433). Moreover, 19 percent of Muslims and 6 percent of Hindus stated the war of 1965 as one of their reasons for migration. The 1964 and 1965 atrocities followed by the India-Pakistan war in 1965 and thereafter, the different pogroms

adopted by the government of Pakistan, such as the Enemy Property Act of 1965, led to the exodus of another one million people from East Pakistan to India.

Insecurity in Bangladesh was stated as another reason for migration from Bangladesh by 7 percent of Muslim and 43 percent of Hindu respondents. Minorities in Bangladesh migrated to India when their integrity was threatened in their country of origin (Davenport *et al.*, 2003, p.27). Repressive and discriminatory measures taken by the sending country had led to forced migration from Bangladesh (Nandy, 2005, p. 12).

The above causes as identified through the field survey are in agreement with the findings of Datta in 2004, who stated:

“Before 1971, massive migration took place during 1948-52. Main reasons were a) Partition of India and b) Hindu backlash. During 1964-65, migration was due to Indo-Pak war. In terms of volume, migration was highest before 1971, most probably during 1948-52 ... If the largest single stream of movement is considered, the peak period was during Bangladesh liberation war in 1971..... the main reasons of this massive migration were a) Political instability in Bangladesh due to independence war in 1971, b) Lack of safety and securities of the Hindu families mainly, due to war, c) Religious issue and communal tension affecting mainly Hindus during regime of Ziaur Rahman (1975-1981) d) friends and relatives giving shelter in West Bengal to those displaced undocumented migrants e) Economic instability in Bangladesh and f) Curtailment of facilities enjoyed by Hindu minority group” (Datta, 2004, p. 338).

#### **4.2.3 Social Causes**

In the case of migration from Bangladesh it is evident that networking is one of the major causes of migration. A network can be defined as:

“Sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through bonds of kinship, friendship and shared community origin” (Massey *et al.*, 1993, p.448).

It is noted from the field survey that networking that exists between migrants in Assam and the people of Bangladesh facilitates migration. Such networking increases the likelihood of international migration because once the number of migrants reaches a critical threshold, the expanding network reduces the costs and risks of movement which probably causes the increase in movement and this further expands the network (Massey *et al.*, 1993, p.449). Moreover, studies show that over time migratory behavior spreads outward to encompass broader segments of the sending society (Hugo, 1981; Taylor, 1986; Massey and Espana, 1987; Massey, 1990a, 1990b; Gurak and Caces, 1992).

Table 4.6 shows that 44 percent of Muslim respondents and 54 percent of Hindus stated that the presence of friends, relatives or fellow countrymen who came either earlier or together, and were there to support each other, was one of the reasons for migration.

“According to network theory, each act of migration creates the social structure necessary to sustain additional movement. Migrants are linked to non-migrants through social ties that carry reciprocal obligations for assistance based on shared understanding of kinship, friendship, and common community origin. Non-migrants draw upon these ties to gain access to employment abroad. Every new migrant

reduces the costs and risk of migration for a set of friends and relatives, and with these lowered costs and risks, they are induced to migrate, which further expands the set of people with ties abroad” (Massey *et al.*, 1994, p., 734).

**Table 4.6: Social Reasons for Migration given by Respondents**  
(Some respondents cited more than one reason)

Reasons	Muslims		Hindus	
	Number	percent	Number	Percent
Presence of Friends, Relatives and Fellow Countrymen	54	43.9	38	54.3
Social Acceptance and Freedom	21	17.1	37	52.9
Lack of Equity in Social and Political Life	6	4.9	11	15.7
Children’s Education	5	4.1	1	1.4
Marriage	0	0.0	3	4.3

Source: Assam Migration Field Survey, 2009-12

Looking at the history of both the countries there is bound to exist some connection or contact with relatives, friends or fellow countrymen, who live across the border and are willing to assist the migrants initially. Haque (2005, p.41) argues that the historical ties between the populations and the intricate interplay of various external and internal factors have shaped the migration patterns in south Asia. Migrants themselves said that without the presence of kith and kin, migration would not have occurred on such a large scale.

The second major reason stated by the respondents is social acceptance and freedom. Freedom to own land was easier as there was no zamindari system<sup>34</sup> or local *dalals* (local self-assumed brokers or middlemen) to interfere in land-purchase deals. Freedom to practice their own religion, as India is a secular country, plus freedom of speech and expression, were some of the reasons given by respondents as to why they migrated to India. Other reasons included the prospect for a better future for their children because a stable and secular India offered them equity in social and political life. This means India will offer a more safe and secure environment to raise their children indicated by 4 percent of Muslims, and one percent of Hindus.

Most often girls of Hindu families are sent to India for matrimonial purposes. Due to partition and the large scale migration of people, the Hindu minority in Bangladesh face problems with matrimonial alliances, particularly in finding enough suitable matches for brides and grooms (Datta, 2004). For matrimonial purposes, and also due to social insecurity, the Hindu girls migrate to India and initially live with their relatives till marriage, as was noted in this study and stated by 4 percent of the respondents.

<sup>34</sup> Zamindari system refers to the now defunct landlord system that prevailed during the British Rule in India. The word Zamindar literally means “land” (Zamin) and “lord” (dar). Under this system, the land ownership is vested with the landlord, who allows landless peasants to use the land on specific terms (e.g., shared crop/produce, charges, levies etc.), which are often favorable to the Zamindar (i.e., the landlord).

#### 4.2.4 Environmental Causes

Although environmental factors play an important role in migration, it should be seen in relation to other factors like political, economic, social and cultural that eventually determines the standard of living and inequality of access to resources (Haas, 2008, p.10).

In the 'Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Summit' held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar during March 1-4, 2014, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina in her address warned of the potential 30 million Bangladeshis becoming "climate migrants" due to global warming because a rise of 1°C would submerge one-fifth of Bangladesh<sup>35</sup>.

Natural disasters such as recurrent floods, severe cyclones, river bank erosion, droughts, water logging are some of the reoccurring phenomena in Bangladesh at present (Akhter, 2009). Table 4.7 lists the primary environmental disasters that typically occur in Bangladesh every year.

**Table 4.7: Common Environmental Disasters Encountered by Bangladesh**

<b>Environmental Disasters</b>	<b>Geographical Spread</b>
Cyclone	On average, 1-3 severe to moderate storm every year. Some travel as far as 200 kilometres inland
Sea level rise and flood	20 percent of total area inundated annually on average. May increase to more than 36 percent in cases of severe flooding. Half of Bangladesh under 12.5 m above the mean sea level
Drought	Common, despite the presence of abundant water resources, western regions are particularly vulnerable to drought
River Bank Erosion	Recurrent in 35 upzilas (sub-districts) of Bangladesh

Source: Sharma and Hugo, 2009

As highlighted and discussed in Chapter 2, by virtue of its location, Bangladesh is prone to natural calamities. Every year, many people are killed or displaced due to natural disasters. About 0.6 million people were killed in Bangladesh in 2011 and another 6 million were affected by natural disasters. Estimates of the economic toll on Bangladesh due to natural calamities in terms of its GDP stood at 2 percent in 1991-1995, 2.4 percent in 1996-2000, 1.0 percent in 2001-05 and 0.8 percent in 2006-10 (Source: Environment, Statistical Year Book for Asia and Pacific, 2011, p.208).

In addition to natural disasters, there are also man-made disasters which have affected the environment and also the economic condition of the people. Examples of such disasters are the Farakka Barrage (Swain, 1996), and also the Kaptai Dam, which has displaced around 100,000 people and inundated 54,000 acres of plough land, hence destroying the livelihood of the indigenous people of those areas (Bangladesh District Gazetteers, 1975).

<sup>35</sup> Source: The Assam Tribune, March 5, 2014

Due to the natural and manmade disasters people migrated to different places both within and outside the country.

“Now all of them are not coming to India, but it would be not implausible to believe that some of them would be. The inherent law of migration... is that people move to areas close to themselves which are compatible, geographically and culturally. Over a period of time this outflow can cross international borders” (Hazarika, 2002, p. 27).

Table 4.8 shows the number of respondents, who have migrated to Assam due to environmental reasons. Natural disasters such as floods, cyclones, and droughts etc. as a cause of migration were stated by only a small percent of respondents. They were affected again and again by natural calamities which culminated in their decision to migrate, with 5.2 percent of respondents indicating that they were affected by floods repeatedly. The floods destroyed their crops, especially paddy and livestock which in turn affected their income. Instead of being able to sell their surplus produce for cash, they were compelled to buy staple foods for their personal consumption with the meager savings they had. Those who had no savings or had exhausted them had to go hungry. The hunger and their inability to provide for the bare minimum of necessities for self and the family, was a major deciding factor in their decision to migrate to Assam. According to these respondents, they simply had no other viable option to live and survive in Bangladesh.

**Table 4.8: Respondents stating environmental events among reasons for migration**

Causes	Total	
	Number	Percent
Increase Frequency of Flood	10	5.2
Low Crop Yield	5	2.6
Cyclones	1	0.5
Drought	3	1.6
Livestock and Fishery less Productive	2	1.0
Depleting Natural Resources	1	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11.4</b>

Source: Assam Migration Survey, 2009-12

#### 4.2.5 Other Factors

##### Proximity to Bangladesh

The geographical proximity of Assam and Bangladesh, plus the porous border as indicated in the field surveys (see Table 4.2) made it easier for many migrants to enter Assam with lesser risk of detection. In addition, geographical proximity also helped some migrants get acclimatized easily with local weather conditions (Deka, 2011). About 2 percent of Muslim and 9 percent of Hindu respondents claimed that Assam’s proximity to Bangladesh, especially their areas of origin, was one of the reasons for their migration to Assam.

##### Unauthorized Trade

Although a formal trade relationship exists between India and Bangladesh, the illegal or unauthorized trade is widespread along the border, and at present, it is unmanageable or

out of control (Pramanik, 2007). Unauthorized trade or illegal trade is at present a major source of income for some of the migrants as well as the local people in the border areas of both the countries.

“According to a postmodern theorist, the circulation of people, goods and ideas creates a new transnational culture that combines values, behaviors, and attitudes from sending and receiving societies to create a new, largely autonomous social space that transcends national boundaries. Although the new culture is complex and multifaceted, it is characterized by several distinct features that reinforce and perpetuate international movement” (Massey, 1994, p.737).

Goods or equipment like agriculture and farming equipment, mobile phones, building materials, such as iron and irrigation pumps, are illegally traded to Bangladesh via the Assam border. However, according to the Commandant of the BSF (2009), the cattle trade was the most lucrative business of all, earning about five million US dollars annually. He added that besides cattle, and small items (like rice, liquor, medicines, salt, and equipment), arms, explosives and women are also trafficked over the border (Commandant, BSF, 2009). In a long group discussion with the migrant community, it was revealed that illegal trade is at present one of the reasons for migration. The ethnic and cultural similarities of the people along both sides of the border and lack of preventive measures have facilitated this illegal trade (Lakshman and Jha, 2003).

### **Assam’s Physiographic Features**

The river Brahmaputra passes through the border of the Dhubri district to Bangladesh and there is a bend in the river’s course along the border. After the monsoon temporary chars (the riverine tracks that get inundated during the monsoon) develop along the river. The formation of chars is a natural phenomenon dictated by the streamlines of water flow in the Brahmaputra River during floods. As a result, the location of chars changes almost every year after the floods. These chars sometimes form on the Bangladesh side of the river, and at other times, on the Indian side, and people inhabiting these chars move to India or Bangladesh according to the development of these chars. Therefore, their population varies according to the formation of the chars (Ahmed, 2009). In addition, as no fence can be constructed along the river it makes it easier for the migrants to enter Assam.

The people of Bangladesh are well acquainted with water, since birth they “live and survive” with water (i.e., being accustomed to perennial floods and deluges), so many who can swim undetected under the water for a long period can enter Assam, avoiding detection by border guards, especially during the night. Soon after entering Assam they move from one district to another by boat within hours thus avoiding detection (Ahmed, 2009). The former Director-General of Assam Police, Harekrishna Deka, too, has acknowledged such unconventional methods of border crossing from Bangladesh to

Assam; quoting Deka: "River routes are being traditionally used by Bangladesh nationals to cross over to India by taking advantage of lax vigilance" (Deka, 2011, pp. 44-45).

### **Porous Border**

After partition the border between India and Pakistan was controlled by the state police force. In 1964 with the introduction of PIP (Prevention of Infiltration from Pakistan) scheme, 159 Watch Post, 15 Patrol Post and 6 Passport Check Post were created at the border (Mirza, n.d.). In addition to this 1,914 police personnel under a Deputy Inspector General (DIG) was appointed to check infiltration (Mirza, n. d). It was only after the 1965 war with Pakistan that the BSF or the Border Security Force was established to guard the border. Hazarika (2000, p. 62) claimed that neither of the above could prevent infiltration "as public interest in the situation diminished and political pressure decreased, they melted away-in the darkness or the shelter of anonymity in the Muslim dominated riverine areas of Assam, neighboring East Pakistan".

In recent years, the government of India has started to erect a security fence across the border to check illegal infiltration from Bangladesh. As of December 20, 2013, 97 percent of Assam's land border with Bangladesh was completed; that is, the fencing of 222.7km out of the 267km land border<sup>36</sup>. In addition, the number of Border Security Force outposts along the border was increased and flood lights were being installed. To make the border patrolling effort more efficient and speedy, a 288.75km long road network was being built to run parallel to the border. At the time of writing, a length of 257.7 km of the border road was completed while work was on progress in the remaining 31.05 km. According to the Chief Minister of Assam, Tarun Gogoi, river patrol by motorized boats has also been further intensified and strengthened across the 40-km stretch of the riverine border.

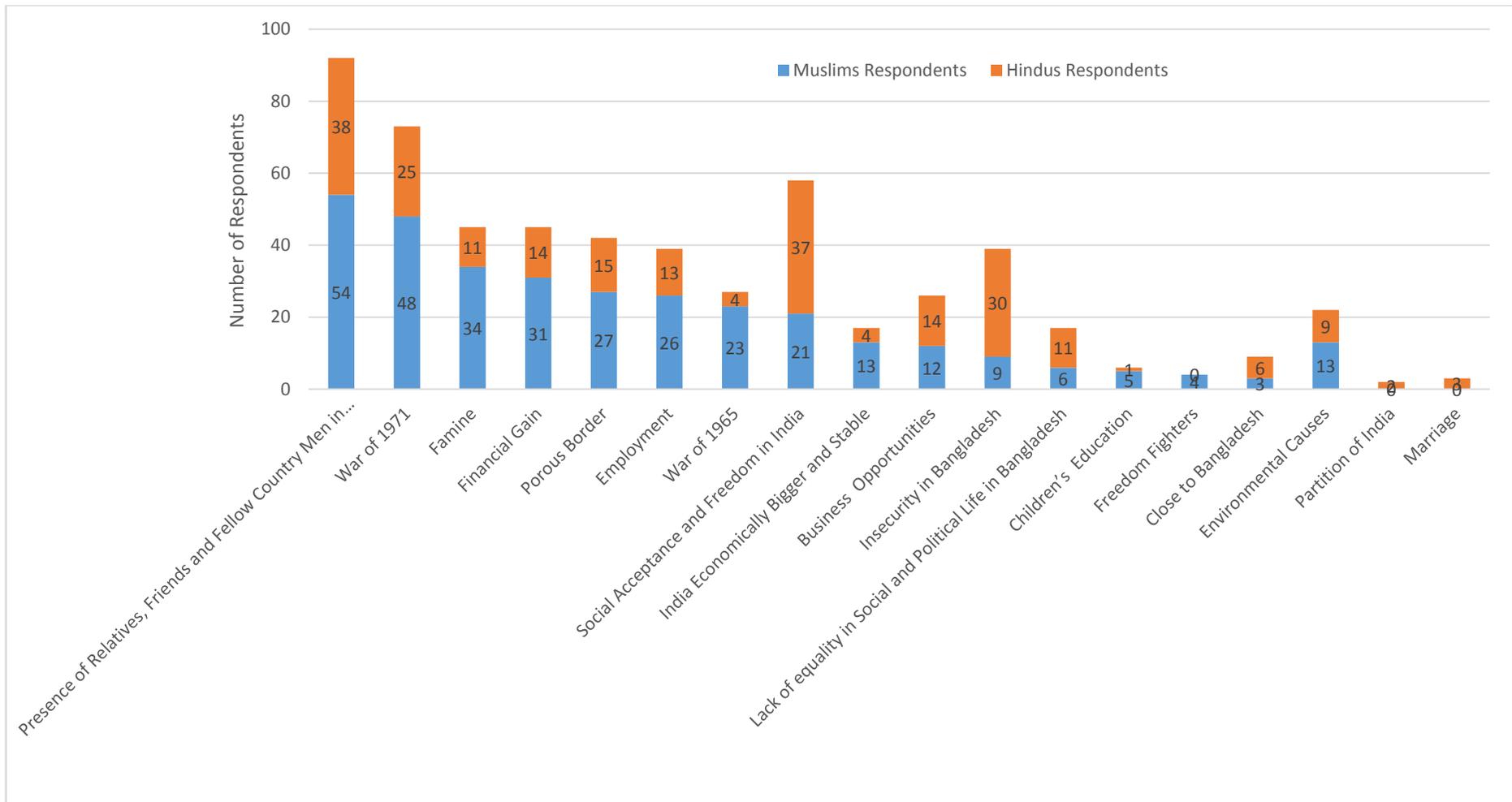
### **4.3 Comparative Analysis of Reasons for Migration for Hindus and Muslims**

Figure 4.3 presents a comparative analysis of various causes of migration stated by Muslim and Hindu respondents. Figure 4.3 shows that the need to follow their relatives, friends and fellow countrymen already in Assam seem to be one of the prominent reasons for both Muslim and Hindu respondents, as 44 percent of Muslims and 54 percent of Hindus stated it as one of the main causes for migration. Therefore, the network theory of migration is relevant in the migration from Bangladesh to Assam.

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.firstpost.com/fwire/assam-to-gain-land-from-bangladesh-gogoi-1299269.html>, December 20, 2013

**Figure 4. 3: Comparative Analysis of Causes of Migration as Cited by Muslim and Hindu Respondents during Field Surveys**



Source: Assam Migration Survey, 2009-12

As stated by Barua (a retired senior bureaucrat in the Indian Administrative Services cadre):

“Social networking among the migrants started during the colonial period and continues even today. Networking in combination with other factors mainly economic and political causes migration to Assam” (Barua, 2009).

Thus, the Social Network Theory of Hugo (1981), Taylor (1986), Massey and Garcia, Espan (1987), Massey (1990), Gurak and Caces (1992) serves as one of the pull factors for this migration and economic hardship as a major push factor.

The war of 1971 was the second important reason for Muslim migration as stated by 39 percent of respondents. For 36 percent of Hindu respondents it was the major reason, and overall, it occupied the third place among the reasons for migration. Datta (2004, p. 338) argues that the 1971 war was the cause of the largest single stream of migration of Hindus and Muslims from Bangladesh.

Social acceptance and freedom in India, although a factor in migration for Muslim respondents, it was more dominant for Hindus. Among the Hindu respondents, 53 percent stated it as the reason for their migration. In addition, insecurity in Bangladesh is the other significant reason for Hindu migration. In the field survey, 43 percent of Hindu respondents gave it as one of the reasons for migration, compared to only 7 percent of Muslims.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, several factors such as the partition of India and the communal riots that followed thereafter, the anti-Hindu riots during 1964 across East Pakistan, all forced thousands of Hindus to flee East Pakistan. Again in 1965, a full scale war broke out between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, and following the war a large number of refugees left for India from East Pakistan (Hazarika, 2000). Soon after the war of 1965 the government of Pakistan enforced the Enemy Property Act, now known as the Vested Property Act in Bangladesh. As Protham Alo reported (November 4, 2004) the act gave the right to the state to confiscate the properties of the minorities who they deemed to be an enemy of the state. It is because of this Act; about 5 million Hindus lost almost 2 million acres of land.

After the assassination of the first Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in August 1975 there was a change in leadership and in April 1977, the “*Fundamental Principles of Secularism*” was removed from the preamble of the constitution and it was preceded by “Bismillah Rahmanir Rahim”, meaning “In the name of Allah, the Beneficent and the Merciful” (Raman, 2004). Again in June 7, 1988 by the 8<sup>th</sup> amendment of the constitution ‘Islam’ was declared as the state religion (Bhattacharyya, 2008). These successive amendments to the constitution since the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made the minority Hindus feel insecure in Bangladesh, leading to the large-scale migration of Hindus to India.

The victory of Begum Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in the 1991 general election in Bangladesh led to widespread backlashes on minorities, and as a consequence; many migrated to India during the tenure of the BNP government.

"As for the new exodus of Hindus from Bangladesh, they are true refugees, they are not migrants. They are as traumatized frightened and brutalized as refugees in any other part of the world and this has been seen especially since the new government in Bangladesh took over. The attacks have abated and the exodus has eased, but these incidents show the uncertainty and insecurity which remains a part of their lives, leading specially the rural middle class and the marginalized to leave" (Hazarika, 2002, p.28).

People also migrated because of insecurity in their day to day life. The survey found that 36 percent of the respondents said that they were ill-treated in Bangladesh. Although the majority of these respondents (76 percent) were Hindus, there were also Muslim migrants (14 percent) who claimed they were ill-treated in Bangladesh. Incidents of such ill-treatment made them fear for their life, and made them apprehensive of their children's future in Bangladesh, and hence, they decided to migrate.

#### **4.4 Bangladesh-to-Assam Migration Framework**

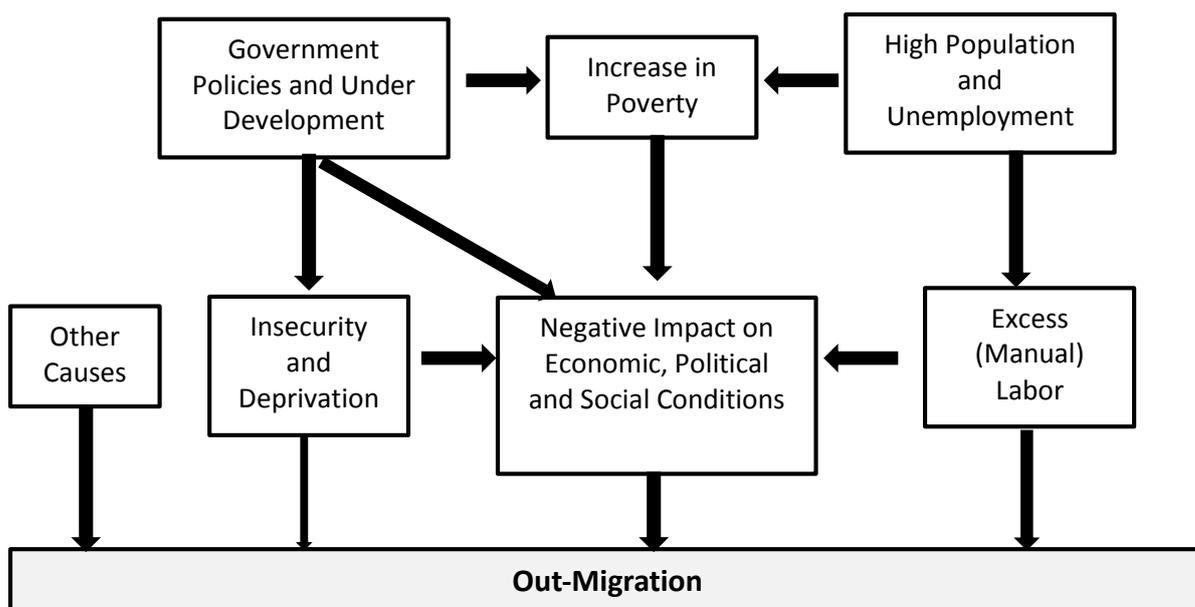
Figure 4.4 is a conceptual depiction of the framework of migration from Bangladesh to Assam. It indicates that the reasons for migration are complex with some of them intricately linked to one another; for example, poverty is linked to high population growth and unemployment in Bangladesh. Government policies and under development have also led to poverty, deprivation and insecurity, particularly among the minority Hindu community.

Bangladesh being a country of high population density is unable to offer gainful employment to its increasing workforce. This leads to an excess of labor causing high unemployment (5 percent in 2012) and underemployment (around 40 percent)<sup>37</sup>. This together with government policies and underdevelopment contribute to an increase in poverty, which in turn has a negative impact on the economic, political and social conditions. Migrants who are desperate to overcome such conditions consider migrating to the neighboring Indian states of Assam and West Bengal.

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<sup>37</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2129.html>

**Figure 4. 4: Conceptual Depiction of Bangladesh-to-Assam Migration Framework**



Some have migrated solely because of their insecurity and deprivation experienced due to government policies, lack of opportunities and poor regional development. The other causes for out-migration include a porous border, proximity to Assam, networking with migrants already settled across the border in Assam and illegal trade.

The foregoing discussions suggest that the primary cause common to two-thirds of both Hindus and Muslims is rooted in their economic livelihood. For Hindus though, the political factors arising out of their minority status in the country is a major cause of migration to India. This seems to agree with Haque (2005, p. 42), who said: *“Economic and social conditions continue to be the major reasons behind population movement in South Asia”*.

During the 1971 war and the liberation of Bangladesh from Pakistan, migrants came in large numbers to take refuge in India and many of them did not return to the liberated Bangladesh. Although some of them had left for Bangladesh after the war, they returned again to India for permanent settlement. It was noted during the field surveys that motivations to migrate from Bangladesh to Assam had several dimensions and aspects. As shown in Table 4.9, although most of them are similar for both Hindus and Muslims, they, however, rank differently for each community.

Since then, migration continues unabated for economic, social and political reasons. Exact number of migrants in Assam cannot be determined as most have come undocumented. Moreover, there is no systematic process or structure in place with the governments to gather migration data reliably.

**Table 4. 9: Motivation to Migrate and Religious Ethnicity**  
(As noted during Field Surveys)

Rank	For Hindus	For Muslims
1	Networking	Networking
2	Refugees	Economic reasons
3	Religious persecution	Land ownership
4	Political cloud unfavourable	Employment
5	Insecurity and low social status	Education
6	Hope of peace and tranquillity	More liberal society
7	Feeling of belonging	Religious tolerance
8	Economic reasons	Acceptance
9	Environmental causes	Environmental causes
10	Matrimonial alliances	Social causes

Source: Assam Migration Field Survey, 2009-12

#### 4.5 Conclusion

Before 1947, India and Bangladesh were one and the same country, so essentially the migration that took place prior to 1947 was inter-district migration. After independence there was large scale migration of Hindus due to communal violence during partition. Over the years Muslims along with Hindus started to migrate and they seemed to have settled as per the "line system", which was concentrated in specific areas in the districts of Dhubri, Goalpara, Nagaon, Barpeta and Kamrup.

In this chapter the migrants' motivation to move to a neighboring country within the same region has been studied and summarized. In so doing, the causes of migration have been established. In the next chapter the trends, patterns and the demographic transformation of the state will be discussed.

## Chapter 5: Trends, Processes and Magnitude of Migration

### 5.1 Introduction

Both Bangladesh and India, share a common 4095-km<sup>38</sup> border and migration has been a significant phenomenon across the border. Historic ties between the two countries, developmental activities in India, the large pool of underutilized labor force (5 percent unemployed and 40 percent underemployed) in Bangladesh are some of the reasons for migration from Bangladesh to India through legal or illegal channels (Haque, 2005).

A number of studies have been done by various scholars on the trends, processes, patterns, magnitude and impact of migration from Bangladesh to India [Hazarika (2000, 2002); Weiner (1975, 1978, 1983, 1995); Samaddar (1999); Pramanik (1990, 2005, 2006, 2007); Guha (1980, 2006); Barua (2008); Deka (2010); Saikia (2002, 2005); Roychoudhury (2009); Hussain (1993)]. Hazarika (2000) in his studies has identified overpopulation, economic destitution and political reasons as primary causes of migration. He also studied the environmental causes of migration. Weiner (1975) studied the relationship between migrants and Assamese people in terms of cultural and political aspects, and land ownership. He emphasized the reactions from the local people of Assam over the predominance of migrant population in the context of language, employment, commercial endeavor etc. Samaddar (1999) identified the complexity of migration and the relationship between migration and the border.

It is, however, difficult to establish trends and magnitude of the migration due to the lack of good and adequate representative data. Although the Indian Census provides some information about migrants from other countries, census data are not free from problems and limitations as mentioned in Chapter 3.

Migration from Bangladesh to India has been influenced by different factors at different times. Migration of landless peasants from erstwhile East Bengal, started towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the former Goalpara district of Assam, where the zamindars (landlords) of Mechpara, Karaibari and Gauripur brought in landless cultivators from the adjacent districts of East Bengal, to cultivate land and raise revenue under easy terms of tenancy (Taher, 2011). The land-right title document (called Patta in local language) given to these peasants was known as 'Pail Patta' where plots of wasteland were leased out to the peasants without rent for three years (Taher, 2011). This led to the beginning of migration of landless peasants from Bangladesh/East Bengal to Assam.

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<sup>38</sup> Source: [www.indianembassy.org/policy/Foreign.../bangladesh\\_fp1998.htm](http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/Foreign.../bangladesh_fp1998.htm)

The primary reason why migration from Bangladesh to the state of Assam in India has emerged as a major issue of political, social and economic interest is because such large scale migration is undoubtedly changing the demographic structure of the state (Goswami, 2008). Contemporary apprehension about this issue is not new; such apprehension was expressed by the Census Superintendent of Assam himself in 1931 (Mullan, 1931, pp. 50-51). Similar concerns were also expressed by pre-independence leaders of Assam; most notably through the Election Manifesto of the 'Assam Pradesh Congress Committee' in 1945 when the Indian National Congress Party was at the helm of limited "home-rule" government both at the federal and state levels<sup>39</sup>. One of the 1945 Manifesto clauses read:

"Unless the province of Assam is organized on the basis of Assamese language and Assamese culture, the survival of the Assamese nationality and culture will become impossible. The inclusion of Bengali speaking Silhoutte<sup>40</sup> and Cachar and immigration or importation of lakhs<sup>41</sup> of Bengali settlers on the waste lands has been threatening the distinctive culture of Assam and caused many disorders." (1945 Election Manifesto of Indian National Congress' Assam Unit, Assam Pradesh Congress Committee).

The indigenous peoples of Assam fear that with continued large-scale migration from Bangladesh, they would eventually lose their power and hold over the state's political, economic and social aspects (Hazarika, 2000).

## **5.2 Trends and Patterns of Migration from Bangladesh to Assam**

The trends and patterns of migration varied widely from India's pre-partition period (i.e., pre-1947) and the post-partition period, and can be classified into three broad categories:

1. Pre-partition period (the period leading up to August 15, 1947)
2. During partition and post-partition period when both conflict and non-conflict factors dominated (August 15, 1947 to the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971)
3. Post-liberation of Bangladesh in 1971.

### **5.2.1 The Pre-Partition Period**

Colonization, land distribution, land reclamation, communal pre-partition politics and development activities in Assam (see Chapter 2), largely impacted on the trends and patterns of migration in the pre-independence period.

The 1921 Census Report of India on Assam stated that the migration of "land-hungry Bengali peasants", mostly Muslims from East Bengal, started sometime prior to 1911, and was induced largely by the availability of 'wasteland' in that province. The great earthquake of 1897 led to subsidence of land in the southern parts of Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Kamrup, Marigaon, Nagaon and the Darrang district in Assam (see Figure A4.1

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<sup>39</sup> Arun Jaitley, the Leader of the Opposition in the federal Upper House (Rajya Sabha) and a senior member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in his address to the House on July 2012 violence clashes between indigenous Bodo tribals and Bangladeshi migrant settlers on August 9, 2012.

<sup>40</sup> The district of Sylhet was also referred to as "Silhoutte" and "Srihatta"

<sup>41</sup> Lakh = a numerical unit used in India to denote a number equivalent to 100,000

in Appendix 4). Due to the subsidence of these lands, the indigenous residents moved out and settled elsewhere. The abandoned areas were left fallow and were slowly covered with grass, trees and swamps. Although some of these fallow lands were used for seasonal cultivation and for cattle grazing, most of it remained fallow, known as 'wasteland' and unclassified forests (Taher, 2011). Many landless peasants from East Bengal at the time seized the opportunity to settle in such tracts of wasteland in the Assam valley. They made those lands productive by introducing multiple-crop cultivation, and used modern techniques of cultivation that were then available. Eventually, such settlements spread toward the east of the state (cited in the Census Reports of 1931, pp. 49-50). Table 5.1 shows the migration trend since 1911; however, the children born to the migrants in Assam were not recorded in the table (Census Report, 1931). The figures in parenthesis show the number of migrants from Mymensingh.

**Table 5. 1: Number of persons born in Bengal who resided in Assam-valley districts in 1911-1931**

(Ms=Mymensingh district and the figures are in 000's)

Year	Goalpara	Kamrup	Darrang	Nowgong	Sibsagar	Lakhimpur
1911	77 (Ms.34)	4 (Ms. 1)	7 (Ms. 1)	4 (Ms. 1)	14 (Ms. Nil)	14 (Ms. Nil)
1921	151 (Ms. 78)	41 (Ms. 20)	20 (Ms. 12)	58 (Ms. 52)	14 (Ms. Nil)	14 (Ms. Nil)
1931	170 (Ms. 30)	134 (Ms. 91)	41 (Ms. 20)	120 (Ms. 108)	12 (Ms. Nil)	19 (Ms. 3)

Source: Census of India, 1931, Assam Report Part 1 Volume 3. Figure in bracket are numbers from Mymensingh district

From Table 5.1 it is evident that although migration from Bangladesh started in Goalpara district and remained active there until 1921, it gradually spread to the districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsaagar and Lakhimpur. According to the 1921 Census Report, the total number of settlers from the former East Bengal was 330,000 including their children born in Assam. It also pointed out that most of the settlers migrated with their families (i.e., not as singles) as out of the 330,000 persons born in Mymensingh over 152,000 (45.6 percent) were female. As per the 1931 Census, the number of migrants crossed the half-a-million mark. The 1931 Census report also recorded that most of the settlers migrated from the Mymensingh district and their numbers were 140,000 including their children born in Assam (Mullan, 1931, p.52).

The other causes of migration in the pre-partition period can be attributed to the following events as discussed briefly in Chapter 2:

1. The land Development Scheme introduced in 1928 by the British Government
2. The land Settlement Policy brought in by the semi-autonomous Muslim League Government in Assam in 1941
3. The pre-partition politics of the Muslim League<sup>42</sup>.

Details of the total area of land distributed to East Bengal peasants during the period (1912-1951) is presented in Table 5.2.

<sup>42</sup> Muslim League is a political party

**Table 5. 2: Total acreage of land distributed to the migrants from Bangladesh/East Bengal/East Pakistan during the years 1912 to 1951**

Districts	1912-1913	1917-1918	1922-1923	1927-1928	1944-1945	1950-1951
Kamrup	542,199	602,573	678,128	783,178	1,072,783	1,092,906
Darrang	309,935	363,235	412,281	485,348	645,644	700,231
Nowgong	261,700	295,581	374,938	463,677	628,868	699,348
Sibsagar	565,035	609,529	650,591	696,702	786,647	812,381
Lakhimpur	262,129	311,802	260,786	433,557	592,260	643,511
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,940,998</b>	<b>2,182,720</b>	<b>2,376,724</b>	<b>2,862,462</b>	<b>3,726,202</b>	<b>3,948,377</b>

Source: Roychoudhury, 2009, Asamat Bangladeshi (Bangladeshis in Assam), Jagaran Sahitya Prakashan, Guwahati.

The distribution of land to the Muslim peasants migrating from Bangladesh turned them from “*mere cultivators living a survivalist life to landowners within a span of few years in the four erstwhile lower districts of Assam; namely, Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong*” (Hazarika, 2000, p.74). These four districts were the ones to see the first wave of the massive flow of Muslims from East Bengal (Mullan, 1931), and according to Hazarika, “*this was to be the pattern of future migration to Assam*” (Hazarika, 2000, p. 74).

### 5.2.2 Partition and Post-Partition Period

The pattern of migration changed during and after the partition of India in 1947. Forced migration due to conflict, and also voluntary migration due to economic, political and social reasons, produced substantial cross-border migration. The trends in migration during the post partition period of 1946-1956 are presented in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3: Trends of Migration, 1946–January 1956**

Year of Migration	Number of Migrants (in 1000's)			Male:Female Ratio
	Male	Female	Total	
1946	3.7	3.4	11.1	1.1
1947	16.1	14.5	30.6	1.1
1948	24.6	21.6	46.2	1.1
1949	17.7	15.7	33.4	1.1
1950	114.5	97.4	211.9	1.2
1951	33.7	28.3	62	1.2
1952	16.3	13.9	30.2	1.2
1953	7.3	5.9	13.2	1.2
1954	5.9	5.3	11.2	1.1
1955	5.9	5.7	11.6	1.0
1956 (January) <sup>#</sup>	1.1	1.3	2.4	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>246.8</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>459.8</b>	<b>1.2</b>

Source: Report on Statistical Survey of Displaced Persons from East Pakistan in Assam, State Government Publication, 1955-56, Table A-25; <sup>#</sup> Data available only up to January 1956

Data presented in Table 5.3 show that large scale migration took place during the partition and in the years immediately after from 1947 to 1952. During this period the Hindus in large numbers migrated to Assam (Vaghaiwalla, 1951). Also the 'Nehru-Liaquat Pact of 1950 (known as the Delhi Pact of 1950), facilitated migration because it promised to safeguard the minority rights in the respective countries of settlement. Assured by this safeguard in the Act, many Muslims who had migrated to East Pakistan during the partition of India returned to Assam to settle permanently. According to Roychoudhury (2009), the number of migrants attributed to the 1950 Act was about 100,000. As is evident from Table 5.3, such migration slowed down substantially after 1952. Furthermore, it noted that ratios of male to female migrants in these period is around one, which suggests that most of them migrated with family.

Table 5.4 highlights the difference between actual population growth of both Hindus and Muslims of East Pakistan during the period 1951-61, and the projected population growth assumed at a rate of 30 percent for Muslims and 25 percent for Hindus. Table 5.5 shows the movement of Muslim and Hindu populations in the states of India bordering East Pakistan that is, Assam, West Bengal, Tripura and the Purnea district of Bihar during the same period 1951-61, against the projected percentage increase of 27.5 percent for Muslims and 25 percent for Hindus.

**Table 5. 4: Muslim and Hindu Population Movement of East Pakistan during 1951-1961**

Migrant Types	Population in 1961	Actual increase in population during 1951-1961		Projected Figures assuming 30 percent decadal increase in 1951-61 Muslim Population and 25 percent decadal increase in Hindu population	Difference
		Number	Percentage Change		
Muslim	40,890,481	8,663,842	26.9	41,894,631	-1,004,150
Caste Hindu	4,388,623	199,270	4.8	5,234,191	-847,568
Scheduled Caste	4,993,046	-59,204	-1.2	6,315,313	-1,322,267
<b>Total (Hindu population)</b>					<b>-2,169,835</b>

Sources: Notes on Census of India, 1961 (Religion), Paper Number-1 of 1963.

Comparing the Census figures of population movement of Muslims and Hindus from East Pakistan (*cf.* Table 5.4) to those of the border states of India, notably, Assam, West Bengal, Tripura and the district of Purnea of Bihar during the period of 1951 to 1961 (*cf.* Table 5.5), it is evident that considerable out-migration of Muslims and Hindus from East Pakistan and in-migration of both Muslims and Hindus to the border districts of Assam, West Bengal, Tripura and the Purnea district of Bihar took place (Commissioner of Census, 1961). When the figures in Table 5.4 are compared to those in Table 5.5, the deficit recorded for East Pakistan almost balances the excess in the Border States of India (Assam, West Bengal, and Tripura) and in the case of Muslims, also the district of Purnea in Bihar. Thus, one can conclude that migration indeed took place from East Pakistan to India during this period 1951 to 1961 (Census Commissioner, 1963).

**Table 5. 5: Movement of Muslim and Hindu Population in Assam, West Bengal, Tripura and Purnea district of Bihar, 1951-1961**

State/District	Population 1961	Population 1951	Projected Muslim Population assuming 27.5 percent increase during 1951-61 and 25 percent increase of Hindu Population	Difference
<b>Muslim Population</b>				
Assam	2,765,509	1,995,936	2,544,818	+220,691
West Bengal	6,985,287	5,118,269	6,525,793	+459,494
Tripura	230,002	136,940	174,599	+55,403
Purnea (Bihar)	1,163,934	679,280	866,082	+297,852
<b>Total</b>				<b>1,033,440</b>
<b>Hindu Population</b>				
Assam	7,884,921	5,886,063	7,357,579	+527,342
West Bengal	27,523,358	20,751,412	25,939,265	+1,584,093
Tripura	867,998	480,622	600,828	+267,170
<b>Total</b>				<b>2,378,605</b>

Source: Notes on Census of India, 1961 (Religion), Paper Number-1 of 1963

Table 5.6 shows that migration from East Pakistan continued beyond 1961 as can be seen from the population increase during that period. As per 1971 Census the population increase of Assam of 35 percent was higher than that of the national average of 24.8 percent for India. Furthermore, according to 1971 Census, Assam's population density rose by 35 percent from 138 people per sq. Km. in 1961 to 186 people per sq. km in 1971. During 1961-71, Assam had registered the highest increase in population density in India. According to Misra (1981), the increase in the density of population was largely due to migration.

**Table 5. 6: Population Trend in Assam compared to India, 1901-2011**

Year	Population (x100,000)		percentage Decadal Variation		Density (Person per sq.km)	
	Assam	India	Assam	India	Assam	India
1901	33	2384	-	-	42	77
1911	38	2521	17.0	5.8	49	82
1921	46	2513	20.5	0.3	59	81
1931	56	2789	19.9	11.0	71	90
1941	67	3186	20.4	14.2	85	103
1951	80	3611	19.9	13.3	102	117
1961	108	4392	35.0	21.5	138	142
1971	146	5481	35.0	24.8	186	177
1981*	180	6833	23.4	24.7	230	230
1991	224	8463	24.2	23.9	286	267
2001	266	10270	18.9	21.5	340	325
2011	312	12102	17.07	17.7	397	382

Source: Census of India, (\*Interpolated)

Population increase in Assam until 1991 also seem to support the claim that large-scale migration into the state has been a contributing factor. Table 5.6, shows that in the post-independence period, in particular during 1951-2011, Assam's population increased by 290 percent while India's population increased by 235 percent. Such growth cannot be

reasonably attributed to the fertility rate alone; for, Assam’s fertility rate did not rise significantly during that period.

The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) for Assam for 1971 was slightly higher than India it was 5.7 compared to 5.2 for India. However the TFR for Assam has declined since 1981, when it was 4.1 as compared to 4.5 for India, and in 1991 it was 3.5 as to 3.6 for India dropping to 3.0 for Assam and 3.04 for India in 2001 and was the same in 2011 at 2.4<sup>43</sup>. Therefore, it can be concluded that the high population growth in Assam compared to that of India was due to migration from neighboring countries (Bezboruah, 2012).

Table 5.7 presents the number of migrants from Bangladesh to Assam since the 1961 Census. It is to be noted that the 1981 Census could not be conducted in Assam due to students’ protests against infiltration of illegal migrants from other countries. Censuses since 1971 indicate a decreasing trend in the migrant population. This could be attributed to a number of factors, such as students’ protests against migration, out movement of migrants to other states for more lucrative jobs or work, the Bodo-land agitation etc.

**Table 5. 7: Number of Migrants from Bangladesh to Assam, 1961-2011**

<b>Years</b>	<b>Numbers of Migrants from Bangladesh</b>	<b>Decadal Percentage Change</b>
1961	774,869	-
1971	903,429	16.6
1991	288,109	-68.1
2001	164,144	-43.0
2011	114,844	-30.0

Source: Census of India, Assam Part II-C Table D -II (Place of Birth). Office of the Register General and Census Commissioner, Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011. The number of migrants during years 1961-1971 included from both East and West Pakistan.

The trend in migration can also be inferred from the study of decadal population growth in different districts of Assam since 1951; that is, after the independence of India. Table 5.8 shows the districts of Assam ranked according to population increase during 1951-2011 based on census data. The Eastern Assam districts of Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Tinsukia and Golaghat had consistently registered a low population increase. Golaghat’s recorded population increase during 1971-1991, which is more of an exception than the norm, as the 2001 Census data again showed a lower population gains for the district. Assuming the natural increase in population remained the same in all districts, it can be inferred that these districts experienced a lower rate of migration. In this context the Census Superintendent C.S. Mullan’s comment in his Census Report of 1931 that the Sibsagar District (undivided) would be the only district where Assamese would “feel at home” bears relevance and significance (Mullan, 1931, pp. 50-51).

<sup>43</sup> Source: [www.censusindia.gov.in/vital\\_statistics/SRS\\_Report](http://www.censusindia.gov.in/vital_statistics/SRS_Report)

**Table 5. 8: Districts of Assam Ranked according to Decadal Population Growth of Assam 1951-2011**

<b>Districts</b>	<b>1951-1961</b>	<b>1961-1971</b>	<b>1971-1991</b>	<b>1991-2001</b>	<b>2001-2011</b>
Dhubri*	8	9	19	4	1
Bongaigaon*	15	15	23	8	10
Kokrajhar*	4	5	10	20	26
Chirang*	11	4	2	27	21
Baksa*	3	3	8	23	22
Goalpara	13	6	13	3	3
Barpeta*	18	16	22	11	6
Nalbari*	19	18	6	21	20
Kamrup (Metro)*	27	25	27	1	12
Kamrup*	7	7	5	18	15
Darrang*	10	14	4	7	11
Udalguri*	5	12	20	24	23
Sonitpur*	9	17	9	16	15
Lakhimpur	6	8	12	15	14
Dhemaji	2	1	1	13	8
Morigaon	12	13	15	9	2
Nagaon	17	11	14	6	4
Golaghat	22	20	11	20	19
Jorhat	23	27	26	19	25
Sivasagar	24	26	24	17	24
Dibrugarh	20	24	25	22	18
Tinsukia	16	19	17	12	16
Karbi Anglong	1	2	7	5	13
Dima Hasao	25	10	3	2	17
Karimganj	21	21	21	9	7
Hailakandi	23	23	18	10	5
Cachar	22	22	16	14	9
<b>Assam</b>	<b>34.98</b>	<b>34.95</b>	<b>53.26</b>	<b>18.92</b>	<b>16.93</b>

Source: Census of India Assam, 1951-2011

\* Due to creation of 4 new districts, the population increase for 2001 have been affected in 12 districts.

Among the other districts, the districts of Dhubri, Karimganj, Cachar, Goalpara and Hailakandi have shown higher population growth during the period 1991-2011. It is to be noted in this context that Dhubri, Goalpara, Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi are the districts bordering Bangladesh, and as mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, the districts of Barpeta, Morigaon and Nagaon have a long history of migration from Bangladesh since the British period. Overall population growth in Assam is higher in the districts of western Assam which borders Bangladesh or are adjacent to the bordering districts.

The district of Karbi Anglong was carved out of the Nagaon district, and hence, it inherited migrant settlements and its population growth remains high. On the other hand, the districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Udalguri, Sonitpur and Darrang have shown a reversal in ranking during 1991-2011 census indicating out-migration, which could partially be due to the formation of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) covering the districts, and to some extent also as a result of ethnic violence which started in 1989 and continues to date.

### **5.2.3 Spatial Distribution**

Tables 5.9 provides data based on the "Place of Last Residence" of the number of migrants from Bangladesh in Assam as of 1991 and 2001 (Censuses 1991, 2001) respectively,

together with their duration of residency to date at that place. According to the 'Place of Last Residence' definition, estimated nationals from Bangladesh were 213,077 in 1991 and 114,844 in 2001. According to place of birth it was 288,109 in 1991 and 164,144 in 2001 (see Appendix 4, Table A4.1 and A4.2). Both show a decline in the number of migrants since 1971.

The migrants are not evenly distributed in all 23 districts of the state<sup>44</sup>. More than 50 percent of migrants reside in the districts bordering Bangladesh and their adjacent districts closer to these bordering districts. During the 1991 Census the district of Nagaon (43,171) recorded the highest number of migrants followed by Cachar (34,011) and Karimganj (28,568) (see Appendix 4, Table A4.1 for number of migrants from Bangladesh by Birth, 1991). During 2001 Census, too, the highest number of migrants was recorded in Nagaon (24,258), followed by Cachar (22,868) and Karimganj (15,964) (see Appendix 4, Table A4.2 for number of migrants from Bangladesh by Place of Birth, 2001). There was, however, not much change in the distribution of migrant population from 1991 to 2001. In 2001 the districts of Dibrugarh (2,185), Dhemaji (2,184), Sibsagar (622), Jorhat (854), Golaghat (979) and Lakhimpur (2,064) had fewer migrants from Bangladesh. The excessive concentration of migrants in certain districts as mentioned above is due to:

- (1) **Location:** These districts are on the border or adjacent to the bordering districts of Bangladesh
- (2) **Past history of migration** since the British Period into these districts (e.g., Nagaon, Barpeta, Darrang) as mentioned in chapter 2
- (3) **Ethnic conflicts and environmental disaster:** Due to ethnic conflict and environmental disasters people have moved from their original areas of settlement to other areas, such as the Kamrup district where the state capital is located with many ongoing development works and a thriving housing construction boom.
- (4) **Shift in the trend of occupation:** People at present are migrating where the employment opportunities are better with a higher and faster income potential. Today an urban setting offers such potential as the demand for workers is much higher with a prospect for a significantly better wage (Assam Migration Survey, 2009-2011).

### 5.3. Recent Trends

**Preference for an urban locale:** Because of the increasing scarcity of agricultural land in Assam there has been a noticeable shift in the preference of migrants from Bangladesh to move to urban areas which are seeing rapid industrialization and a big boom in infrastructure, construction and real estate activities. This trend is evident in Table 5.10 based on 1991-2001 Census data. The rural-urban divide in the migrant population

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<sup>44</sup> Currently, however, Assam's administrative districts have been reorganized to make smaller administrative units. Sequel to this reorganization, Assam has now 27 districts.

appears to be shrinking. Samaddar (1999, pp. 91-92) summed up the reason for this as below:

“No new deltaic areas remains to be reclaimed, no new Assam awaits the deltaic peasantry. Either they have the money to force open the gates to the Asia-Pacific region through immigration or they move westwards to India, Pakistan, the Middle-East accepting anything that comes in the way.”

An urban locale for a new migrant provides certain advantages because the urban setting is usually more cosmopolitan in terms of linguistic and ethnic makeup, and hence, the fear of being detected as an illegal migrant is much less. In addition, the earning potential in an urban area is higher, the chances of finding odd jobs for other family members to supplement the overall family-income are also more prevalent (Taher, 2011). Most of the women folk from the migrant community supplement their family income by working as domestic help in individual households or as daily wage earners (Taher, 2011). Table 5.10 shows the migration from rural to urban areas by migrants from Bangladesh in Assam during the period 1991 to 2001. It is seen that other than the districts of Kamrup, Nalbari, Morigaon, Lakhimpur and Karbi Anglong, there has been an increase in the urban population of migrants from Bangladesh in all other districts in Assam. The difference between rural and urban migrant population is decreasing, suggesting migrants' preference to move to rural areas due to better job opportunities.

***Shift in Migrants' Occupational Preferences:*** There has also been a noticeable and marked shift in migrants' preferences in occupation. Early migrants' had mostly agro-based occupations. This has also been corroborated through the field survey where the majority of the respondents cited an occupation related to agriculture. The current occupation preferences of migrants are construction work, daily wage earner, brick-kiln workers and domestics which fall into the 'other' category of workers according to the census definition. According to Hazarika "*the old settlers have land of their own, the new ones do not have...they are daily wage laborers mostly*" (Hazarika, 2000, p.148). Table 5.11 compares the occupational pattern in Assam for the years 2001 and 2011, and there has been a decrease in the percentage of cultivators and agricultural workers in 2011. While the percentage of workers engaged in the 'others' work category (such as manual laborers, rickshaw puller, push-cart puller, business, construction workers, etc.) had increased from 44 percent in 2001 to 46.5 percent in 2011.

**Table 5. 9: Bangladeshi Migrants to Assam Classified by Place of Last Residence and Duration of Residence in Place of enumeration per 1991 and 2001 Censuses**

Residency Period	<1 year		1-4 years		5-9 years		10-19 years		20+ years		Period not stated		Assam Total All Periods	
	1991 Census	2001 Census	1991 Census	2001 Census	1991 Census	2001 Census								
Total	1,419	214	4,810	1,152	5,568	1,788	16,200	4,791	177,900	100,020	7,180	6,879	213,077	114,844
Male	939	97	2,460	588	2,915	890	7,280	2,230	96,634	53,494	4,450	3,708	114,678	61,007
Female	480	117	2,350	564	2,653	898	8,920	2,561	81,266	46,526	2,730	3,171	98,399	53,837
Rural	860	154	2,880	699	3,510	989	11,200	3,091	126,637	66,650	3,760	4,456	148,847	76,039
Urban	559	60	1,930	453	2,058	799	5,000	1,700	51,263	33,370	3,420	2,423	64,230	38,805

Source: Census of India, 1991 and 2001, Series 4 – Assam (Migration Tables), Table D-2

**Table 5. 10: Trend in Migration for Bangladeshi Migrants from Rural to Urban Areas in Assam**

Districts	Rural-Urban gap 1991 (Percent)	Rural-Urban Gap 2001 (Percent)	Urban Population Growth Rate 1991-2001
Kokrajhar	44.6	34.8	4.9
Dhubri	4.8	-8.8	6.8
Goalpara	83.7	79.0	2.4
Bongaigaon	57.2	44.4	6.4
Barpeta	57.1	33.1	12.0
Kamrup	-2.1	2.0	-2.0
Nalbari	98.3	98.4	-0.1
Darrang	66.4	56.9	4.8
Marigaon	78.2	80.6	-1.2
Nagaon	46.5	36.7	4.9
Sonitpur	49.5	48.3	0.6
Lakhimpur	60.5	70.2	-4.8
Dhemaji	98.3	70.5	13.9
Tinsukia	-8.3	-31.1	11.4
Dibrugarh	6.0	-27.1	16.6
Sibsagar	53.9	51.5	1.2
Jorhat	-79.5	-85.3	2.9
Golaghat	79.4	-2.2	40.8
Karbi Anglong	66.9	77.8	-5.5
Dima Hasao	-13.0	-19.8	3.4
Cachar	36.0	26.6	4.7
Karimganj	61.0	59.5	0.8
Hailakandi	18.1	13.0	2.6
<b>Assam</b>	45.6	36.9	4.3

Source: Compiled from Census of India, Migration Table, 1991-2001

**Table 5. 11: Workers in different Category of Work in Assam, 2001 and 2011**

Work Category	2011	percentage	2001	percentage
Cultivators	4061627	33.9	3730773	39.0
Agricultural Labourers	1845346	15.4	1263532	13.2
Household Industries	491321	4.1	344912	3.6
Others	5571395	46.5	4199374	44.0

Source: Census of India, Assam, 2001 and 2011

There could be yet another reason for migrants' shift in occupation. At present, migrant laborers are being hired from Bangladesh via middleman and there is already an established network to help them with the recruitment and transportation to work sites be it the construction sites, brick kilns, or as fisherman etc.

“There are well organized gangs who organize travel and settlement to India for a fee. This illegal system of organized movement has been around since the beginning of the influx into Assam, at the start of the last century. These days, it is much more profitable and better tuned” (Hazarika, 2000, p.117).

These workers are provided with shelter and their daily wage is lower than that of the local workers. After completing their work, most do not return to Bangladesh but remain in India, and should it be necessary, change their occupation to any type of job for survival (Barthakur, 2012). This trend shows an overlap of labor migration and settlers. As most of these migrants are hired as temporary workers, they try to avoid returning to Bangladesh because they may not be able to re-enter India if they were to return. Furthermore, they generally enjoy a better livelihood and some even get married to families already settled in Assam, thus establishing a family tie. In the field surveys, too, 93 percent respondents indicated that they would not like to return to Bangladesh.

***Decline in Migration Since 1991: Why?*** The 1991 Census data showed a decline in the growth of the migrant population, which has been a subject of much discussion, debate and controversy among scholars, different interest groups and politicians. During the field survey in 2011, it was found that various “explanations” or “reasons” for the decline of migrants' population were put forward by some scholars.

As mentioned in Chapter 3 there are inaccuracies in the place of birth statistics reported by the censuses. This makes the estimation of migration based on the place of birth unreliable. A comparison of the in-migration figures given in the 1991 Census report with those of 1971 Census report (Table 5.12) shows that the number of migrants (identified on the basis of the place of birth statistics) had declined from 1,465,251 in 1971 to 876,134 in 1991. This implies out-migration of 40.2 percent of the pre-1971 migrants from Assam during the period 1971-1991. Interestingly, in the same census report of 1991, the migration table shows that during this period more than 300,000 people migrated to Assam. This contradiction in the census report indicates inaccuracy in the place of birth statistics (Saikia *et al.* 2003, p.92). Alternatively, as also mentioned in Chapter 3, some migrants did not report their birthplace correctly which makes it difficult to rely in the census birthplace statistics, and in turn, the calculation of the exact number of migrants

in Assam. To make things worse, the 1981 census could not be held due to prolonged agitation and disturbances on the issue of illegal migration to Assam. The figures reported in the census were estimated, with the Census of India data in the previous decade and the next decade questioning the accuracy of the data used in its estimation.

**Table 5. 12: Interstate and International Migration to Assam per Places of Birth statistics, 1951-1991**

Year	Interstate			International			Total		
	Migrants	(+/-)	Percent	Migrants	(+/-)	Percent	Migrants	(+/-)	Percent Gain or Loss
1951	449,646	n/a	n/a	866,268	n/a	n/a	1,315,954	n/a	n/a
1961	468,062	18,416	4.1	813,346	-52,922	-6.1	1,281,408	-34,546	-2.6
1971	505,425	40,363	8.0	959,826	146,480	18.0	1,465,251	183,843	14.4
1991	536,579	31,154	6.2	339,555	-620,271	-64.6	876,134	-58,117	-40.2

Source: Census of India 1951, 1961, 1971, 1991, Assam Migration Tables (Saikia, 2003).

\* The migration figures are adjusted for the present political boundary of Assam

As mentioned in Chapter 2, conflicts and organized movements against migrants by various organizations in Assam, the anti-foreigner movement during 1978-1985, the Nellie massacre of 1983 and the Bodoland movement which started in 1987, may have discouraged many to migrate to Assam (Das, d.n). However, comparing the number of migrants in North-East India from 1981 to 2001 (Table 5.13) there was a rise in the number of migrants from Bangladesh into Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh during 1981-1991, while it decreased in all other North-East states. Nagaland and Mizoram (another border state) experienced an increase in migrant population in 2001. By comparing the trend of growth of migrant population from Bangladesh to Tripura with Assam, it can be inferred that unfavorable conditions (that is, prevailing anti-migrant sentiments in Assam) had in part led to a decline in the migrant population in the state.

**Table 5. 13: Migration from Bangladesh to North-East India, 1981-2001 (Based on Place of Last Residence)**

States in North-East India	Number of Migrants		
	1981	1991	2001
Tripura	338,808	364,448	260,844
Arunachal Pradesh	963	1,742	6,591
Assam	NA	213,077	114,844
Meghalaya	14,793	6,399	4,586
Mizoram	1,226	737	929
Manipur	1,536	859	499
Nagaland	744	247	384
Sikkim	69	52	28

Source: Census of India (1981, 1991 and 2001). Census was not held in Assam in 1981

Improved conditions in Bangladesh have also contributed to the decline in migration to Assam. It is noted that with development activities, there is a marked improvement in human, economic as well as in several other fields since the end of 1980s in Bangladesh (see Table 5.14). During the war of 1971 the economy of Bangladesh was shattered, but due to developmental work undertaken during the 1970s and 1980s its economy started to grow towards the end of the 80s.

Table 5.14, shows that other than the unemployment rate which was 4.5 percent in 2010 (only a meager increase from 4.3 percent in 1991). Other sectors have shown more positive results. House size has increased by 1.2 percent from 1991 to 2011, use of tap water has gone up by 4 percent, and in 2011 61.6 percent of the population were using sanitary toilets. The consumption of wood as cooking fuel had also been drastically reduced from 44.3 percent in 1991 to 34.8 percent in 2011 and the percentage of people living in brick and cement house had increased by 6.1 percent. Regarding population characteristics, sex ratio had reduced by 6.6 percent and there was a big jump in literacy rates with a 22.8 percent increase. The percentage of professionals went up from 2.2 percent in 1991 to 5.6 percent in 2011, although the clerical-support workforce remains the same, the proportion of agriculture, forestry and fishing workers have reduced drastically from 50.4 percent in 1991 to 30.1 percent in 2011, a reduction of 20.3 percent. On the other hand the crude death rate per 1,000 reduced from 43 in 1981 to 18 in 2011, and the Infant mortality rate decreased from 87 in 1991 to 38 in 2011 and child death rate declined to 10.9 percent.

Table 5.14 also shows economic growth and development in Bangladesh. The income distribution as percentage of national income in the highest quintile was 38 percent and 8 percent in the lowest quintile in 1981. The proportion of population below the national poverty line reduced by 25.1 percent and the poverty gap ratio reduced by 10.5 percent in 2011. Net enrolments in primary education rose by 44 percent from 51 percent in 1991 to 94.9 percent in 2010. In the environmental field, other than CO<sub>2</sub> emission which rose from 0.14 metric tons per capita in 1991 to 0.30 in 2007, the proportion of land area covered by forest (tree coverage) has gone up by 10.3 tree density >10 percent and consumption of ozone depleting CFCs in metric tons went down by 67 percent from 1991 to 2009. An increase in the per capita GDP; which rose by 3.5 percent during 1990-2010 compared to meager 0.4 percent during 1970-1990 (UNICEF Statistics of Bangladesh) has led to overall improved conditions in Bangladesh.

With growth and development from the end of 1980s as well as opportunities in other countries, such as Malaysia or the Gulf countries, may have encouraged many to move to those countries. Again due to anti-foreigners movement in Assam, Bodo-land movement and ongoing problems, outmigration continued from Assam to other states in India (Ramachandran, 2009). In addition some migrants use migration to Assam as a conduit for further migration to more "lucrative" destinations, like other states in India where opportunities for manual laborers are greater.

Among the respondents, 9 percent said that they would like to move to other places. Others would like to move within Assam, and some further west, especially to the state of West Bengal where they would experience more similar culture and language.

**Table 5. 14: Socio-Economic and Demographic Indicators of Bangladesh, 1981-2011**

Indicators	2011	2004	1991	1981
House Size	4.4	4.7	5.5*	-
<b>House Amenities/Facilities</b>				
<b>Source of Drinking Water</b>				
Tap	8.1	7.8	4.1	-
Tube Well	89.1	51.0	82.5	-
Well	0.7	1.8	7.2	-
Pond	1.3	1.3	4.6	-
River/Ditch/canal	0.4	7.8	1.7	-
Others	0.5	30.2	-	-
<b>Toilet Facilities</b>				
Sanitary with water seal	27.8	-	-	-
Sanitary without water seal	33.8	-	-	-
Non-sanitary	31.4	-	-	-
Open Space	7.0	-	-	-
<b>Cooking Fuel</b>				
Wood	34.8	31.8	44.3	-
Kerosene	1.0	1.8	0.6	-
Gas/LPG	12.6	9.1	2.4	-
Electricity	0.4	0.8	0.9	-
Straw/leaf/cow dung	51.2	55.9	-	-
Bio-Gas	0.1	-	-	-
<b>House construction materials</b>				
<b>Roof</b>				
Straw/Bamboo/Polythene/Plastic/Canvas	4.4	2858	47.3*	-
Tin (CI Sheet)	83.0	67.0	48.6	-
Brick/cement	10.7	4.1	4.6*	-
<b>Population Characteristics</b>				
Sex Ratio	99.7	104.1	106.3	
Literacy Rate (all ages)	47.7	38.1	24.9*	26 (15 yrs +)
Crude death rate	4.8	6.1	9.7	
Crude Birth Rate	17.9	20.8	28.5	43
Infant mortality rate	37.8	54	87	139
Adult literacy rate	72 (2009)	-	37.2	26 (1997)
Net Enrolment in Primary Education	94.9 (2010)	-	60.5	51
Unemployment	4.5 (2010)	4.3 (2005-06)	4.3 (2002-03)	-
Net Labor Force	38.9 (2010)	35.1 (2005-06)	34.5 (2002-03)	
<b>Occupation</b>				
Professional	5.6	4.4	2.2	-
Managerial	12.4	0.5	0.07	-
Clerical support workers	2.7	3.9	2.8	-
Craft and related Trade workers	12.9	21.2	8.3	-
Skilled Agricultural/Forestry and Fishing works	30.1	49.5	50.4	-
Technicians and Associated Professionals	1.8	-	-	-
Plant and Machine Operator and Assemblers	8.4	-	-	-
<b>Environmental Sustainability</b>				
CO <sub>2</sub> emission (metric tons per capita)	0.30	-	0.14	-
Proportion of land area covered by forest (tree coverage) Tree density > 10 percent	19.3	-	9.0	-
Consumption of ozone depleting CFCs in metric tons	128 (2009)	-	195	
Proportion of species threatened with extinction	106 (2010)	-	-	-

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Population and Housing Census, 2011, Socio-Economic and Demographic Report, National Series, Volume 4 and The World Bank, 1981, Bangladesh: Current Economic Situation and Review of the Second Plan, Volume 1: Main Report and Statistical Appendix, Feb. 23, Report No. 3309-BD.

## 5. 4 Migrant's Process of Settlement in Assam

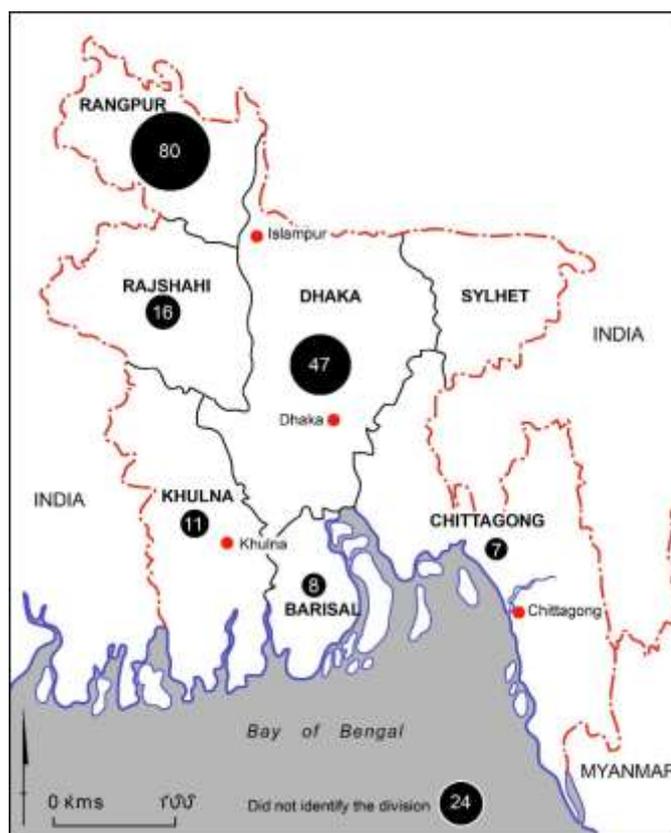
### 5.4.1 Areas of Origin of Migrants from Bangladesh

Most migrants were landless and those who owned land often did not have enough to sustain their livelihood (Deka, 2011). The Field Survey found that in terms of skills, they

are also very ill-prepared as the majority of them are not well-educated, lacking even a junior-school diploma. Although networking is a major factor in migration, they (65 percent respondents) migrated mainly due to economic reasons. Some minority Hindus, however, migrated for political or social reasons.

The field survey established that divisions<sup>45</sup> that border Assam are mostly the places where the migrants come from. These are: Dhaka, Rangpur, Rajshahi and Chittagong. As shown in Figure 5.1, Rangpur being the division closest to Assam, it is also the most prolific source of migrants (41 percent), followed by Dhaka (24 percent). This was also noted in earlier studies by Saikia *et al.* (2003) and Deka (2010). Taher (2011) in his presentation at the Vivekananda Kendra Institute of Culture in Guwahati, stated that sources of the first wave of migrants that started at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with East Bengal peasants were from Rangpur, Boghora and Mymensingh. Therefore, it is interesting to note that the pattern in terms of the source-locations of migrants essentially remains unchanged till today.

**Figure 5. 1: Map of Bangladesh showing the places of origin of the respondents' migrants and their numbers from different divisions of Bangladesh**



Source: Assam Migration Field Survey, 2009-12.  
(Figure within black circle denotes the number of respondents)

<sup>45</sup> Bangladesh is divided into 7 administrative Divisions, which are further sub-divided into Districts.

The majority of respondents, 149 out of 193 (77 percent), moved directly from their birthplaces to Assam. Some migrated within Bangladesh before migrating to Assam; their number stood at 28 of the 193 respondents (i.e., 15 percent). The other 8 percent chose not to answer this question. The reasons the respondents moved within Bangladesh before migration are shown in Table 5.15. It is seen that about one fifth of them moved from their birth place for employment, one quarter due to abuse and about one seventh due to famine.

**Table 5. 15: Reasons why some respondents relocated elsewhere within Bangladesh before migrating to Assam**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Famine of 1974	4	14.3
Employment/Work	6	21.4
Untoward Incidents (freedom fighters)	2	7.1
Abused	7	25.0
Business	2	7.1
Financial gain	1	3.6
Livestock and fishery not as productive and economic	1	3.6
Flood	1	3.6
Purchased Land	2	7.1
Marriage	2	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Assam Migration Field Survey, 2009-2012

#### **5.4.2 Selection of Present Place of Residence in Assam**

Prior to migration, potential migrants largely seek information in relation to areas of settlement, sources of earning, initial support, cultural ties and religious freedom, and more importantly, security at destination. In such efforts, they depend heavily on informal network in both their home country, as well as the country of destination (Ukwatta, 2010). As Massey *et al.* (1994, p. 728) noted:

“Migrant networks are set of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship and shared community origin. The existence of these ties is hypothesized to increase the likelihood of emigration by lowering the costs, raising the benefits and mitigating the risks of international movement.”

This study found that potential migrants had established networks, be it relatives, friends or even people of the same community (Table 5.16). Such networks gave them substantial support by way of providing relevant information before their departure with regard to intended destination, and anticipated conditions on their immediate accommodation. Interestingly, there also exists a network of brokers who are “specialized” in facilitating migrants’ movement across the border and they offer their “services” for a fee (Afsar, 2008).

Table 5.16 summarizes the responses to the question on migrants’ reasons for choosing the present place of residence in Assam. The presence of relatives and people of the same community was the major factor influencing their choice for a particular place of residence. The Social Network Theory of Hugo (1981) focuses on micro-level factors that are relevant in their settlement process. It assumes a relationship between migrants and their friends or family members at their place of origin. The existence of such network initiates new

migration as it lowers the risk as well as the cost of migration for the newcomers. It also acts as incentive for more migration as it leads to expansion of network in places of origin and destination and is relevant in this study.

**Table 5. 16: Reasons for settlement at the current place of residence**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Presence of Relatives	64	33.2
More work opportunity for daily laborers or casual workers	25	13.0
Presence of fellow countrymen	19	9.8
Government support	13	6.7
Proximity to town	13	6.7
Land for settling	10	5.2
Opportunities for Fishermen	6	3.1
Facilities for agricultural workers	5	2.6
Proximity to Bangladesh	4	2.1
Other Reasons (education, religion, business etc.)	4	2.1
Not Responded	30	15.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Assam Migration Field Survey, 2009-2012

Table 5.16, shows that 33.2 percent gave the main reason for choosing the current place of residence as the presence of relatives. Another 10 percent chose the present place of residence because of their friends and fellow countrymen who either came earlier or together and decided to settle in the same place for 'moral support' and also security in times of need.

#### **5.4.3 The Pattern of Employment among Migrants**

Successful settlement of migrants is intricately linked to their ability to get some form of employment to earn a livelihood for the self and family, and for this they mostly depend on the network at the place of destination. Therefore, not surprisingly most migrants state the term 'settled' in the context of being able to achieve some kind of fulfillment in their new-found place of residence. As Massey *et al* (1993, p. 449) explains:

"Networks make international migration extremely attractive as a strategy for risk diversification. When migrant networks are well developed, they put a destination job within easy reach of most community members and make emigration a reliable and secure source of income. Thus, the self-sustaining growth of networks that occurs through the progressive reduction of costs may also be explained theoretically by the progressive reduction of risk."

When moving to a foreign country where migrants are often not welcome, they tend to seek any help they can get from various sources. Table 5.17 shows that among the respondents, 142 (73.6 percent) were helped by someone (family members, relatives and friends they knew in their days in Bangladesh) to settle in Assam. For 11.9 percent of the documented refugees, some form of government help (financial grants towards purchase of land and building a house, low-interest loan and food subsidies) was provided to settle in their current places. However 1.6 percent of them claimed that they were helped by agents to settle in Assam. Only 23 (11.9 percent) settled on their own.

**Table 5. 17: Source of Help Received by Respondents' in Settling in Assam**

<b>Who helped to settle</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Relatives	94	48.7
Family Members	17	8.8
Friends	31	16.1
Government	23	11.9
Middleman	3	1.6
Settled on their own	23	11.9
Not responded to question	2	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Assam Migration Field Survey, 2009-2012

Again relatives (48.7 percent) and family members (8.8 percent) are the ones that the respondents initially took help from in their process of settlement followed by friends (16.1 percent). The presence of friends or relatives or family members is one of the causes for this migration. Being part of the same country before 1947, and with relatives or friends or even fellow countrymen living on both sides of the border, this migration is likely to continue as an inducement to migration to certain extent as:

“Once the number of network connections in an origin area reaches a critical threshold, migration becomes self-perpetuating because each act of migration itself creates the social structure needed to sustain it” (Massey et al., 1993, p .449).

#### **5.4.4 Family Status of Respondents at the time of Migration**

The New Economics of Migration theory states that:

“Migration decisions are not made by isolated individual actors, but by larger units of related people-typically families or households- in which people act collectively not only to maximize expected income, but also to minimize risks and to loosen constraints associated with a variety of market failures, apart from those in labor market” (Massey et al., 1993, p. 436)

The field survey found that the vast majority of the respondents (91 percent) stated that they had come with their families in the first instance (Table 5.18). This, in general, agrees with the history of migration to Assam, as in the past migration from East Bengal occurred as families. This was stated in the Census Report of Assam in 1921, and also restated in the following Census Report of 1931 (Census Report of Assam, Part-1, 1931, p. 52).

Another more recent study by Gupta *et al.* (1997) agrees with this study in that most of migrants from Bangladesh have moved with their families (Gupta et al., in Dey and Samaddar (eds.), 1997). The percentage of male and female migrants as recorded in the 1971 to 2001 Censuses by place of birth (Table 5.18) shows that the differences are not significant and agrees with the hypothesis that most migrated with their families. However, in general, more males than females migrate.

The field study found that only 9 percent of respondent came alone, but later formed family in Assam by marrying mostly from and among the migrant communities. Hazarika (2000, p. 139) claims that “*these days, they don’t return to Bangladesh to seek brides. There are enough Bangladeshi young women in Delhi and other parts of the country from whom they can choose*”.

**Table 5. 18: The percentage of Male and Female among Migrants, 1971 -2001**

Year	percentage of Male and female Migrants from Bangladesh	
	Male ( percent)	Female ( percent)
1971	53.7	46.3
1991	54.2	45.8
2001	53.2	46.8

Source: Census of India, Assam, 1971, 1991, 2001 (D-1 Series)

Table 5.19 provides an indication of the types of family members who accompanied the migrants, and most were accompanied by immediate family members. This is because it would be an added advantage to the migrants as family members could help supplement the family income. As the majority of them migrate to places with a labor-intensive agrarian base, it made sense to be equipped with “more hands to work with”.

**Table 5. 19: Family Members accompanying respondents during migration**

Family Members	Number	Percentage
Father	76	39.4
Mother	95	49.2
Husband	9	4.7
Wife	65	33.7
Brother	101	52.3
Sister	71	36.8
Son	105	54.4
Daughter	87	45.1
In-laws	3	1.6
Others/Uncles/Grand Parents/Aunts etc.	6	3.1

Source: Assam Migration Survey, 2009-2012

It is seen that those who had migrated with their family in the first instance are, in general, doing much better in terms of their economic and social status. This agrees with the New Economics Theory of migration which states that:

“Unlike individuals, households are in a position to control risks to their economic well-being by diversifying the allocation of household resources, such as family labor” (Massey *et al.*, 1993, p. 436).

#### **5.4.5 Migrants’ Ties with Bangladesh**

Out of 193 respondents, only 62 (32 percent) respondents stated that they maintained some form of ties with their ancestral roots in Bangladesh (Table 5.20).

**Table 5. 20: Reasons why respondent maintain link with Bangladesh**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Close family members and relatives still living in Bangladesh	48	77.4
Possess ancestral properties	2	3.2
Need to visit for emotional/business purpose	12	19.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Assam Migration Field Survey, 2009-2012

Visiting their ancestral places in Bangladesh is not easy particularly for relatively new migrants for two compelling reasons; one, they cannot financially afford it, and second, for the irregular migrants the fear that they might be caught in the process either at the border of Bangladesh or India during their attempt to re-enter Assam. For such new migrants, communications through modern media, such as mobile phones or public phones, along with mail, appears to be the preferred route {Focus Group Discussion (FGD)}. However, through the Government of India's recent rules on tightening the registration and tracking of SIM cards for mobile phones, it has not been easy for many new migrants to access mobile phone services. Nevertheless, these constraints have not totally stopped them from maintaining links with their ancestral homes in Bangladesh. Many use informal channels to keep up with relatives left behind and some even send remittances through a network of middlemen who operate clandestinely in the migrant communities, as well as friends or relatives visiting Bangladesh. Many of the migrants do not have institutional savings, their only avenue to send remittances to Bangladesh is via informal channels (especially through 'Hawala') or middleman with a payment of higher-than-normal commission (FGD). By examining the migration data, the World Bank reckons that about \$3.8 Billion probably crosses the Indian border every year (The Economist, 2012, April 28). Again in 2014 the World Bank reckons that 6.6 Billion US Dollars were sent by migrants from Bangladesh in India to Bangladesh and that it is the single biggest source of foreign remittances accounting for about 47.1 percent of the total remittance to Bangladesh (The Assam Tribune, 2014, June 29).

With a few exceptions, the migrants who have been in Assam for a longer period usually do not maintain links with Bangladesh. Most of their children have settled and married in Assam or West Bengal within their community, and with relatives and friends in Assam a network of relationships has developed within India and therefore, they do not feel the need to visit or maintain links with Bangladesh. The only link, if any, they maintain is with their own generations such as brothers, sisters by mail or by phone, and mostly have no links with the next generation.

#### **5.4.6 Migrants' Route to Assam**

According to Hazarika (2000), illegal or irregular migration usually takes place along South Salmara, Kedar, Binnachaara, Jhaukutty, and Balabhoot. According to Focus Groups, the majority of migrants move in via the river by boat through the Dhubri district. The numerous chars located in the border areas offer an added advantage for migration as people can move from one char to another quickly, and thus, easily avoid detection at the initial stage of their migration (Ahmed, 2009). The study shows that majority of the

migrants 45 percent entered by boat and then walked and later used public transport such as bus, train or car even rickshaw to reach India. Only 59 percent of the respondents answered this question.

A majority of the respondents said that the open or porous, and easily negotiable border, made their migration easy as 22 percent took advantage of it. With the help of brokers they entered India without documents. Only 1 percent entered with valid documents whereas 2 percent were helped by their relatives and friends.

Among the respondents, five entered India through Changrabandar (Cooch Behar), Boroybari BSF Camp, Sonapara (Mankachar) and Sukchar border. The immigrants came through these borders and also from Patomari, Ghewoner check-post, and from Mankachar border of Dhubri district. Some of them were helped by relatives or friends or family members who were frequent travelers, others just walked in as intruders while some others were facilitated by personnel of the Border Security Force (BSF) of India and the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) of Bangladesh only three came with valid documents.

Scholars like Hazarika (2000), Ray (2002), and Kumar (2006) have mentioned that one of the reasons for this ongoing migration was the porous and easily negotiable border with Bangladesh. In general, responses received from migrants, support this observation, as most respondents claimed that the porous Indo-Bangladesh border with no obstruction on either side is making it easier for anyone who wanted to enter India.

#### **5.4.7 An Actual Journey of a Migrant as it Happened: Through Khakan Das Experience**

One of the migrants from Bangladesh (Khakan Das, the pseudo name used at his request) shared his own migration journey on the condition that he remains anonymous.

Khakan Das' story suggests that networking was the most important factor in his "successful" migration from Bangladesh to Assam. Also, the key drivers for migration appeared to be security for family, and the hope of better economic prospects in India. A few other respondents, also mentioned similar drivers in group discussions.

**Text Box 1: Khakan Das' Migration Journey**  
**"From Mymensingh, Bangladesh to Assam"**

Khakan Das hails from Mymensingh district of Bangladesh and lived in an extended family with his grandparents and others. His father owned a small business and about 2 acres of agricultural land with which the family could live a decent life. However, after his sister was born his grandfather together with his father decided to move to India. As per Das, the main cause of migration for Khakan Das' family was the security of his family. There were number of steps and also conditions one had to fulfil in the process of migration and the most important being the presence of relative or friend or fellow countrymen or even employer in India; that is, someone to provide initial shelter in India. *"Without initial help at the destination this migration would not be easy or even possible"* said Khakan Das.

The decision to move was kept secret by the family for various reasons, some of them being: selling of property at the market price, transferring money and valuables to India, fear of complaints to authorities and also demand for money by local "self-styled bosses" in the village. Money was usually transferred via 'Hawala' whose job was to pay them equivalent amount of Indian Rupees in India in exchange for Bangladesh Taka, with, of course, a "service" charge. After the decision to move, the first step his grandfather took was to find a broker (or 'dalal' as known in local language), who would be able to take them from their house in Bangladesh to his relative's house in India with a minimum payment. Here word "relatives" was implied in more general term; for, it did not necessarily mean close family members but someone who was distantly related to them. According to Khakan Das his Grandfather had paid 2000 Bangladesh Taka for each person to be transferred.

The next step his grandfather took was to move them to their maternal grandparents' house. He then sold his property and also the business. *"The day before we moved to India we came to our village and early next morning we left. We went to the border by bus and waited till nightfall. During night our broker took us to the Bangladesh border, he then paid the BDR and we were taken to the Indian border where the broker from India also paid the BSF, but the amount was not disclosed to us and we did not bother to know. The BSF personal informed the broker that 2 Km away, east to his post there were no guards that day and we could sneak in through that route"*. They moved in quietly through that route into India. After getting into India they waited till morning when they took the bus and then rickshaw to his relative's house.

Initially his relatives would introduce them as visitors coming from some other place in India; and for them, it was Jalpaiguri in the neighboring state of West Bengal. After staying on low profile for few months his father got a job in a grocery store as a salesman. They then rented a house and lived on their own. His grandfather later bought a piece of land and built a house with the money he got by selling his land and business in Bangladesh. Khakan Das said that school admission or obtaining Ration Card (an identity card plus a document which provides subsidized ration or food stuffs plus fuel) was not difficult for them to procure as they were helped by relatives, and also by donation to authorities concerned. Khakan Das said that eventually all his family members are registered voters in India. He also agreed to answer a few follow up questions from the author.

**Author:** Do you still maintain any link with Bangladesh?

**Khakan Das (K.D.):** Yes, my relatives still live there, although we did not see them. We communicate with each other mostly via middleman or dalal and also by mail or phone.

**Author:** After coming to India how do you feel?

**K.D.:** We have some better facilities and freedom here.

**Author:** Are there any problems here that you would like to talk about?

**K.D.:** The same problem as in Bangladesh, security and safety but of different type.

**Author:** What is it?

**K.D.:** The constant fear of being detected and deported, even though we are in the voters' list.

**Author:** But, you are here for a long time?

**K.D.:** Yes, but you never know who thinks what and when, your neighbor, the authorities or even the local people.

**Author:** Who do you vote for?

**K.D.:** Anyone who promises to protect us.

## **5.5 Number of Migrants from Bangladesh to Assam**

When studying the population distribution of Bangladesh nationals in India it is necessary to take into account both the Hindu and Muslim populations as both groups have migrated to India, including Assam, for different reasons and purposes. Because the 1947 partition of India, into India and Pakistan was based on the then prevailing religious demographic distribution in the country, religion continues to play a major and dominant role in the Indian sub-continent comprising of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

When analyzing the demographic composition of the state of Assam, a clear distinction has to be made between the indigenous Muslim population and the migrant Muslim community. The origin of the indigenous Muslim population of Assam can be traced back to 13<sup>th</sup> century during the pre-Mughal (who ruled India from 1501 to 1857) rule. This group is settled in Guwahati, Hajo and their adjacent areas, and around the tea growing areas of the eastern districts of Assam, mainly Jorhat, Golaghat, Sibsagar and Dibrugarh (Hussain, 2004). In addition, the Barak Valley hosts indigenous Cachari Muslims and the undivided Goalpara district has a large indigenous Muslim population. Most of them were originally Rajbanshis, converted to Islam (Mannan, 2011).

With the above background the number of both documented (based on available Census figures) and irregular migrants estimated by indirect method is presented in the next segment

### **5.5.1 Number of Bangladesh Nationals Residing in Assam during 1991-2001**

Normally data collected during the census should give the magnitude of migration in a given time period within a given geographical area. Unfortunately such data are not readily available, and hence the need to estimate the magnitude of migration by using indirect methods (Bhuyan, 2002, p. 77).

Although there are no appropriate data to estimate the number of migrants from Bangladesh to India or Assam, there is, however, a noticeable increasing trend in the number of visas India has issued to Bangladesh nationals recently for example, 448,000 visas were issued in 2010-11, 481,000 in 2011-12 and 483,000 in 2012-13. Furthermore, the newly elected Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government of India had decided to relax its visa regime to Bangladesh nationals<sup>46</sup>. This proposal was conveyed by Ms. Sushma Swaraj, India's Foreign Minister in her first visit to Bangladesh on June 26, 2014. As per the proposed visa regime, Bangladesh nationals below the age of 13 years (children) and elderly persons above the age of 65 years would be given multiple-entry tourist visas for 5 years after their arrival in India. This proposal by the BJP-led government took everyone by surprise (both anti and pro-migrant lobbies) as the BJP was the most vocal among all

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<sup>46</sup> Source: The Assam Tribune, June 29, 2014 story by Kalyan Barooah, entitled: "Bangla immigrants sent home US\$6 Billion Last Year: World Bank".

national political parties with its stand against migration from Bangladesh. It is speculated that the new government wishes to address the issue of migration through friendly discussions with the current Bangladesh Government. By encouraging a visa regime it hopes to bring some transparency into the system of tracking, and tackling the issue. In an interview with the Prothom Alo daily published on June 29, 2014 in Bangladesh, Ms Swaraj underlined the need for consultations with all stakeholders to carefully handle the problem along India's nearly 4,000-km porous border with its eastern neighbor. Ms. Swaraj (Prothom Alo, 2014, June 29) was quoted as saying:

"We not only want to maintain the relationship both countries enjoyed during the previous regime, but also want to take it to a new height. ...Illegal migrants' issue is a sensitive subject in any country and needs careful handling. ...We want to address the issue through consultations with all stakeholders. ....The issue is also important for both the countries on the security front. ..It's a porous border. People living on the border are poor and the areas are densely populated. For this, lots of illegal activities are taking place. ...Both countries should work together to stop illegal activities in the border areas."

Quoting from the book: "Bangladeshi Migrants – A Threat to India" by P.K Mishra, who was responsible for the border security as the Additional Director-General of India's Border Security Force, the Assam Tribune (June 29, 2014) reported that the estimated size of illegal migrants from Bangladesh in India was about 60 million. (The Assam Tribune, 2014, June 29). These migrants are the single biggest source among all foreign remittances (about 47.1 percent of the total) to Bangladesh, amounting to over US\$ 6.6 Billion.

With the above background the number of both documented (based on available Census figures) and irregular migrants estimated by an indirect method is presented next.

### **5.5.2 Illegal Migration**

Illegal migration, also referred to as irregular migration, has been an issue acknowledged as a major concern by almost every group. As reported by the Assam Tribune on December 6, 2011 the indigenous people and the minority community or the tribal population of Assam claim that the slow but regular influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh to Assam has been an on-going problem. There is, however, no unanimity among these groups when asked to comment on the scale and magnitude of illegal migration that is occurring. Different groups come up with a different set of estimates on the number of illegal migrants from Bangladesh. Commenting on their number, Abdul Mannan in his article 'Infiltration: Myth and or Reality' writes:

"Different estimates have been put forward by interested quarters at different stages, as to the number of foreign nationals, ranging from 15 to 84 lakhs<sup>47</sup>. Contrary to these estimates, the minorities and a few leftist intellectuals, while acknowledging the presence of Bangladeshis, feel that it is in thousands and not in lakhs" (Mannan, 1991, p.1).

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<sup>47</sup> 1 lakh = 100,000

The All Assam Student Union and other organizations behind the anti-foreigners movement in the state had put the figure to be as high as 4.5 to 5 million in the mid-1980's (Hussain, 2004). According to Hazarika (2000), no less than one-third of Assam's 22.38 million populations were migrants from Bangladesh and their descendants.

According to the Commanding Officer of Border Security Force of India (2009) there were about seven million illegal Bangladesh origin nationals in Assam (in 2009) and they were concentrated in Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Nagaon, Kamrup, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts of Assam. Among the illegal settlers, 85 percent are Muslims and the rest are Hindus and others (Commandant, BSF, 2009, researcher's interview).

A study done from the Institute of Development Studies, Dhaka points out that about 4.65 to 5 million migrated from Bangladesh between 1961 to 1974 (Hazarika, 1994). Recently the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and the National Population Research and Training Institute (NPRTI) of Bangladesh have officially reported that over 900,000 Hindus left Bangladesh during the decade 2001-2011 (The Assam Tribune, August 29, 2013). This probably explains why the percentage of Hindu population in Bangladesh declined from 9.2 percent in 2001 to 8.5 percent in 2011.

The former Governor of Assam, S.K.Sinha, in his report to the President of India in 1998, stated that about 5 million illegal migrants from Bangladesh have settled in Assam (Sinha, 1998). More recently, in 2009, Chatterjee compiled data from various sources including Government of India Home Ministry's data, covering December 31, 1995 through December 31, 2001, and identified the districts/areas in each state of India that had a significant presence of illegal migrants from Bangladesh. Chatterjee's data are presented in Table 5.21.

We notice a difference of 4,595,136 (38.1 percent) in the all-India figures between the Home Ministry and Chatterjee, and for Assam, in particular it is 1,700,300 (34 percent). The migrants' numbers from Bangladesh vary widely, depending on the data sources and do not tally with each other. Furthermore, the numbers cited by political parties are influenced by the policies of the respective party on the issue of illegal migration from Bangladesh; for example, a recently published article in the local English daily in Assam, 'The Sentinel' in August 24th, 2010 quoted the CPI (Communist Party of India) as saying that out of 26 million people in Assam about 6 million were from Bangladesh.

There are clearly wide variations in the estimates of illegal migrants, depending on the person or entity reporting them. Even the governments at both levels – federal and state – have been reporting different statistics at different times. However, regardless of

**Table 5. 21: Illegal Bangladeshis in India, as at December 31, 2001**

#	State	District/Area with significant Bangladeshi migrant presence	Number of Bangladeshis	Percentage
1	Assam	Dhubri, Barpeta, Kamrup, Nagaon, Karimganj, Morigaon, Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, Nagaon and Darrang	6,700,300	40.2
2	Arunachal Pradesh	Panpupare	1,080	0.01
3	Mizoram		39	0.0
4	Bihar	Bhagalpur, Samastipur, Katihar, Sahebganj, Kishanganj, Araria, Pakur, Purnia, Gaya	641,396	3.9
5	Nagaland	Kohima, Dimapur, Tensang, Mon, Mokokchang, Bokha, Jhunboto and Fek	79,800	0.5
6	Meghalaya	Fulbari, Rajabari, Pipulbari, Mahendraganj, Helediganj (West Garo Hills Districts)	40,518	0.2
7	Tripura	West-Tripura, North-Tripura, and South-Tripura	444,867	2.7
8	West Bengal	Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, North-Dinajpur, South-Dinajpur, Murshidabad, Malda, South-24-Parganas, North-24-Parganas, Howrah, Nadia and Kolkata	7,680,122	46.1
9	Orissa	Kendrapara, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghapur, Baleshwar, Kharda, Ganjam, Raigarh, Mayurbh and Sambhalpur	41,670	0.3
10	Andaman and Nicobar Island	Andaman	4,050	0.02
11	Delhi	Selampur, Seemapuri, Jamunapustha, Gandhi Nagar, Sahid, Nagar, Krishna Nagar, Tulsiniketan, Geeta colony, Khureji, Sashi Garden, Dilshad Garden, Bhajanpur (The Interstate Border between Delhi (East) and Uttar Pradesh (UP))	502,366	3.0
12	Madhya Pradesh	Debas, Sarguja, Mondsaur, Sibni, Korba	950	0.01
13	Maharashtra	Thane, Mumbai, Pune, Garchiroli, Gondia	28,089	0.2
14	Punjab	Malerkotla, Patiala, Mohali, Chandigarh	345	0.002
15	Haryana	Panipath, Fatehabad, Gurgaon, Rohtak, Faridabad	800	0.01
16	Gujarat	Jamnagar, Kachh, Banaskantha, Porbandar	150	0.001
17	Rajasthan	Nagaur, Barmer, Jaisalmar, Ajmer, Bikaniar, Joypur, Alwar, Barat, Rajsamund	447,150	2.7
18	Uttar Pradesh	Allahabad, Mirjapur, Debaria, Jonepur, Faizabad, Kanpur, Gazipur, Ajamgarh, Gorakhpur, Chandouli, Meerut, Baranashi, Gaizabad, Hamirpur, Lucknow, Maharajganj, Saharanpur, Bijnaur, Bareilly, Baharaich, Haidwar, Dehradun, Sant Rabidas Nagar	34,874	0.2
19	Karnataka	n/a	15	0.0001
20	Himachal Pradesh	n/a	25	0.0002
21	Jammu and Kashmir	n/a	480	0.0029
<b>Total for India</b>			<b>16,649,086</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India (Note: According to the Home Ministry, Government of India Report covering December 31, 1995 through December 31, 2001 on the Bangladeshis living in India)

\*Cited in Sib Shankar Chatterjee, Millions of Foreigners in India, Published in News Blazed, November 24, 2009.

contradictions among various groups with regard to the scale and magnitude of illegal migration from Bangladesh today, the censuses data 1971 to 2001 indicate that Muslim population has consistently been much higher than the average population growth of other communities (see Appendix 4, Table A4.1, A4.2 and A4.5). This trend has been more apparent in the bordering districts in Assam and their adjoining districts, as shown in Table 3.4 and Figure 3.8 in Chapter 3. The population growth of non-Muslims in each of these districts has been consistently below the total average population growth for the district. Certainly, such high growth of the Muslim population in the border districts of Assam could not be possible without migration from Bangladesh.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

In this Chapter, the trends, patterns, and the magnitude of the migration have been studied and analyzed. The study shows that the patterns and trends of migration varied during the pre- and post-independence periods. In the pre-independence period, it was mostly induced by the government for economic and political gain. The post-independence period saw both forced migration due to conflict and voluntary migration due to economic, political and social reasons. However, according to census data there is a decline of migration due to various reasons, especially due to conflicts and unstable political conditions in the state. Most of the migration is occurring from divisions bordering Assam via Dhubri district and mostly by the river route.

However, it is difficult to establish the trends and magnitude of the migration due to lack of good and adequate representative data. Although the Indian Census provides some information about the number of migrants from Bangladesh to Assam, these figures are not free from problems and limitations as mentioned in Chapter 3. Figures taken from various sources regarding both legal and illegal migrants are also presented in this chapter. The following chapter, Chapter 6, deals with the political impact the migration has on the state of Assam and the policies that were implemented by the government at various stages and period are presented.

## Chapter 6: Impact of Migration -- Political

"It has become increasingly clear, however, that public perceptions of migration and migrants play a critical role in determining the policy choices available to governments ...Rational and well-informed choices by migrants, governments, civil society, communities and the private sector can help maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of migration, in social, economic and political terms."

Brunson McKinley, Director General, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva in his Foreword in Volume 3 of IOM World Migration Report, 2005

"The question of migration has spread much bitterness and tension in the North East of India, not to speak of violence, and troubled relations between India and Bangladesh. But many of the substantial issues have been lost in rhetoric and political posturing."

Dr. V.A. Pai Panandiker in his Foreword in Sanjoy Hazarika's "Rites of Passage", Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2000, p. ix.

### 6.1 Introduction

Impact of migration on Assam's politics has been the most contentious issue in Assam since the start of 20<sup>th</sup> century. They intertwined very intricately in all major political developments since then. As has been indicated earlier, the early influx of migrants were politically motivated. In 1940s the Saadulla government encouraged, under the pretext of its land settlement policy and grow more food scheme, the large scale Muslim influx to Assam to establish a political stronghold. In 1979, the mass agitation by students against illegal migration started when a significant jump in the voters' list was noted in one parliamentary constituency. The agitation continued till the Assam Accord was signed in August 1985. During this period, Assam saw a major political upheaval, violence and suspension of the 1981 Census activities.

Migrants became the biggest single vote bank and this gave them enormous political clout. Politicians on both sides of the aisle have been using the migration issue as an emotional means to garner votes. In fact, in the 2014 Indian general election, migrant issues made a major plank in the eastern Indian states. The present Prime Minister Narendra Modi made strong statements assuring the electorate that if elected he would ensure that all illegal migrants from Bangladesh would be deported. However, after becoming Prime Minister his tone softened and he became conciliatory because of the complexity of the issue. In his first visit to Assam as Prime Minister, Modi expressed his support to the land swap deal worked out with Bangladesh by the previous Congress government of Manmohan Singh. Ironically, his party, Bharatiya Janata Party vehemently opposed the deal and did not allow its ratification. Now Prime Minister Modi sees it as a tool to curb the migration problem in Assam. He states that:

"I know the sentiments of the people of Assam. I assure you that I am going to use the proposed land swap deal for the benefit of Assam. I am going to make such arrangements that the land swap deal with Bangladesh benefits Assam...I am going to use the land swap deal to stop illegal infiltration from Bangladesh,

which has been a perennial problem for the state. I am also going to use the land swap deal to ensure security along the border in Assam. It may seem a loss for Assam at present, but I will make arrangements so that it benefits Assam in the long run. There will be no compromise on the security of the people of Assam and I will ensure that the people of Assam get their rights.”

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his public rally in Sarusasai Stadium in Guwahati, November 30, 2014 (The Assam Tribune, November 30, 2014)

As noted by Kuldip Nayar, an eminent journalist and a former Indian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, “The Assamese are valiantly trying to retain their entity, which is eroding every day because of uninterrupted flow of foreigners” (Nayar, 1999)<sup>48</sup>. According to him the foreigner issue was just a symptom; the actual disease was “their realization that they are fighting a losing battle” and he added, nobody, especially the political class, was not recognizing it.

The history of the influx of population into Assam dates back to the pre-independence period, or at least since 1930s when the question of partition on the basis of religious composition was being comprehended. Thereafter the issue of influx has remained as the central theme of the state’s politics in both the pre- and post-independence periods.

The plan of the Muslim League to form the Muslim majority country of Pakistan led to the establishment of the political party, ‘The Muslim League’ in 1906 and the eventual demand to attach Assam to Pakistan during the discussions related to the partition of India in 1947 (Roychoudhry, 2009, p.27).

For most of the pre-partition period between 1937 and 1946 as mentioned in Chapter 2, the Muslim League ruled Assam with Mohammed Saadulla as its Premier. In 1941 Mohammad Saadulla’s party announced the ‘Land Settlement Policy’ on the pretext of a ‘Grow More Food’ scheme to meet the allied forces’ need for food during World War II (Borgohain, 2009). This opened up government lands to migrants and encouraged Muslim peasants from East Bengal to move to Assam inflating the Muslim population which ultimately culminated in the demand for inclusion of the province in Pakistan during partition (Hazarika, 2000). The Congress High Command gave up its claim of Assam, but it was vehemently opposed by Gopinath Bordoloi, its first Chief Minister after Independence. Thanks to the strong support and endorsement he received from Mahatma Gandhi and the result of the Sylhet Referendum<sup>49</sup> of July 1947, Assam was included in India and a major part of Sylhet was transferred to East Pakistan (Sinha, 1998; Misra, 1981).

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<sup>48</sup> <http://www.rediff.com/news/1999/jan/23nayar.htm>

<sup>49</sup> Sylhet Referendum was conducted in July 1947 to gauge the preference of Sylhet residents to join either India or Pakistan and the majority favored the handing over of Sylhet to Pakistan

The failure to include Assam in Pakistan is resented to this day by certain quarters in Bangladesh and Pakistan. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan wrote in his book 'Myths of Independence':

"It would be wrong to think that Kashmir is the only dispute that divides India and Pakistan, though undoubtedly the most significant. One at least is nearly as important as Kashmir dispute, that of Assam and some districts of India adjacent to East Pakistan. To this East Pakistan have very good claims, which should not have been allowed to remain quiescent" (Bhutto, 1969, P. 125).

Even Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the first Prime Minister of Bangladesh in his book 'Eastern Pakistan: Its Population and Economics', wrote:

"Because Eastern Pakistan must have sufficient land for its expansion and because Assam has abundant forest and mineral resources, coal, petroleum etc., Eastern Pakistan must include Assam to be financially and economically strong" (cited in Governor Sinha's Report, 1998, p.6).

According to the report such views, particularly emanating from neighboring countries should not be ignored no matter how friendly the relationship between the two countries may be. Sanjib Baruah (2008, p., 1) in his article 'Assam: confronting a failed partition' puts another perspective; he concludes that the migration problems Assam is facing today are the consequences of a 'failed partition'<sup>50</sup>.

## **6.2 Political Impact of Migration from Bangladesh**

### **6.2.1 Controversy over Language**

Large scale migration of Bengalis, both Hindus and Muslims to Assam during the British period was bound to cause a tilt in the linguistic balance towards the migrant population. This was further strengthened and boosted by the 1837 declaration of Bengali as the official language of Assam by the British government. It caused considerable resentment and anguish among the Assamese population, which in turn led to bitter feelings between the two communities (Guha, 1980). The multi-ethnic composition of the Assamese society on one hand, and the quest for unilingual identity on the other, has been one of the major contradictions that the state had to face (Misra, 1999). This contradiction remains strong even today.

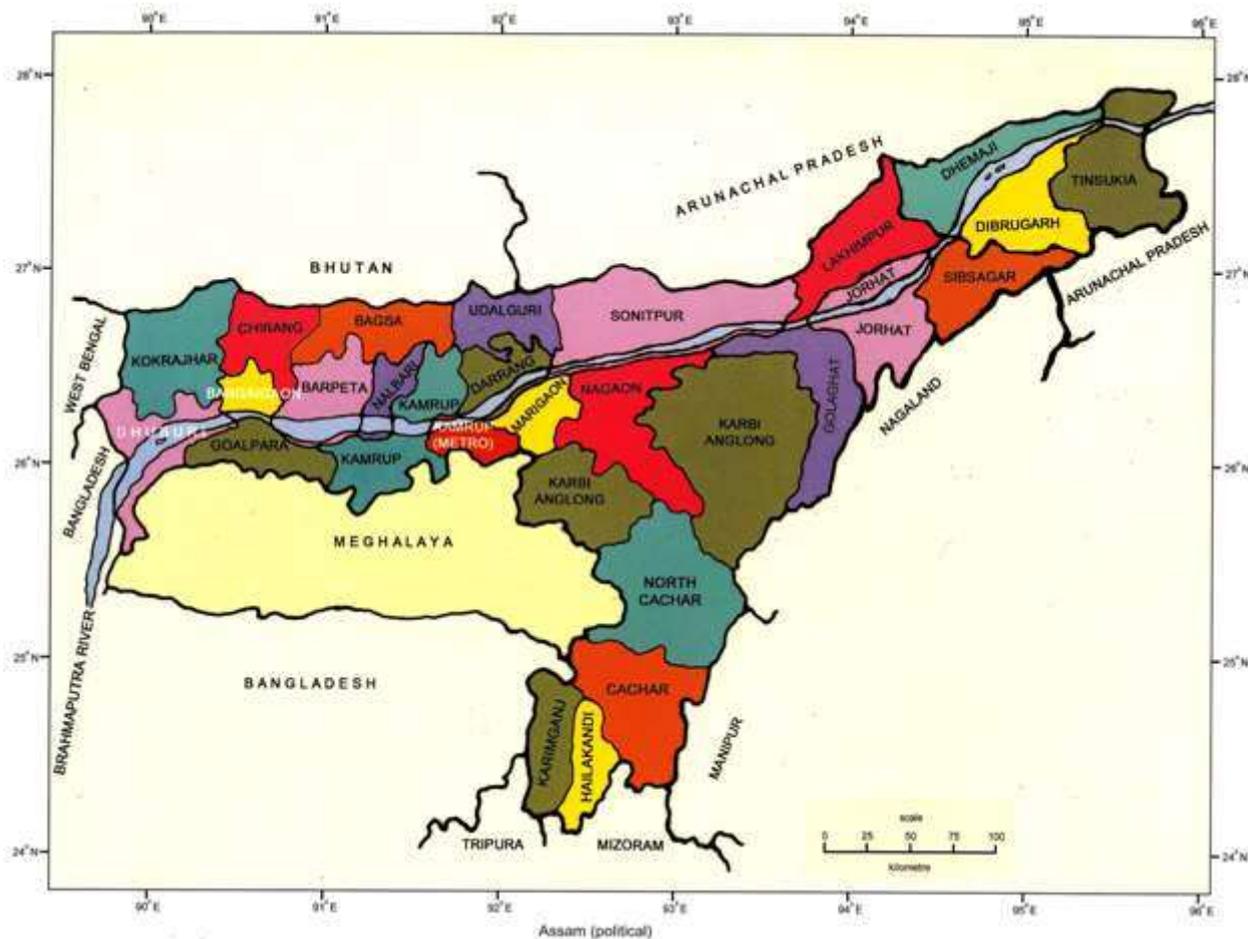
The Assamese people's fear of losing their language and culture, and ultimately their identity, has led to the development of resentment towards Bengalis and this has led to sporadic riots between the two communities, especially in the Brahmaputra valley in the years 1948, 1950, 1960, 1968, 1972 and 1980 (Guha, 1980). These riots were in retaliation of Bengali speaking people to Assamese becoming the official language of Assam. The fear of Assamese losing their culture and identity was also due to the slower growth rate of Assamese population, and the prior history of suppression of their language for almost 36 years, from 1837 to 1873 (Guha,1980).

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<sup>50</sup> Baruah, 2008 at <http://www.india-seminar.com/2008/591.htm>

To understand this complex issue of the linguistic divide, it is important to look into the historical background on the evolution of the current cultural situation in the province. Before the British, Assam was ruled by the Ahom's for almost 700 years. The Ahom territories then occupied the whole of the Brahmaputra valley, with the exception of the erstwhile undivided Goalpara district of Assam which includes the present districts of Goalpara, Chirang, Kokrajhar, Dhubri and Bongaigaon (see Figure 6.1).

**Figure 6. 1: 2011 Political Map of Assam showing Its Administrative Districts**



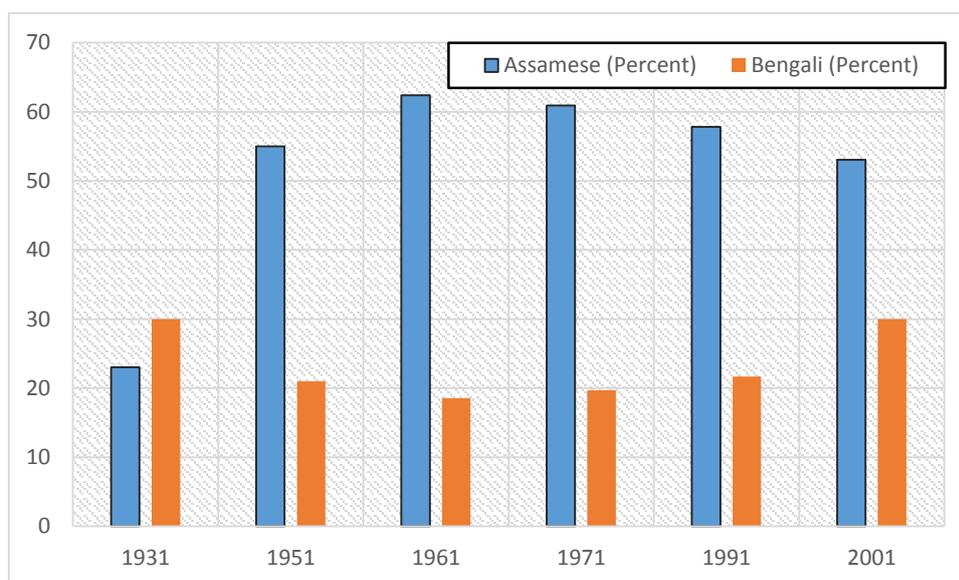
Source: *Assam: Land and People, First Edition, 2009, Published by KC Das Commerce College, Guwahati*

After Assam's annexation to India in 1826 by the British, Assam first became a new division of its *Bengal Presidency*. This administrative status was maintained till 1874, when it was changed to a province and the Bengali-speaking district of Sylhet was attached to it. The incorporation of Sylhet district in Assam raised the percentage of Bengali-speaking to more than 40 percent while decreasing the Assamese-speaking population to less than 25 percent of the total population (Guha, 1980). The provincial status of Assam, with Sylhet as one of its administrative districts, continued until 1947, when India became an independent country (Weiner, 1983).

Figure 6.2 shows the balance between Bengali- and Assamese-speaking people in Assam between 1931 and 2001. It is to be noted that the Census data on the linguistic makeup

of Assam for 2011 have not yet been released. However, the whole demographic picture of the state changed drastically after independence with the district of Sylhet ceding to Pakistan in 1947. This resulted in a higher percentage of Assamese speaking population; which rose from 23 percent in 1931 to 55 percent in 1951. Another factor which contributed towards the increasing percentage of Assamese speaking population was that many Muslim migrants, in particular, those settled in the Brahmaputra valley chose to identify themselves as Assamese in the post-1947 Censuses (Weiner, 1983, p. 285). This helped them attain a greater political and social acceptance, and they soon came to be recognized as “NaAsomiya”, a term which literally translates as “New Assamese” (Misra, 1981).

**Figure 6. 2: Assamese and Bengali Population (Percentages) in Assam, 1931-2001**



Sources: Bhuyan, 2002, p .81; Guha, 1980, p. 94 and Statistical Handbook of Assam, 2010, p. 40

### 6.2.2 Alternative Strategy by Political Parties to retain power

However the influx continued even after independence and it is widely believed that most of the political parties of India, as well as the states, welcomed the migrants to gain their votes during elections and maintain their political viability.

“The foreigners from the then East Pakistan and now Bangladesh have been allowed to decide the political destiny of Assam in violation of all the laws of the country. A Union Government document on problem of influx from East Pakistan, published in 1963, observed that politically interested persons and parties patronized the illegal stay of the foreigners to enlist their support in elections” (Goswami, 2009, p. 115)

The migrants are promised security as well as other facilities for votes by the political leaders representing their areas of settlement as well as the government. They follow their leader’s advice and cast their votes *en masse* for the candidate that the leader supports. Such a group of voters who cast its votes as a block is referred to as the ‘Vote Bank’ in India (Jai Bihar, 2009). Most political parties try to capitalize on such vote banks although the party in power seemingly reaps more benefits from the vote bank and “*The problem has been aggravated by the political parties demanding inclusion in the electoral rolls of*

*the names of such migrants who are not Indian citizens*" (Goswami, 2009, p. 115). As Hazarika (2000) stated:

"For decades, charges have flown around that local Congress Party, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, patronized the influx of Muslims from East Pakistan and later Bangladesh, to retain political power in the Brahmaputra Valley. The strategy was to allow the "miyahs"<sup>51</sup> to enter and settle in areas where older settlements of migrants existed. ... To move in and claim legitimacy was easy. One could always claim that one had moved from another part of the state and cite a fictitious parental address or name of a relative. The game of 'settlement for vote' continues to be played in the state."(Hazarika, 2000, pp. 56-57).

The Congress party realizing that they are losing the ethnic Assamese vote was in pursuit of an alternative strategy or support for their party and hence started the vote bank politics and encouraged migration to Assam from Bangladesh/East Pakistan for political gain (Jaitley, 2012).

The newly-elected BJP government recognizes the issue of migration from Bangladesh to north-eastern India (which includes Assam) as a major national priority issue. They included it in the inaugural government-policy speech read out on its behalf by the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee, to the joint-parliamentary session comprising both upper and lower houses at Central Hall of Parliament, New Delhi on June 9, 2014. President Mukherjee stated in paragraph 20 of the speech: *"The issue of infiltration and illegal immigrants in the Northeast region will be tackled on priority and all pending fencing work along the Northeast border will be completed."*

### **6.2.3 Change of Assam's Administrative Units**

Topographically, there are three distinct regions in Assam: (i) the Brahmaputra valley, (ii) the Barak valley and (iii) sandwiched between these valleys is the hilly regions consisting of the districts of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao. The majority of the Assamese-speaking people are concentrated in the Brahmaputra valley which is also the home to the plains tribes in certain pockets and tea-garden communities in tea plantation areas. The hilly region, comprising the districts of Karbi Anglong, and Dima Hasao (North Cachar Hills), is mostly inhabited by hill tribes with their own distinctive dialects and culture. The third region, the Barak valley, with majority Bengali-speaking population comprises of three districts of Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj.

Post-independence Assam's population can be classified into the following broad groups (Baruah, 1980):

- a) Assamese community including both Hindus and Muslims,
- b) Bengali Hindus.
- c) Bengali Muslims,
- d) Hill tribes, and
- e) Tea-garden communities, which have adopted the Assamese language

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<sup>51</sup> Usually the term "miya" is used when referring to the Muslim Bengali-speakers from Mymensingh, Rangpur and other border districts of East Pakistan-Bangladesh. They are usually less-educated peasants and/or manual laborers.

It was only in 1961 that Assamese was made the official language of Assam along with English by legislation with the 'Official Language Act' passed by the Government of Assam. However, due to the objections of the Bengali-speaking districts of Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj in the Barak valley of Southern Assam, Bengali was also retained in the Act (Bhattacharyya, 2008). In 1972 Assamese along with English, was made the medium of instruction at university. In addition to Assamese and Bengali, current official languages of Assam also include the tribal language 'Bodo'.

During both the pre- and post-independence periods, the state's politics was dominated by the language issue, and as a result, all other issues related to development were neglected or sidelined (Misra, 1999). The Assamese community was so anxious to defend their cultural identity and linguistic heritage that it neglected the interests and development of other indigenous peoples, such as the Nagas of Nagaland, Garos, Khasis and Jaintias of Meghalaya and the Mizos of Mizoram, which were part of Assam. Due to this neglect, the districts with large populations of such indigenous hill tribes felt alienated and became resentful, thus demanding separate statehood for themselves. This led to the formation of three new states carved out of Assam: Nagaland in 1963, and Mizoram and Meghalaya in 1972. After the Chinese war of 1962, North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) was made a union territory, and later it was also accorded a separate statehood in 1972 under a new name, Arunachal Pradesh (Misra, 1999). Figure 6.3 shows how Assam's political boundaries underwent changes since the post-partition period of India. Assam which was sharing international boundary with China, Myanmar, Bhutan and Bangladesh now shares international boundaries with only two countries: Bhutan and Bangladesh.

**Figure 6. 3: Current north-eastern states of India: Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh**



Source: Government Archives and [www.mapsofindia.com](http://www.mapsofindia.com)

#### **6.2.4 Recent events in the political scenario in Assam**

Among the recent events, the election for the State Legislature in 2011 will probably stand out as a watershed event for Assam in the context of power sharing and governance; for, the migrant issue formed one of the core political planks in the electioneering process.

A new political party heavily patronized and dominated by migrants named, All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) headed by a Dubai-based perfume baron of Assamese origin, Badaruddin Ajmal, relegated the regional party, Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) to third place in terms of its strength in the State Legislative Assembly (Todd, 2011). During electioneering AIUDF concentrated heavily in the migrant strong-holds in Assam and fielded their candidates in those areas, namely the districts of Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Nagaon, and Bongaigaon in the Brahmaputra Valley and the districts of Halikandi, Karimganj and Cachar in the Barak Valley. These are the districts where the migrant population was around or above 50 percent, and their strategy worked. The AIUDF had emerged as the largest opposition party with its vote share of 12.8 percent in 2011 as against 9 percent in 2006 state election (The Times of India, 2011, May 15), even though it was just 2 seats short in the Assam Assembly to be legally recognized as the Opposition Party. Muslims, particularly Bengali speaking Muslims, in the Brahmaputra Valley, supported the AIUDF to secure their "permanent residency" in Assam (Times of India, 2011, May 15).

In the 2011 Assembly elections, 29 Muslim members were elected to the Legislative Assembly of 128 members, some 23 percent of the total elected members in the assembly, and 18 of these 29 Muslim members belonged to the AIUDF. The AIUDF, with 18 legislators, can boast of more Muslims members in the Legislative Assembly than even the Congress party, which had traditionally been enjoying strong support from the Muslims, in general and the migrant Muslims, in particular. According to Ahmed (2009), in 26 out of 126 state legislature constituencies in Assam, migrants comprised 50 to 90 percent of total voters. In another 7 constituencies, 40 to 50 percent of voters were migrants, whereas in 30 other constituencies they appeared to enjoy the stature of deciding voters. On the other hand, the Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) could garner only one Muslim legislative member. Ironically, it was the AGP, a party which came into being for its opposition to migration from Bangladesh, received the biggest drubbing in the 2011 elections from those political parties representing primarily migrants.

The Assamese population, including both Hindus and Muslims, has resented the growing political influence and clout of the settlers. A mass movement was launched in 1979 to stop the influx of foreign nationals to Assam spearheaded by All Assam Students' Union (AASU), a student organization and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad a newly formed party. Triggered by the 1978 by-election for a Look Sabha (federal Lower House), and more specifically by an observation made by the then Chief Election Commissioner of India,

S.L. Sakhdher, on the large number of migrants (around 45,000), suddenly appearing in the voters' list for a particular Lok Sabha constituency (Ahmed, 2006).

Shekhar Gupta, the eminent journalist who has reported from Assam since 1980s and is now the Editor-in-Chief of the major national English daily newspaper, *The Indian Express*, commented in his column on the eve of 2014 federal election of India: "*Assam, more than any part of India, comes truest to the principle that in any diverse electorate, sum of all insecure minorities is greater than a divided majority. And in Assam, everybody is a minority.*"<sup>52</sup> Citing the data reported in the 2011 electoral roll, Gupta estimated that in 2011, there were 18,700,000 voters in Assam comprising 5,700,000 Muslims (30.5 percent), 2,245,000 tea garden laborers (12 percent), 2,300,000 Bengali Hindus (12.3 percent) and 1,000,000 Bodos (5.3 percent). The remaining 7,455,000, or 40 percent voters were Assamese including assorted other smaller tribal and non-tribal groups.

The migration from Bangladesh to Assam can be compared to some extent with Malaysia. Both the societies are multicultural with many ethnic groups and were once under British rule. Both Malaysia and Assam saw ethnic conflicts, conflicts over political power and competition among various groups in their economic endeavor, as well as the possession of territories (Dasgupta, 1998). Migrants to Assam were mainly from former East Bengal and can be classified into two categories: Hindu comprising administrators and office workers, and the Muslim peasants for the agricultural sector. To a certain extent, some migration also took place from Nepal and other parts of India. In contrast, migrants in Malaysia were mainly Chinese small traders and tin miners, and laborers mostly from India, to cater for the needs of rubber plantations.

Assam's political crisis over the issue of migration since 1979 shows some structural similarities to the crisis Malaysia faced in 1969 related to migration. The conflict between the Alliance Party and the Peoples' Action Party of Singapore, the National Language Act controversy in 1967, the Labor Party led strike in 1967 and the electoral campaigns of 1969, contributed to ethnic violence that started on May 13, 1969 (Dasgupta, 1998). However, while Malaysia has tried to respond to this issue, India has shown little recognition of the problem.

Although the indigenous population of both societies viewed migration in similar terms, the management of indigenous-migrant relations is somewhat different in both societies. Malaysia is an independent country, ruled by a dominant single-party since the 1950s. This has allowed Malaysia to develop and enforce its policy to manage migration more effectively without much interference. In Malaysia, it has been a tradition since the British

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<sup>52</sup> Shekhar Gupta, *Editor-in-Chief of national daily, Indian Express in his column on April 4, 2014.*

rule to regard the indigenous Malays as privileged and protected owners of land (Bhumiputras) and this tradition continues to date.

Assam, on the other hand, is a state within the Indian union, and hence, it has to rely on the federal government to develop a policy to manage migration. India's immigration policy is framed by two highly sensitive issues, the treatment of its minorities (that is, the Muslim population) and its obligation to allow the Hindu refugees from East Bengal/Pakistan to settle in India (Baruah, 1999). To compound the problem further, Assam has been governed by inefficient and unstable governments since the 1960s. As a result migrants have found themselves in a vulnerable situation with little choice than to affiliate themselves with the Congress party or other minority parties (Dasgupta, 1998).

### **6.2.5 Migration and Insurgency**

The movement to stop the influx of migrants from Bangladesh has been successful in raising awareness of this issue; however, at the same time it has affected the political environment of the state (Saikia, 2005). The Bodo student union participated in the Anti-Foreigners movement initially but unfortunately, due to differences in ideology between the All Assam Students Union and some sections of the Bodo student leaders, they parted ways. The Bodo students chose to form a separate student organization named All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), which was successful in enrolling almost all Bodo students of the state, thus alienating themselves from the mainstream Assamese student movement (Saxena, 2007). The relationship between Assamese and Bodos soured to the extent that they raised the demand for a separate province to be carved out of Assam in the north bank of the Brahmaputra River they also adopted Devnagari script for their language in place of the existing Assamese script, (Kashyap, 2010). The main political plank of the ABSU now is the realization of their goal of a separate state for them, called "Bodoland". They chose the path of insurgency and armed struggle to fulfill their purpose (Saxena, 2007).

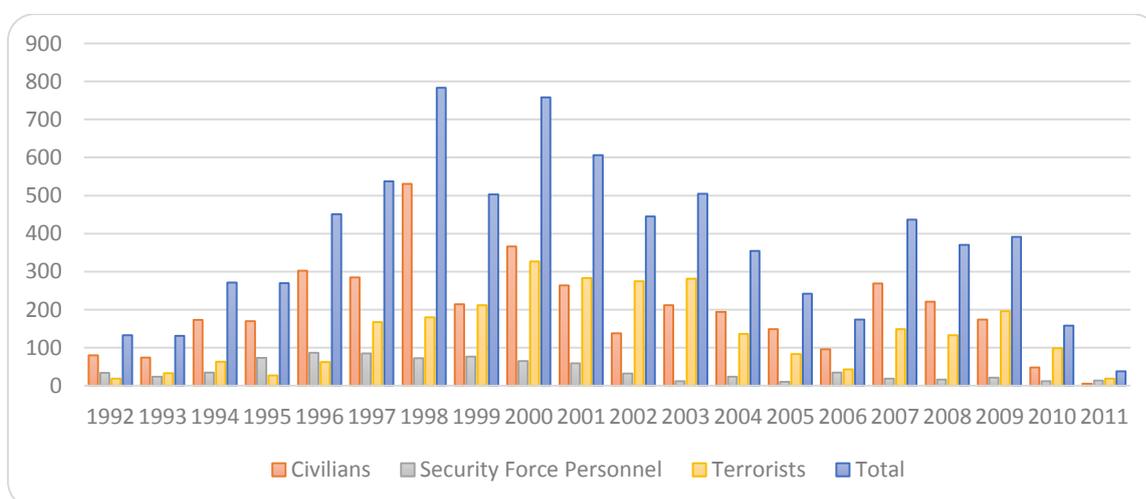
Interestingly, two other organizations, the Plains Tribal Council (PTCA) and United Tribal Liberation Front (UTNLA) have opposed ABSU, and this has created a division between the Bodos and other non-Bodo tribal communities of Assam on political grounds. The fight for supremacy between these groups has led to the creation of yet another extremist organization, the Bodo Security Force (BSF). These groups have later joined hands with other extremist groups within the Bodo community and formed the extremist organization in March 1993 known as Bodo Liberation Tiger (BLT). Formation of the BLT in Assam led to large scale violence in the state where a number of civilians, security force as well as terrorists were killed.

On 20<sup>th</sup> February 1993 the Bodo Accord was signed by representatives of Central and State government and the ABSU. As a term of this Accord, a Bodoland Autonomous Council was formed to assuage certain demands of Bodos for autonomy in the management of their affairs where they inhabited (Saxena, 2007). Therefore, the emergence of the anti-

foreigners' movement along with the Bodoland movement saw several violent incidents erupting in the state, and such activities resulted in the eventual birth of terrorist groups and outfits in Assam. Notable among them are the ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam), NDFB (National Democratic Front of Bodoland), ULFBA (United Liberation Front of Barak Valley), MULTA (Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam), DHD (Dima Halim Daogah) to mention a few.

Some 7,557 people, civilians, security force personnel and also terrorists lost their lives in the violent incidences from 1992 up to May 2011 (South Asian terrorist Profile, 2011). Figure 6.4 shows various insurgency related killings in Assam from 1992-2011 as of May 15, 2011. Here it is observed that civilians have been the largest casualty group making up 52 percent of the casualties followed by terrorists and the security force.

**Figure 6. 4: Insurgency related deaths in Assam, 1992-2011**



Source: Source: South Asia Terrorist Profile, Data for 1992 to May 15, 2011

### 6.2.6 Doubtful Voters (D Voters)

There are other ongoing problems relating to migration from Bangladesh; among them is the unsolved problem of the 'D' voters or 'Doubtful Voters'. This is the category of voters who are disenfranchised by the government on account of their lack of citizenship credentials (The Hindu, 2012, April 10). Persons who could not provide evidence of citizenship were marked as 'D' voters in the electoral roll to indicate their disputed status of citizenship by the Election Commission. This category of voters were banned from the electoral process, in that they can neither vote nor contest elections. Their cases are referred to the Foreign Tribunals set up under the Foreigner Tribunal order of 1964 to determine their citizenship status (The Hindu, 2012, April 10). At present there are about 147,000 'D' voters in Assam and another 12,480 were added before the election of 2011 (The Assam Tribune, 2011, June 14). The fate of these voters is pending before the Tribunals and it is quite possible that their names could be struck off the electoral roll,

unless they are cleared by the Tribunal (Datta-Choudhury, 2011). The 'D' voters issue has now become a major political issue as it is alleged that some Indian citizens are being deprived of their voting rights.

### **6.2.7 National Register of Citizenship (NRC)**

The government of India has introduced a National Register of Citizenship (NRC) for citizens and it is being done at the local, sub-district, district, state and national levels. This register is prepared based on the National Population Register (NPR) of 1951 after verifying the details and establishing the citizenship status of each individual (National Population Register, Census of India, 2011). The NRC is, therefore, designed to be a subset of the NPR, which is prepared at the village, sub-district, district, state and national levels under the provision of the Citizenship Act of 1955, and the Registration of Citizens and Issues of National Identity Cards Rule of 2003. Thus, the NPR is the first step in the preparation of NRC and it is compulsory for all individual to register.<sup>53</sup>

Although national registration of citizenship was to be revised based on the National Register of Citizen of 1951, however, in the case of Assam, by an agreement between the Union Government and the state Government, the 1951 NRC was to be revised in terms of 1971 electoral roll. The revision of cut-off date for Assam from 1951 National Register of Citizen (NRC) to 25<sup>th</sup> March 1971 was due to the 'Assam Accord' which is an agreement that was signed between the All Assam Student's Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad with the Central or Union Government in 1985 (Bezboruah, 2011). *"The Assam Accord overrode Article 6 of the Constitution and made the cut-off year for the migrants from erstwhile Pakistan to Assam 25<sup>th</sup> March 1971"* (Bezboruah, 2011, The Sentinel, June 11). Many are highly critical of this move to base the NRC to the 1971 electoral roll. To quote Shome (2010, p. 1): *"Something that the Union Government and the State Government have already agreed upon regardless of how unjust this was for the indigenous people of Assam and for the citizen of India as a whole"*.

In spite of the agreement between the Central and State Government to the 1971 electoral roll for Assam, there has been violent protest by the All Assam Minority Students Union (AAMSU) against the pilot project undertaken in Barpeta revenue circle of Barpeta district for the revision of the NRC. The demand of the protesters was to scrap the revision of the NRC altogether (Bezboruah, 2011). However, there was no protest in the Chaygaon Revenue Circle in Kamrup district where another pilot project was undertaken.

Following the protest the Government temporarily suspended the two pilot projects in Barpeta and Chaygaon. However, data for the National Population Register was collected alongside, and in conjunction with, the 2011 Census operations, and these findings are still awaited.

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<sup>53</sup> National Population Register, Census of India, 2011 at <http://www.ditnpr.nic.in/FAQ.aspx>

### **6.2.8 Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983**

The Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, also referred to as IMDT Act, was passed by the Parliament of India in 1983 to undermine the on-going anti-foreigner movement in Assam (Hazarika, 2000). It is an extra-ordinary piece of legislation imposed on Assam, in that the Act makes Assam the only state that is exempt from the Foreigners Act of 1946, which granted the central government certain powers in relation to foreigners in India and was enacted by the Central Legislative Assembly on 23 November 1946 before India's independence.

The Foreigners Act 1946 defines a foreigner as a person who is not a citizen of India. Section 9 of the Act states that, if the nationality of a person is not evident as per section 8 of the act, the onus of providing proof of citizenship lie on the person accused and the government may by order make provision, prohibit, regulate or restrict entry of foreigners into India<sup>54</sup>.

The IMDT Act, drafted by Abdul Muhib Majumdar, a lawyer as well as an established politician from Cachar district of Assam, is specific to Assam and runs counter to the Foreigners Act 1946 in several aspects. As per the IMDT Act, the Foreigners Act of 1946 can only be applied to foreigners with valid Passports who have overstayed in a foreign country, not for illegal migrants in Assam. Thus, the IMDT Act provides for a 'judicial trial' in case a suspect claims not to be a foreigner (Baruah, 2008).

The IMDT Act spelt out a lengthy and complicated procedure for filing a complaint against any person suspected to be an illegal migrant. Due to its enactment, the process of detection, deletion from the voters' list and deportation of illegal migrants remained as slow as in the pre-accord days (Upadhyay, 2005). The 16 Tribunals in different districts of Assam located about 10,000 illegal migrants but only 1,400 have been deported in 17 years between 1983 and 2000 (Hazarika, 2000).

Through this Act, the government of India has systematically projected itself both as the protector of Assam's identity and the minorities at the same time, through legal and political moves (Baruah, 2008). On the one hand it signed the Assam Accord by accepting the key demands of the Movement leaders knowing very well that the IMDT Act would act as a barrier to its implementation, and on the other hand, it could present itself as the protector of the minorities by implementing the IMDT ACT (Baruah, 2008). The IMDT Act helped the Congress party win elections in Assam except in the years of 1986 and 1996 when it lost its grip on power to the newly-formed Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), a political party which comprised the Movement leaders who signed the Assam Accord on August 15, 1985.

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<sup>54</sup> <http://indiacode.nic.in/fullact1.asp?tfnm=194631>

### **6.2.9 Scrapping of IMDT Act and Rise of All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF)**

It took 22 years for the IMDT Act to be ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of India in July 2005. The Supreme Court in its ruling said that the IMDT Act was the main barrier in identifying illegal migrants (The Assam Tribune, 2005). The scrapping of the IMDT Act did hurt the ruling Congress party in the state in that its failure to defend the Act led to the birth of a migrant-based political party, the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) in 2006. AIUDF's primary platform is to look after the interests of the minorities, especially the migrants. As discussed earlier, AIUDF has already gained the status of the second largest party in the state Legislative Assembly with 18 members in the 2011 election. Currently, the AIUDF's senior leadership is strategizing to position the party as a more inclusive one; in particular, it is trying to draw the poorer and disadvantaged to its fold. This, it believes, will give the party a more "secular" image with a broader appeal (Ghosh, 2011). In reality, however, as it stands now, AIUDF is more aligned to the aspirations of migrants of certain ethnicity.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

With the growth of the Muslim population in the districts of Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Nalbari, Nagaon, Morigaon, Halikandi and Karimganj where they are the majority, there may be possibilities in the near future for a separate state along the lines of ethnicity, similar to the demands that led to the creation of states of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram out of Assam earlier. Again, the Muslim-majority districts may also demand greater administrative autonomy within Assam.

One distinct possibility is that if the migration from Bangladesh continues unchecked, Assam may become another Muslim-majority state in India like the current state of Jammu and Kashmir. According to Bezboruah, who has been studying the migration issue in Assam for a long time, it may happen just within 10 to 12 years from now (Bezboruah, 2005). If that should happen, politics of the state will become more complex with regard to citizenship issues, elections and governance.

## Chapter 7: Impact of Migration on the Economy

“The phenomenon of illegal migration is not limited to the geographical area of South Asia, or even Asia taken as a whole. It is an international problem that has led to conflicts in different parts of the world and exacerbation of social, economic and environmental pressures.”

Dr. V.A. Pai Panandiker, President of the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi in his Foreword to Rites of Passage by Sanjoy Hazarika, November 21, 2000.

### 7.1 Introduction

Unauthorized migration from Bangladesh has triggered high population growth in Assam and this in turn is putting immense pressure on land, natural resources and the economy of the state.

“The excess population of unauthorized immigrants along with their descendants is a potent cause for retardation of progress as well as a threat to the peace and stability in the state” (Goswami, 2009, p. 117).

With the entrance of the British in 1826, change in demographic structure was the most important impact on the state (Goswami, 2009). The development work undertaken by the British in Assam after its annexation led to the migration of workers mostly from northern India and East Bengal. The migrants from East Bengal were mostly Muslim peasants brought to work as cultivators, and “*this new influx rapidly changed the religious as well as linguistic composition of the state*” (Weiner, 1983, p. 283). It also had a tremendous impact on the land-use pattern of the state (Saikia, 2002). Moreover, impacts of migration on the economy of Assam has been both positive and negative, and are summarized in Table 7.1.

### 7.2 Land: A Key Economic Resource

The agricultural sector greatly benefited initially from this migration because it was primarily a labor-intensive sector. Both skill and tenacity are required for agriculture and migrants from Bangladesh brought both. They also introduced better techniques of cultivation by introducing multiple crops. According to Guha (2006), it is the migrants from Bangladesh who first introduced ‘double cropping’; that is, winter and summer cropping, in Assam. This has contributed to more effective usage of land for cultivation and hence is one of the factors that made Assam a “surplus province’ in rice production as early as 1947 (Goswami, 2007).

Multiple-cropping has not only created a greater value-added diversified land usage but it has also led to the introduction of new varieties of vegetables, pulses, lentils and crops like jute which were previously not grown in Assam. Today these are among cash crops for both migrants and indigenous people alike. In addition to agriculture, the migrants have also contributed towards improving the fishing industry by introducing new fishing techniques (Guha, 2006).

Recently the migrant community has taken to vegetable cultivation rather than traditional crops. Regular flood-damage to crops has been a major factor for migrants to shift away from traditional crops, such as rice, to farming more vegetables, which offer a shorter seedling-to-harvest span and can be sold in markets for a quicker cash flow (Taher, 2011, Field Survey, 2009-2012). Typical vegetables grown are: tomatoes, potatoes, squash, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, peas, bitter gourd, okra, carrot, cucumber, etc. The field survey found that they offer an advantage in that they have a longer shelf-life compared to other easily perishable varieties of vegetables, and hence, can be transported for sale in urban areas, such as cities and townships.

**Table 7. 1: Impact of Migration on Economic Aspects affecting Assam and Its People**

Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revolutionized the agriculture sector in Assam by introducing multiple crop system in the same land</li> <li>• Supply of cheap labor</li> <li>• Produced marketable vegetables and cash crops, not only for Assam but also for other eastern and north-eastern regions.</li> <li>• A large pool of women workforce as domestic help.</li> <li>• Money earned by the migrant workforces is circulated within the state in small businesses thus boosting the economy of the state.</li> <li>• With immigrants shifting from agricultural sector to other sectors like self-employment, small business ownership, construction workers, there will be growth and development in Assam.</li> <li>• Bank deposit shall increase with growth and development in the immigrant areas.</li> <li>• In the long run, trade with neighboring Bangladesh could improve and get easier with the participation of entrepreneurial migrants.</li> <li>• Migrants' competitiveness and the success of their hard work has been a motivating factor for many indigenous people to be entrepreneurial and self-employed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assam has been one of the slowest growing states in aggregate and per capita term. Also, the per capita net state domestic product has been lower than the rest of India. This is partly due to the significant percentage of migrant population, which remains in a transitory phase for a longer period than usual.</li> <li>• Migrants put a tremendous pressure on land because migration causes the average land holding to decline. Debt burden of the government increases due to increase of population as revenue from all sources as well as loans have to be pulled together to manage food supply for its growing population.</li> <li>• As substantial amount of money has to be spent on the development of people by a state with a much smaller revenue-base than most other Indian states.</li> <li>• Decrease in land holding and depletion of common property resources hampers the modernization and mechanization of agriculture. Small-size land holding leads to intensive cultivation and use of fertilizer and pesticides which ultimately affects the land quality.</li> <li>• Higher population growth rate among migrants leads to more spending by government on basic infrastructure, and healthcare and it comes at the cost of communities.</li> <li>• Increase in the rural population leads youth to leave agriculture sector, and drive them to seek jobs in other sectors. As a result, local youths enjoy lesser employment openings.</li> <li>• As more people leave agriculture sector related work, extra expenditure on training and capacity building is incurred, putting an added burden on an already resource-constrained state.</li> <li>• Privatization policies of the government suffer in the migrant-areas as most migrants do not have the means to pay for such services.</li> <li>• Most migrant economy is run through unofficial and informal channel. This encourages a parallel "black market" economy riddled with corruption and without adequate revenue/tax collection. Banking sector, too, does not benefit from such an economy and banks are constrained to provide credits to investors.</li> <li>• Migration has led to flourishing of various illegal trade practices in the border areas.</li> </ul>

The district of Barpeta ranks top among districts in marketable vegetable production per unit area. The other notable pockets known for vegetable production in Assam are Singimari in the Kamrup district and Kharupetia in the Darrang district (Loitongbam, 2010). The majority of people in these pockets are of East Bengal origin (Ahmed, 2011). However, among the crops, rice and jute are the most dominant crops in the migrant-populated areas.

Goswami (2009) argues that an increase in population leads to a decrease in land holding size, be it agricultural, forest or grazing or riverine land, and this in turn, increases landlessness among the indigenous people. Growth of population due to large scale migration, recurring flood as well as erosion, puts pressure on land resulting in decreased land holding (Saikia, 2002). A decrease in land holding is also due to the inheritance law by which the family property is shared equally among children. This causes a decrease in the size of individual land ownership. The average operational land holding size in Assam is only 1.15 hectares as compared to 1.33 hectares for India (Census, 2001). About 63.7 per cent of households in Assam had a land holding below one hectare, while the national average is 62 per cent (Agricultural Census, 2005-06). Due to the smaller land plot sizes, implementation of modern mechanized techniques of agriculture is not often cost-effective. The field survey found that in such smaller plots, most migrants resort to a labor-intensive method of cultivation and use chemical fertilizers such as N-P-K (Nitrogen-Phosphorous-Potassium), and also pesticides to increase production.

Given the fact that the state of Assam of only 78,438 square km is already densely populated (397 persons per sq. km) and has also experienced a rapid increase in its population (Table 1.9 Chapter 1), it is inevitable that the pressure on (and demand for) land will escalate further. This will eventually compel the migrant workforce to seek employment in other sectors like construction, manufacturing and also service industries other than agriculture, which was their traditional profession since the British rule. As this happens, it will have a cascading effect; for, it would definitely increase and intensify the competition for employment. Although the current overall unemployment rate in Assam is 6.4 percent compared to the all India average figure of 9.5 percent, the urban unemployment rate in Assam, however, stands at 10.6 percent, which is much higher than the national average urban unemployment rate of 7.4 percent<sup>55</sup>. Sarma (2012) anticipates that this may eventually lead to conflicts between the indigenous people and migrants over employment and create a highly protectionist atmosphere in the state.

Based on the field survey, it was noted that migrants' economic activities have been centered on certain types of occupation as summarized in Table 7.2. Many of the respondents hold multiple small odd jobs (usually 2-3) to make ends meet and as such work long hours. Many of them engaged in farming also seek other odd jobs after their

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<sup>55</sup> According to the report on Employment and Unemployment Survey of 2009-10, Government of India, Ministry of Labor and as reported in The Assam Tribune, September 03, 2011

plantation and harvesting seasons (migrants' call them "lean" period for agricultural activities). As a result, a total of 211 responses were received from 193 respondents. One respondent chose not to reveal his type of occupation.

**Table 7. 2: Migrants' Occupation Types in Assam (Multiple Responses)**

Occupation Types	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
<b>Self Employed</b>		
Farming	54	25.5
Agricultural labourer	2	0.9
Laborer	23	10.9
Fisherman	12	5.7
Casual work (Rickshaw or pushcart puller, maid, shopkeeper etc.)	21	9.9
<b>Business</b>		
Business	69	32.6
<b>Others</b>		
Employee	7	3.3
Unemployed (beggar, housewife, pensioner, student etc.)	23	10.9
Not Stated	1	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Assam Migration Survey, 2009-12

Table 7.2 shows that most occupations are small-scale agro-based. Even those who cited their occupation as "business" are also, in reality, linked with the agricultural sector, such as running a small business buying and selling produce, selling seeds and fertilizers or providing farming assistance. Therefore, quite justifiably, the agricultural activities have been the primary source of income, and hence, the centre of the migrants' economy. This has also been the case for the general populace in Assam; for, as per 2001 Census, agriculture has been the major source of income for about 53 percent of the population, engaging 34.8 percent of the workforce. These figures agree with those from respondents; for, 37.3 percent responses received from migrants were directly based on agriculture (e.g., farming, agricultural laborers – full-and part-time). Therefore, it is not surprising that arable land is the most sought after property among migrants and indigenous people alike.

It has also been observed from the field surveys that about 20 percent of the migrants work in the informal sector. They work as casual laborers, rickshaw pullers, push-cart pullers, maids, shopkeepers, construction workers, and brick kiln workers etc. The informal sector does not have employment security, work security or social security (National Commission for Enterprises in Unorganized Sector, 2007). Moreover, it absorbs about 90 percent of employment in the country and produce half its economy (The Economist, 2013, October 25).

The fact that only 3.3 percent of respondents indicated some kind of salaried employment is hardly surprising, as most of the migrants lacked adequate educational credentials to

hold a salaried job. Also most of them are not eligible for government jobs and are employed in private organizations such as farms, factories, or grocery stores or as helpers.

### 7.3 Labor as a contributing factor to economic activities

Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, President of Assam Char Chapori Sahitya Parishad<sup>56</sup> said that migrants were a source of cheap labor as they were prepared to work at lower wages than the local people (Author's interview, 2011). Cheap labor has a positive impact on manufacturers and consumers; it reduces the cost of production, and hence, the price of the product.

Table 7.3 compares the wages of laborers in Assam with those in India and there is a clear difference between them. The average daily wages of labor in Assam is on average about 5 percent lower than India's total national average.

**Table 7. 3: Average Daily Wages in Rupees in Assam and India, 2002-2003**

Types of Wages	2002				2003			
	Nominal (Current Rupees)		Real (1986-87 Constant Rupees)		Nominal (Current Rupees)		Real (1986-87 constant Rupees)	
	Assam	India	Assam	India	Assam	India	Assam	India
<b>Agricultural wage</b>	56.8	60.0	17.8	19.3	63.3	66.0	19.2	20.4
<b>Non-agricultural wage</b>	78.3	81.1	24.9	25.9	71.7	89.3	21.7	27.5
<b>Unskilled laborers</b>	52.5	57.2	16.4	18.3	58.9	58.9	17.9	18.1

Source: Nath, 2010 (Illegal Migration into Assam: Magnitude, Causes and Economic Consequences)

The migrants and their descendants are the biggest source of labor for the construction industries, public works like road and building construction, the laying of railway lines, domestic cleaning and other unskilled work (Taher, 2011). This is due to several reasons: lack of appropriate education among the migrants, shortage of labor in relation to development activities in the state, and also the local people are often unwilling to undertake such jobs (Bhuyan, 1971). The migrants also work in semi-skilled jobs like house painting, bricklaying, carpentry etc. (Barua, 2009). Table 7.4 shows the occupational categories of migrant workers as per census; whereas Table 7.2 presented the types of occupations of the respondent migrants during field surveys. As Table 7.4 shows, most migrants (34 percent) are cultivators and another 11.6 percent are agricultural laborers because they cannot compete for jobs with the local people due to low literacy rates and the appropriate training required to compete in the local job market (Madhab, 2006).

What is not widely known about the migrants from Bangladesh is the amount of remittances they send to their families and relatives in Bangladesh. Because most of them do not use the official channels (e.g., Bank transfer, Money Orders, Cheques, etc.) rather, they use various informal and personal contacts to remit money across the border (FGD). One very common and popular informal mode of money transfer to Bangladesh is known as 'Hawala'. Under the "Hawala" process, people transfer money through known personal

<sup>56</sup>Assam Char Chapori Sahitya Parishad is a migrant-community literary body

contacts. The modus operandi is that they would remit the money in an equivalent amount in Bangladesh currency to the payee in Bangladesh in lieu of a fee, the magnitude of which is set on a case by case basis (Focus Group Discussion).

**Table 7. 4: Occupational Categories of Migrant Workers**

Number of Migrants in Assam whose place of Last Residence is outside India	2,967,253	
Occupation	Number	Percent
Cultivators	1,008,250	34.0
Agricultural laborers	344,194	11.6
Plantation, Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting and allied activities	277,603	9.4
Household Industries	128,672	4.3
Other than household	136,575	4.6
Other Workers	1,071,959	36.1

Source: Census of India, 2001, D-8 Migrant Workers by Place of Last Residence and Industrial Categories

A large number of migrants who lived on the banks of the river Brahmaputra and other large rivers and its tributaries in Assam were uprooted from their homes due to natural calamities like erosion and flood. During the years 1951 to 2000, a total of 429,697 hectares of land was destroyed by the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries which represents about 7 percent of the total cultivable land<sup>57</sup>. Ahmed (2011) stated that there were about 2 million people uprooted from their homes and settlements due to river-induced erosion and among them 1.2 million (60 percent) belonged to the minority community. He further noted that during 1994-2010 about 28,718 people were affected in the districts of Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, and Chirang by communal conflict and these Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) had to be sheltered in camps for their safety and security. More recent violent conflicts between Bodo tribes' and the migrant community in 2012 resulted in over 100 deaths and increased the number of IDPs significantly to above 400,000 (The Washington Post, August 20, 2012). Many are still languishing in make-shift camps arranged by the state government. It is difficult to accurately estimate the number of the conflict-induced IDPs; for, the numbers reported by various sources are often skewed by the special interest of the sources and are politically motivated. The political and social sensitivities with regard to IDPs belonging to the migrant community often make fact-checking a major challenge. To compound the complexities further, there have been several such conflicts in Assam since the Assam Movement against Illegal migrants started in the late 1970s and the Bodo-land agitation which started in 1987.

Taher (2011) observed that IDPs often moved to cities and towns or other commercial centers in the state and contribute to the labor force (Taher, 2011), and settled in slums or along roadsides in towns or cities. They worked as low-wage daily laborers, rickshaw pullers, "thella" (push cart) pushers, laborers in construction sector, street-vendors etc. The women folk work as domestic help to supplement their family income and are part of the domestic labor force of Assam. The migrants discussed in the above category are

<sup>57</sup> As per the statement of the state Chief Minister in the Assam Legislative Assembly on December 31, 2003

contributing to the labor force in different ways depending on their skills, and hence, to the economy of the state (Zaman, 2011).

#### 7.4 Capital for economic activities

The migration after independence had a tremendous impact on the economy of the state. The immigrants who migrated to Assam were mostly less-educated and under-skilled and were primarily engaged in agriculture and agriculture related activities or as workers in the informal sector. The government provided aid to the refugees who came to Assam by providing various incentives for business (such as: low interest loans, ready-made stalls for businesses and shelters) to motivate and divert the bulk of the refugee population into petty business and self-generating (or, self-employment) income for their livelihood rather than making them dependent on salaried jobs (Census of India, 1951, p. 362-63). This led many of them to be businessmen and entrepreneurs, and this tradition still continues.

Table 7.5 shows the educational level of migrant respondents. It shows that majority of them are less educated. Among the respondents 26.9 percent have no education and another 31.1 percent are considered literate but without any formal education. Another 13.5 percent did not complete primary education, while only 8.3 percent have a high school diploma. The Census definition of a literate is: "A person who can both read and write with understanding in any language is to be taken as literate. ... it is not necessary that a person who is literate should have received any formal education or should have passed any minimum educational standard" (Census of India, 1991, Series IV, Assam, p. 7)

**Table 7. 5: Educational level of migrant respondents**

<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Without any recognized level	60	31.1
Below Primary	26	13.5
Matric/Higher Secondary/Diploma	16	8.3
Graduate and Above	4	2.1
No Education	52	26.9
Not Stated	35	18.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Assam Migration Survey, 2009-12

Table 7.6 compares the per capita income of Assam to the average national per capita income of India since 1960-2011. When adjusted to the current Consumer Price Index, Assam's per capita income was above the national average up until 1979, when it began to decline below the national average and continued to 2010-11 (last column in Table 7.6 shows the ratio of Assam to India per capita income).

From 1951 to 1979 Assam's economy grew almost at the same rate as India but thereafter, the per capita income fell due to higher rates of population growth and the gap between per capita income and the rest of the country has widened since then. This clearly demonstrates that Assam has not been able to keep pace with the rest of country in terms of its economic growth. Ahmed (2006) argues that one of the primary factors causing such poor economic indicators in Assam is the combination of the political problems and

insurgency that the state has been experiencing since 1979, and owe their origin primarily to the problem of large-scale migration from Bangladesh. During this period the population of Assam, grew at a faster pace than that of India, and more so after 1971 when there was large scale migration from Bangladesh caused by the 1971 War (Bezboruah, 2005).

**Table 7. 6: Per Capita Incomes of Assam and India (in Rupees)**

Year	Per capita Income at Current Prices in Rupees		
	Assam	India	Assam-to-India Ratio
1960-61	433	359	1.21
1970-71	743	742	1.00
	1673	1784	0.94
1990-91	5315	5440	0.98
1999-00	12282	15881	0.77
2000-01	12803	16688	0.77
2003-04	15487	20895	0.74
2004-05	16900	24143	0.70
2005-06	18396	27123	0.68
2006-07	19737	31198	0.63
2007-08	21290	35820	0.59
2008-09	24195	40605	0.60
2009-10	27197	46492	0.58
2010-11	30413	54527	0.56

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics (Assam) and Central Statistical Office, Government of India, 2012.

Although it is thought that the decline of per capita income of Assam is due to an increase in population as a result of migration from Bangladesh, the decline after 1979 as compared to India cannot be wholly attributed to this (Nath, 2010). In addition to migration, other factors like geographical location of the state, lack of adequate infrastructure, lack of a developmental policy, economic stagnation, lack of private sector investment, and high expenses of the government, especially salaries of employees and a fall in the gross national product (GNP), are other factors for the lack of development (Ahmed, 2006). Furthermore, the development policies taken by different states of India led to their faster pace of growth and Assam, with its political problems and terrorism, could not keep pace (Planning Commission, 2010-2011).

Most migrants are not used to banking practices, and hence, the banking sector is unable to access a substantial amount of their capital (FGD). The banking percentage ratio (defined as the proportion of households availing banking facilities) for Assam is 20.5 as against National average of 35.8 (Economic survey, government of India, 2010-2011). Lesser the deposits, the lesser is the revenue to banks, and this makes banks less inclined to expand into migrant areas. On the other hand, the banks are under continuous

pressure, through various government schemes and directives, to give loans to population in migrant areas (Sarma, 2011).

As the migrants settle mostly in the char areas, they are not required to pay taxes as lands in char areas are classified by the state government in its revenue records as non-cadastral lands due to their transient nature (Chatterjee, 2009). Moreover, as the location of chars usually changes, often due to floods, their inhabitants cannot be considered as permanent residents of those areas either.

The immigrants who inhabit the char areas are mostly engaged in agriculture and related work, and are not required to pay tax because, per Indian tax rules, no tax is applicable on agricultural produce, with the exception of cash crops like tea, coffee, etc. Also migrants who own small businesses do not pay tax as their earnings are below the threshold tax bracket. Therefore, migrants effectively enjoy a tax-free environment, but the government is obligated to invest in basic infrastructure and development programs in these areas. This makes char areas revenue-negative zones (Nath, 2010). In addition, natural calamities like floods occur almost every year and the char areas, by virtue of their riverine location, are the worst affected, requiring the government to spend a substantial amount of money on emergency evacuation, food, drinking water and monetary flood relief to the inhabitants (Nath, 2010).

## **7.5 Entrepreneurship**

### **7.5.1 Background**

No new major industries other than the oil refineries, along with the ones dating from pre-independence days (tea, oil, timber) exist in Assam. This makes it among the least developed states in India. Table 7.7 shows a comparison of a few key socio-economic indicators of selected states in India (Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh) to those of Assam. Assam lags behind the other states in several of the key indicators, notably in growth rate, Gini coefficient, energy utilization, health and employment.

The developed states like Gujarat and Haryana are doing well in most socio-economic indicators, while the other states like Bihar are progressing but the progress of Assam has been very slow. Lack of infrastructure, insurgency, and lower growth rate are some of the factors contributing to the backwardness of the state of Assam. Ethnic and socio-economic problems with no immediate solution make policy implementation difficult in Assam (Economic Survey, Government of India, 2010-2011).

In summary, large industries or businesses in the private sector are not commonly seen in Assam. Due to the six long years of anti-foreigner movement from 1979 to 1985 and the Bodoland movement thereafter the state slipped into lawlessness with the emergence of several terrorist and other groups. Incidences of violent activities and frequent strikes and calls for "Bandh" (i.e., the complete shutdown of all activities) which continues even

today, created an unfriendly atmosphere for businesses. Moreover, the law and order situation is too poor to attract any major direct investment into the state, and Assam's political leadership has not been able to develop a comprehensive strategy for its economic development, nor does it have a clear plan to harness and utilize the enormous natural resources the state has to offer. The net casualty of this situation is the absence of an environment to create private entrepreneurship in the state.

**Table 7. 7: Socio-Economic Indicators of a few Indian States compared to Assam 2010-2011**

Socio-Economic Indicators/Items	Andhra Pradesh	Assam	Bihar	Chattisgarh	Gujarat	Haryana	Himachal Pradesh
Projected Population as at 01.10.2010 (persons in '000)	84,426	30,413	97,192	24.124	58,709	25,270	6,767
<b>Growth Related (real growth rates of States-GSDP percentage at constant prices as on 26 April 2010)</b>							
2008-09	5.0	6.2	16.6	6.8	7.2	7.9	7.4
Average 1994-95 to 2001-02	5.7	2.2	4.9	3.2	6.5	6.5	6.8
Average 2002-03 to 2008-09	8.2	5.5	9.8	9.3	11.2	9.3	7.8
<b>Poverty Related (Percentage of population below poverty line)</b>							
URP (2004-05)	15.8	19.7	41.4	40.9	16.8	14	10.0
MRP (2004-05)	11.1	15	32.5	32	12.5	9.9	6.7
<b>Gini Coefficient (MRP-2004-05)</b>							
Rural	0.24	0.17	0.17	0.24	0.25	0.31	0.26
Urban	0.34	0.30	0.31	0.35	0.32	0.36	0.26
<b>Health Related (Life Expectancy at Birth) (2002-06)</b>							
Male	62.9	58.6	62.2	**	62.9	65.9	66.5
Female	65.5	59.3	60.4	**	65.2	66.3	67.3
Infant Mortality Rates (per 1000 live births) 2009	49.0	61.0	52.0	54.0	48.0	51.0	45.0
Birth Rate (per 1000) 2009	18.3	23.6	28.5	25.7	22.3	22.7	17.2
Death Rate (per 1000) 2009	7.6	8.4	7.0	8.1	6.9	6.6	7.2
<b>Education Related</b>							
Pupil-Teacher Ratio (2007-08) (6-10 years)	32	38	68	43	30	53	18
<b>Basic Amenities</b>							
Percentage Share in Total Energy Consumption (GWh) by Ultimate Consumers in 2007-2008	9.7	0.5	0.9	2.1	8.8	3.6	1.0
Progress under NRHM 24x7 (Primary Health Centers as on 31.01.2010)	800	343	533	418	331	318	95
<b>Social Sector Schemes Related</b>							
Percentage Share in HH Provided Employment during 2009-10	11.7	4.1	7.9	3.9	3.0	0.3	1.0
<b>Percentage Share in Employment during 2009-10 under MGNREGA of</b>							
Schedule Caste	24.7	12.2	45.3	15.3	14.9	53.6	33.4
Schedule Tribe	14.7	31.0	2.2	38.2	39.5	0.0	8.7
Women	58.1	27.7	30.0	49.2	47.6	34.8	46.1

Source: Planning Commission, Office of Registrar General of India (RGI)

MRP = Mixed recall period, URP = Uniform recall period, HH = household, NRHM = National Rural Health Mission, MGNREGA = Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

\*\*Data relating to Chattisgarh are not available as it was a part of Madhya Pradesh.

### 7.5.2 Entrepreneurial Activities of Migrants

As mentioned earlier, most migrants are not well educated, and hence, they often start with small businesses that are linked directly or indirectly to agricultural activities and production. From the field survey it was found that the majority of respondents had started with some sort of petty business, such as small grocery store, rice mills, fresh vegetable

shops, cycle shops, hardware stores, small and low-end eateries (restaurants), clothing stores, etc. (see Table 7.8). Such businesses were not well structured; nor were they registered with the local administrative bodies; rather, they led to growth in informal-sector enterprises. The entrepreneurial activities and contributions of migrant respondents to the economy represent almost 45 percent of them owned small agriculture-related businesses.

**Table 7. 8: Types of Businesses by Migrant Respondents in Assam**

<b>Business Types</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b><i>Agriculture Related</i></b>	<b>31</b>	<b>44.9</b>
Seasonal Fruit Business	1	1.4
Rice Business	16	23.2
Betel-nut Shop	5	7.2
Vegetable seller	1	1.4
Flower Shop	1	1.4
Jute Craft	1	1.4
Poultry Business	3	4.3
Milk Supply/vending	3	4.3
<b><i>Food Processing</i></b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5.8</b>
Snack Making Business	1	1.4
Cashew processing	1	1.4
Rice Mill	2	2.9
<b><i>Small Stores</i></b>	<b>18</b>	<b>26.1</b>
Grocery Store	7	10.1
Cloth Business	3	4.3
Stationary Store	3	4.3
Hardware Store	2	2.9
Pottery Business	2	2.9
Pharmacy	1	1.4
<b><i>Small Eateries</i></b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7.2</b>
Tea Shop	2	2.9
Sweetmeat Shop	2	2.9
Restaurant	1	1.4
<b><i>Repairing and Selling (Mechanical Type)</i></b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5.8</b>
Bicycle Repair Shop	1	1.4
Goldsmith	1	1.4
Cycle Belt Business	1	1.4
Radio Shop	1	1.4
<b><i>Service Related</i></b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5.8</b>
Government Supplier	1	1.4
Boat Renting	1	1.4
Broker	1	1.4
Rickshaw Owner	1	1.4
<b><i>Not Stated</i></b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4.3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Assam Migration Survey, 2009-12

Most of these businesses are located within their communities, and hence draw their customer-base from within them. This poses both advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that most of their customers are known to them, and hence, they understand their needs and purchasing power. However, the disadvantages are that they are in general "poor" customers with very little discretionary spending power. They buy only basic necessities, and at times, they cannot pay for the purchases made on the spot. Therefore, most of these businesses also maintain a credit ledger for those who cannot pay at the time of their purchase. Chasing up unpaid amounts from customers is often a

stressful and unpleasant experience owners have to endure on a regular basis. Fortunately, the number of defaulters in payments is very low among the customers, and in some cases, customers who are unable to pay up in cash pay it in some form of mutually agreed upon kind (e.g., providing manual assistance in the store, compensating with some agricultural produce, etc.). Because their purchasing power is limited, the business owners cannot afford to mark up their prices. As a result the margin of profit from their sales is not high. Migrants, however, try to enhance their profit margin by engaging more members of their family with free time in the day to day running of their businesses. Therefore, it was not surprising to see migrants' business manned by their children after school or by their wives after meals are cooked. Perhaps the need to survive and succeed in business is another impetus to see close-knit and well-bonded families in migrant areas.

### 7.6 Illegal Border Trade with Bangladesh

Assam shares a total of 262-Km border with Bangladesh of which 92 km are riverine and there is ample scope for developing trade between the two countries. There are at present eight Land Custom Stations on the border of India (Assam) to facilitate legal trade (Economic Survey of Assam, 2010-2011). The government of India has also approved two more trade centers, one at Sutarkandi in the Karimganj district, and the other at Mankachar in the Dhubri district (Economic Survey of Assam, 2010-11). Table 7.9 shows the value of commodities exported and imported through these border trading points of Assam during the period 2006-07 to 2009-10.

**Table 7. 9: Value of Legal Export and Import via Border Trading Points on Assam-Bangladesh Border  
(In lakh of Rupees; 1 lakh = 100,000)**

Border Trading Points	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	Export	Import	Export	Import	Export	Import	Export	Import
Mankachar	26.36	7.03	12.73	11.86	37.81	20.35	11.42	182.02
Karimganj Steamer Ghat	344.41	14.83	477.81	56.78	383.88	56.01	531.45	114.16
Sutarkandi	5103.55	3041.78	2465.80	1422.34	2939.91	2865.13	2856.96	4110.60
<b>Total</b>	<b>5474.32</b>	<b>3063.64</b>	<b>2956.34</b>	<b>1490.98</b>	<b>3361.60</b>	<b>2941.49</b>	<b>3399.83</b>	<b>4406.78</b>

Source: Economic Survey Assam 2010-2011

Table 7.10 shows the major items exported to, and imported from Bangladesh through trade. Figures in Table 7.9, however, does not include the substantial volume of illegal trade that takes place on a regular basis across the border. Hence, the volume and value of trade across these official trading points is not substantial.

Illegal trade seems to be several orders of magnitude bigger than the legal trade. Because most of such trade deals cannot be accounted for, it is not possible to put an exact monetary figure to the volume of the trade. Among the illegal trade, cattle trade is the single most lucrative business (Commandant, BSF, 2009) The total volume of illegal exports from India to Bangladesh is estimated to be roughly in the amount of Indian Rupees 11.65 billion annually (Lakshman and Jha, 2003). According to Lakshman and Jha

(2003), the ethnic and cultural similarities of the populations along the border areas on both sides, and the inability of security forces on both sides to prevent this trade has facilitated illegal border trade. Therefore, put simply, its proportion at present is out of hand or unmanageable, even though it is being positively accepted on both sides of the border (Pramanik, 2007).

**Table 7. 10: Items Exported and Imported to Bangladesh**

<b>Exports</b>	<b>Imports</b>
Coal	Ready Made Garments
Ginger	Cotton Waste
Commercial Plywood	Religious Books
Dry Fish	Cement
Onion	Synthetic Fruit Drinks
Fresh Fruits	Vanaspati (vegetable oil)
Oranges	Hilsha Fish
Quick Lime	Soya Bean Oil
	Knitted or Crocheted Fabrics of synthetic fiber
	Woven Fabrics
	Soap
	Miscellaneous food Items

Source: Compiled from Economic Survey Assam 2010-2011

According to the Newspaper 'Barak Valley' cattle smuggling is going on between India and Bangladesh from the markets of Kaliganj, Kabuganj, Katigorah and Sealtek in the Barak Valley. Indian currency is preferred to Bangladesh Taka as the Indian Rupee is more easily convertible and accepted than the Bangladesh Taka because of its appreciation and stability in the international market (Barak Valley, 2009).

The Commandant of the Border Security Force (Guwahati, Assam) in his discussion with the author in August 2011 said that "*although illegal trades like cattle smuggling and some small items are still going on, it has come down substantially*". Illegal trade at present is contributing to migration from Bangladesh (FGD). This has been acknowledged even by the government of Bangladesh; quoting M. Morshed Khan, ex-Foreign Minister of Bangladesh at a discussion at the Overseas Correspondents Association in Dhaka: "cross-border illegal trade must be checked to control illegal migration" (Reported by Daily Star, 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2003)

### **7.7 Char Area Development**

The riverine islands of the Brahmaputra locally known as char or chapories covers about 360,000 hectares of land with a total population of approximately 2.5 million (Socio-Economic Survey Report, 2002-2003, Government of Assam). Among them, 80 percent are Muslims of East Bengal/Bangladesh origin as they have settled in those areas since the British rule. Most of the new migrants from Bangladesh prefer to stay close to the older settlements of people of Bangladesh origin and still follow the 'line system' introduced by the British government. So they prefer to settle in the char areas mainly due to cultural and linguistic similarities of the people in those areas. The remaining 20 percent is made

up of various communities, notably: Nepalese, Bodo, Bengali Hindus, Fishermen, Rajbangshi and the Missing tribe of Assam<sup>58</sup>.

As 80 percent of the inhabitants of the char areas are of East Bengal/Bangladesh origin, a brief study was done on the char areas of Assam. Almost 80 percent of the char inhabitants live below the poverty line and the government of Assam in 1983 constituted the 'Assam State Char Areas Development Authority' for the uplift of the poor in these areas by introducing the 'Special Area Programme'. Subsequently in 1996, a full-fledged Directorate of Char Areas Development Assam was formed to look after the welfare of the inhabitants of these areas (Socio-Economic Survey Report, 2002-2003, Government of Assam).

Table 7.11 shows the profile of the Char Areas of Assam indicating that there are about 2251 char villages and they are located in 14 different districts of Assam (Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darrang, Sonitpur, Nagaon, Marigaon, Jorhat, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji and Tinsukia). Together they comprise 24.9 percent of the population of Assam and 80 percent of them are illiterate and with poor health care facilities.

**Table 7. 11: State's Profile of Char Areas (2002-03)**

<b>Number of Districts where chars are located</b>	14
number of Sub-division	23
number of Gaon Panchayat	299
number of development Block	59
<b>Number of Char Villages</b>	2251
<b>Population</b>	24,90,097
number of Male	12,71, 588
number of Females	12,18,509
<b>Land in Hectares</b>	3,60,927
cultivable Land in Hectares	2,42,277
land uncultivable in Hectares	1,18,650
land under Irrigation in Hectares	13975
<b>Number of Families</b>	4,34,754
<b>Number of Families below Poverty Line</b>	2,95,199
<b>Number of Literate person</b>	4,80,807
<b>Number of Illiterate person</b>	20,09,290
<b>Percentage of Literacy</b>	19.3
<b>Educational Institutions</b>	
Lower Primary	1852
Middle English	574
High School	218
Higher Secondary	8
College	18
<b>Medical Facilities</b>	
Number of Primary Health Care	52
Number of Dispensary	Nil
Number of Sub-Centre	132

Source: Socio-Economic Survey Report 2002-03 of Char Areas of Assam

The following are the schemes taken by the government for the development of the char areas of Assam (Directorate of Char Areas Development Assam, office):

<sup>58</sup> As per the spokesperson of the Directorate of Char Areas Development Assam, Guwahati, 2011.

- **Education:** nursing training, computer training, higher education, self-employment
- **Agriculture:** power pumps and distribution of jute seeds, wheat seeds and rabi crops.
- **Cottage industries:** Sewing machines, training in cutting, knitting, embroidery and handicraft
- **Veterinary and dairy:** construction of higher platforms for shelter of animals during flood season, distribution of cattle.
- **Drinking water facilities:** providing tube wells and constructing wells for safe drinking water.

The government in its Eleventh Five-Year Plan of India have taken steps for the development and improvement of the char areas under 'Special Areas Programme' starting with the year 2007 to 2012, and a comprehensive statement of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007-2012) under Char Areas Development Assam is given in Table 7.12.

The basic objective of the Char Areas Development Programme is to boost development by implementing certain schemes in the agricultural sector, veterinary and dairy, drinking water facilities, education, cottage industries, wages, and other schemes like Assam Vikash Yojana and the Chief Minister's special employment generation scheme. Under the central government-- scholarships and multi-sectored development programs have been proposed for the development of these areas.

**Table 7. 12: Budget Estimates of the Government of Assam for the Years, 2007-2012 (in Indian Rupees in lakh, 1 lakh – 100,000)**

Year	Amount allocated to Char Area Development (Plan)	Amount allocated to Char Area Development (Non Plan)	Percent of the total Budget allocated to Char Area development
2011-2012	67353.7	371.0	4.4
2010-2011	41910.0	231.1	1.1
2009-2010	53244.5	168.5	1.5
2008-2009	2245.0	127.9	1.0
2007-2008	1040.0	101.7	0.1

Source: Government of Assam (Demands for grants of miscellaneous departments for the years 2007-2012)

The improvement of Char Areas and its inhabitants is important for the growth and development of the areas as well as the State, but without checking the influx of migrants from Bangladesh it will not be possible to achieve the desired goal of development. With more new migrants coming in each year, the government will have to spend more and it will be an ongoing process with little or almost no hope of development and progress hence the state will remain as one of the most backward states in the Indian Union.

Sarma (2009) argues that most of the government funding at present is spent on the development of char areas as shown in Table 7.12 and 7.13 as a result the other sectors are neglected and this would continue if the migration does not slow down (Sarma, 2009).

Table 7.12 shows the amount of money allocated to the Char areas out of the total budget of the government of Assam every year for the last five years. It is seen that from 0.1 percent in 2007-2008 it has increased to 4.4 percent in 2011-2012. Tables 7.13 and 7.14 present the total amount of money received by the Char Area development office every year from both the state and central government for the last three years. As per the government spokesperson 90 percent of the fund comes from central government and 10 per cent from state government.

**Table 7. 13: Allocation of Funds by State Government, 2006-07 to 2010-2011**

Year of State Plan	Allocation of fund in Rupees (lakh)	Expenditure in Rupees (lakh)
2008-09	1360.0	1353.7
2009-2010	2400.0	2399.7
2010-2011	3563.0	Under Process

Source: Directorate of Char Areas Development Assam

**Table 7. 14: Funding from the Government of India to Char Areas from 2007 to 2010**

Year	Scholarships		Multi Sector Development Plan	
	Allocation in Rupees (lakh)	Expenditure in Rupees (lakh)	Allocation in Rupees (lakh)	Expenditure in Rupees (lakh)
2007-08	163.5	163.5	-	-
2008-09	824.4	824.4	4226.7	8226.7
2009-10	1366.6	1366.6	1626.9	1626.9

Source: Directorate of Char Areas Development Assam.

## 7.8 Conclusion

In summary, it is noted that all facets: namely, land, labor, capital and entrepreneurship are affected both positively and negatively due to illegal migration. Land holdings are decreasing due to increases in population and the history of development shows that a large number of people engaged in agricultural activity is not sustainable. Therefore, dependence on agriculture has to be reduced for the progress and development of the state. To achieve this, the government needs to spend more on training and capacity building and hence the resources of the state will further reduce. In order for the state to progress, the migrant areas need to be developed in all key areas; notably in education, employment, infrastructure and healthcare.

In this chapter the economic impact of migration on the state as a whole has been discussed, and although there are some positive impacts on the state economy there are also some negative effects due to migration. In the next chapter the environmental impact of migration in Assam will be discussed.

## Chapter 8: Impact of Migration – Impact on Ecosystem in National Parks in Assam

“It is important that the resettlement not be attempted where the displaceds and the pre-existing local populations have existing enmities or practices which may offend the other group.”

Professor Graeme Hugo, “Lessons from past forced resettlement for climate change migration,” in “Migration and Climate Change”, Edited by Piguat, E., Recoud, A. and Guchteneire, P.D. published by UNESCO Publishing, 2011, pp. 280-281.

### 8.1 Introduction

Although environmental degradation causes migration, migration on the other hand can also cause environmental degradation in the receiving areas (Hugo, 2008), and Assam is no exception. Looking at the history of Assam for the past 100 years it is seen that Assam like any other state of India is experiencing loss of its biodiversity due to various human and environmental factors.

Among the environmental factors, regular floods, river bank erosion, siltation and soil erosion are exerting a great threat to the areas. It has intensified in recent years due to human activities in the ecologically sensitive areas, such as river tracts and foothills (Bhagabati *at al.*, 2006, p.254). On the human front, factors like unplanned expansion of human settlement, irrational use of land, use of agro-chemicals, exploitation of mineral resources and also of valuable species of flora and fauna, insurgency and political unrest, allotment of land in the forest fringe villages in the name of rehabilitation to fulfill narrow political interest, have caused immense pressure on the environment of the state (Bhagabati *et al.*, 2006, p.254).

Most migrants often settle in “general common areas” such as “chars and chapories”, “bathans<sup>59</sup>”, “banks of beels<sup>60</sup>”(Das, 2001), that do not have any distinctive title of ownership to any individual or entity. Many are also settling in forest areas, along the side of railway tracks and highways and in the fringe areas or buffer zones of the National Parks, World Heritage Sites and Satras<sup>61</sup> (Sarma, 2009). Such haphazard growth of villages or settlements have resulted in the damage of geo-ecological conditions of the areas and have led to deforestation, loss of wild life, erosion, water shortages, and also generation of organic waste which results in the damage to the geo-ecological conditions of the affected areas (Goswami, 2009). Furthermore, since India’s independence in 1947, Assam has witnessed many changes in its political and administrative makeup and these changes also had an impact on its environment.

“The political uprising of the tribal groups for their territorial and cultural identity, insurgency, interstate boundary problems and large-scale immigration have together led to

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<sup>59</sup> the grazing land for cattle and buffaloes

<sup>60</sup> inland fresh water bodies

<sup>61</sup> Satras are old religious institutions of Hindus

a situation quite detrimental to biodiversity in many areas within the state. During the recent period, the state has experienced displacement of people in certain localities either due to natural hazards like flood and bank erosion, shifting of river courses or conflicts among population groups. The displaced people are in most cases rehabilitated in the forest areas or in some government lands. This naturally affects the state of biodiversity in the areas selected for rehabilitation." (Bhagabati *et al.*, 2006, p. 246).

According to the Forest Survey of India (FSI), 2000 study, there has been a decrease of about 1800 sq. km of forest cover in North East India. In addition, there is also deterioration in the quality of the forest. In some case, forests have been degraded into open forests or mere scrubs. As shown in Table 8.1, four of the eight states of North East India (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Mizoram and Sikkim) have lost dense forest cover due to deforestation. With a loss of 2,788 sq. km of dense forests, Assam tops the list of these four states.

**Table 8. 1: Loss of Dense Forest Cover in North East India, 2003**

State	2001 Assessment (in hectares)			2003 Assessment (in hectares)			Change (in hectares)		
	Dense	Open	Total	Dense	Open	Total	Dense	Open	Total
<b>Arunachal Pradesh</b>	55,932	14,113	68,045	53,511	14,508	68,019	<b>-421</b>	395	-26
<b>Assam</b>	15,830	11,884	27,714	13,042	14,784	27,826	<b>-2,788</b>	2900	112
<b>Manipur</b>	5710	11,216	16,926	6,538	10,681	17,219	828	-535	293
<b>Meghalaya</b>	5,681	9,903	15,584	6,481	10,348	16,839	810	445	1,255
<b>Mizoram</b>	8,936	8,558	17,494	7,488	10,942	18,430	<b>-1,448</b>	2,384	936
<b>Nagaland</b>	5,393	7,952	13,345	5,707	7,902	13,609	314	-50	264
<b>Sikkim</b>	2,391	802	3,193	2,362	900	3,262	<b>-29</b>	98	69
<b>Tripura</b>	3,463	3,602	7,065	5,046	3,047	8,093	1,583	-555	1,028

Source: Forest Survey of India, 2003, cited at Chatterjee *et al.*, 2006

In this chapter, the settlement of people of Bangladesh-origin in the fringe villages of Manas National Park and the environmental impact of this settlement is discussed. In studying the environmental impact it should be kept in mind that it is not only the settlement of people of East Bengal origin but also from the other communities in the hinterland of the Park which is contributing to changes in the physical environment, land-use, population and other ecological and cultural characteristics of the area. Therefore, together they pose serious threats to the environment of the Park. Two villages in the Basbari Range of the park were surveyed with regard to the environmental impact of the park due to the settlement of people of East Bengal origin.

## **8.2 Study of Migrant Settlement in Manas National Park**

### **8.2.1 Location and Feature of Manas National Park**

The Manas National Park, with an area of about 2837 sq. km., lies between river Sankosh in the west to Dhansiri in the east and is recognized as a World Heritage site under UNESCO. The core area of the Park is about 500 sq. km. and its average elevation is 85 meters above sea level (see Figure 8.1)<sup>62</sup>. It is part of the largest conservation area in the region and forms a continuous habitat with the forest of Bhutan in the north and Buxa Tiger Reserve of West Bengal in the west. Due to its unique location which is at the

<sup>62</sup> Assam Online Portal, Manas National Park, <http://www.assamportal.com/2012/07/manas-national-park.html>

confluence of Indian, Ethiopian and Indo-Chinese realms, it is one of the areas with rich biodiversity. Several endemic species such as the Golden Langur, Pygmy Hog or the Assam Roof Turtle (*Kachua sythentensis*) are unique to the zone and are not found outside this area anywhere in the world. About 543 plant species have been recorded in this area. It is an important catchment area of a number of rivers and rivulets like Manas, Beki, Pahumara etc. and a perennial source of water resulting in unhindered downstream irrigation which sustains economic prosperity of this area (Government of Assam booklet, 2012).

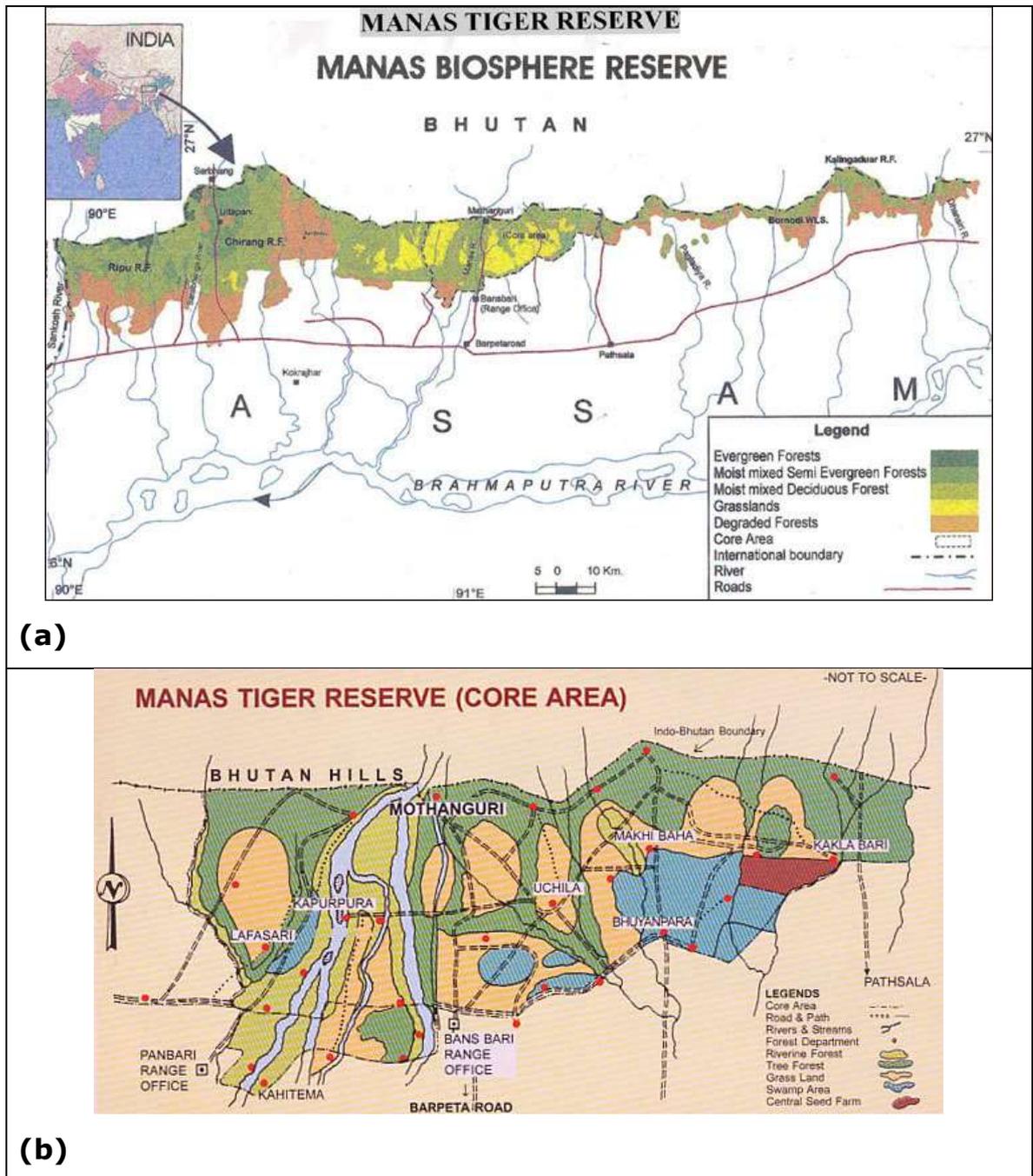
### **8.2.2 Land Cover of Manas National Park**

The Assam Tribune on December 4, 2009 reported that a combination of natural and anthropogenic factors is altering the landscape of Manas National Park. According to the article, a joint study done by conservationist groups and forest authorities using satellite images confirmed that considerable encroachment had taken place in the National Park and the two major areas are the extreme southwest and extreme southeast part of the Park (shaded yellow in Figure 8.2). A combined 20.5 sq. km area was deforested within the Park Boundary by encroachers from 1977 onwards (The Assam Tribune, 2009).

Another article published in the same newspaper (The Assam Tribune, August 17, 2010) reported that according to an assessment made by the Forest Survey of India, the forest cover in Assam had shrunk more than 66 sq. Km since the previous biennial assessment. According to the newspaper report, encroachment had been reported from a number of National Parks located in Assam; namely, Nameri National Park (2100 hectares), Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park (800 Hectares), Manas National Park (1700 hectares), Dibru Saikhowa National Park (300 hectares) and Kaziranga National Park (7790 hectares). A total area of 20.05 sq. km has been deforested within the forest boundary between the years 1977 to 2004 in the southwest and eastern most part of the Park (Lahkar *et al.*, 2007).

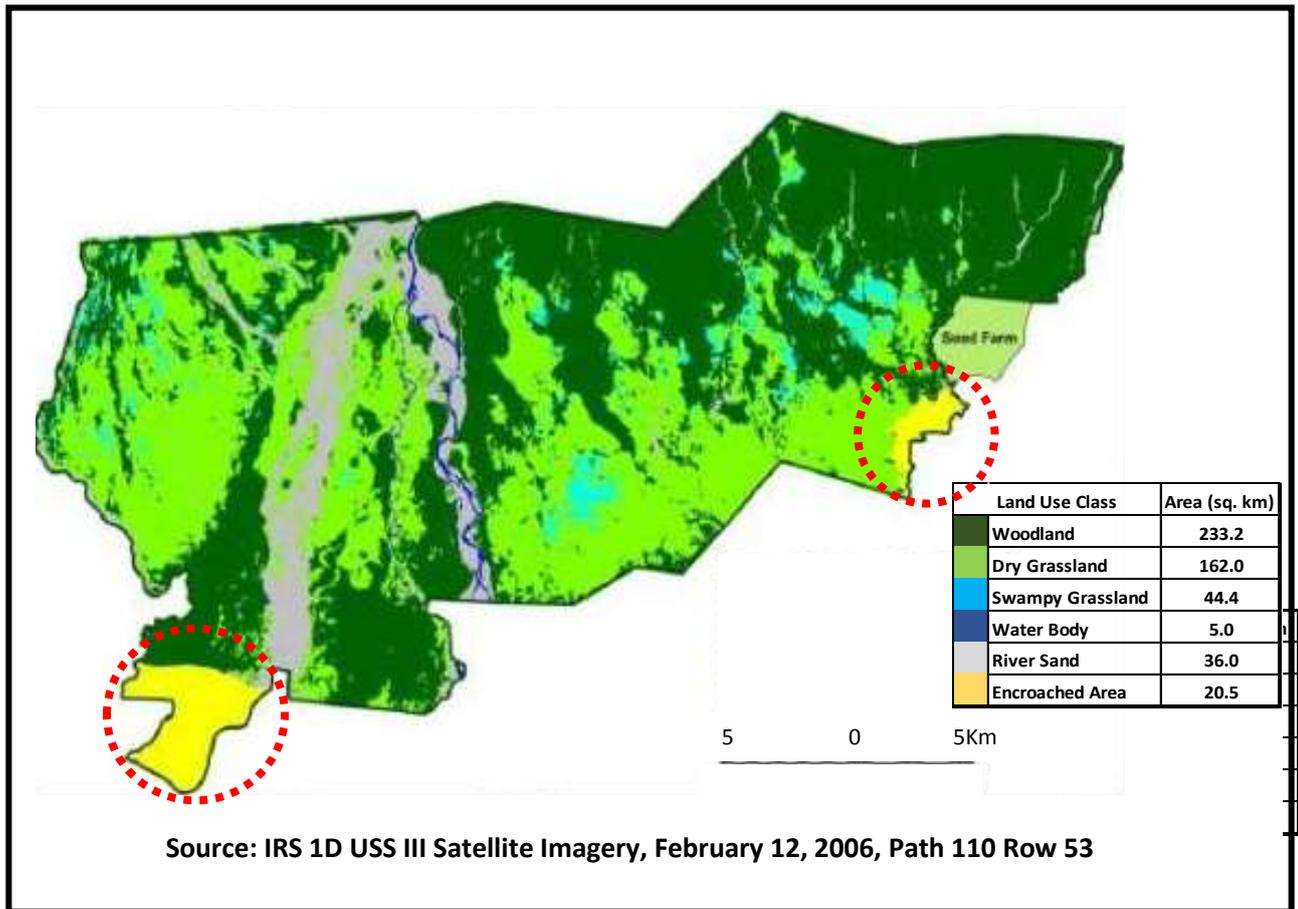
“Initially the surrounding forests of the Park were used for grazing and minor forest products collection by the local community of the fringe areas. Slowly there has been logging by timber smugglers for a pittance and the cleared land have been illegally purchased by immigrant farmers.....Political presser from this growing population, driven by feeling of deprivation and neglect, may become the greatest threat to the future of the Park” (Lahkar *et al.* , 2007, p.19).

**Figure 8. 1: (a) Location of Manas National Park and (b) Identification of Core Areas**



(Source: <http://manasassam.org/maps.asp>)

**Figure 8. 2: Encroachments in Manas National Park, 2006**



Source: IRS 1D USS III Satellite Imagery, February 12, 2006, Path 110 Row 53

Lahkar *et al.* (2007) have chronicled that changing land usage in the Park since 1977. The types of landscape elements are presented in Table 8.2.

**Table 8. 2: Land use changes in terms of area from 1977 to 2006**

Landscape elements type	Area in Sq. Km			
	1977	1998	2004	2006
Woodland	253.1	242.1	232.6	233.2
Dry Grassland	120.9	132.8	202.4	162.0
Swampy	94.4	83.2	12.1	44.4
Water body	8.9	6.7	5.3	5.0
River Sand	23.7	20.5	28.6	36.0
Encroached Areas	0	15.5	20.5	20.5

Source: A study of habitat utilization patterns of Asian elephant *Elephas maximus* and current status of human elephant conflict in Manas National Park within Chirang-Ripu Elephant Reserve, Assam, by Aaranyak, Lahkar *et al.*, 2007 ([www.aaranyak.org/reportsManas elephant final project report.pdf](http://www.aaranyak.org/reportsManas%20elephant%20final%20project%20report.pdf))

Data provide evidence that encroachment of forest land has been on the increase since 1977, from none to 20.5 sq. km in 2006. Dry grass land is also on the rise due to grazing activities. Today over 4 percent of the Park has been encroached by human settlement and the woodland cover has shrunk by a similar amount since 1977. Due to restrictions imposed on grazing since 2004, a slight decrease in the use of grass land was noted. Both swampy areas and waterbodies have been reduced to almost half of what were there in 1977, and this has resulted in an increase in river sand exposure from 23.74 sq km in 1977 to 35.97 sq km in 2006, an increase of more than 51.5 percent. River sand now covers 7.2 percent of Park area in 2006 as opposed to only 4.7 percent in 1977.

### **8.3 Fringe Villages in Manas National Park**

To the south of the Park lie thickly populated 'revenue' (i.e., villages recognized under the Land Revenue Act of Assam) and forest villages. There are no large townships or industries other than the Fatimabad Tea Estate in the Bansbari Range adjacent to the boundary of the Park. There are 61 fringe villages within two kilometers of the Park boundary and the total population of these villages according to 1997 survey was 53,821, of which 50,527 were in the Barpeta district and 3,294 in the Bongaigaon district of the state (Manas At A Glance, Government of Assam Booklet, n.d.). The biggest community is the Bodos comprising between 47 to 65 percent of the total population, followed by other communities, such as: Assamese, Bengali, Nepalese and a small number of Adivasis according to the survey of 1997 (*Manas at A Glance*, Government of Assam, n.d).

In an interview with the Park Field Director it was learnt that, most of the people are poorly educated, with only a basic elementary education, and are mainly poor, landless laborers or agriculture workers. Due to their traditions and ethno-specific practices they are heavily dependent on various kinds of forest products. The Bodo communities as well as others, such as the settlers of Bangladesh origin, use the Park for cattle grazing. The forest is their source for firewood, and also the source of their basic housing materials; for example, the hay harvested from the forest is used for roof thatching. Occasionally wild animals are killed for consumption of meat and for certain rituals. These practices have been going on since time immemorial. However, with increased human and cattle population, such rituals are putting tremendous pressure on the resources in the reserve. Facilities such as public-health centers, safe drinking water, good road communication and quality educational institutions are lacking in the area. There is high incidence of water borne diseases, malaria, and malnutrition<sup>63</sup>. Some of the key threats identified in the Park are land erosion, poaching, invasive species, habitat degradation, encroachment, deforestation, cattle grazing, tourism, use of fertilizer, insecticides, DDT, lack of proper sanitation in fringe villages and safe drinking water.

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<sup>63</sup> As per Field Director, Tiger Project, Manas At A Glance, Manas Biosphere Reserve, Barpeta Road, Assam, Government of Assam, 2012

## **8.4 Methodology Adopted in the Field Study**

This study is based on a field survey of 33 East Bengal-origin families in two selected villages located in the neighborhood of the Park. The villages are Ragabil and Giati Gaon in the Bansbari Range of the National Park (See Fig. 8.1). Most of the inhabitants of Giati Gaon have relocated from their original settlements as their land and property were eroded by the floods of River Beki in 2003 and 2007.

The Basbari Range also saw violent activities during the Bodo agitation, particularly against the migrant community of East Bengal origin (Ahmed, 2011). Recent events following the Indian general election in May 2014 also created another cycle of violent activities against the migrant settlers in Manas National Park. The Army, with the "shoot-at-sight" order had to be called in.

The study area was selected by consulting with leaders of minority communities, migrants, NGO's, and other key informants. A 'Mixed Methodology' approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis, was used to study the environmental impact of migrant settlement. Data triangulation was used in the collection and analysis phase as the questionnaire contained both closed and open-ended questions. Data were collected from different sources such as migrants and also from key persons like park officials or local people who have knowledge of the topic.

Face-to-face interviews in the courtyard of influential persons using structured questionnaires, were conducted to collect primary data. All information could not be collected through the field survey alone, and it was supplemented by in-depth interviews, focus group discussion (FGD) and group discussions. In addition, observation/comments in the public domain were also taken into consideration on issues related to the study topic. Secondary information and data were collected from the Census, Office of the Field Director Tiger Project, Village head, and the Forest Range Officer.

## **8.5 Impact of Settlement**

### **8.5.1 Ecological Changes**

The ecological setting of Manas National Park area is characterized by a set of interacting elements which may be broadly classified as woodland, Savannah grassland, alluvial grassland, water bodies, river sand and also flora and fauna (Lahkar *et al.*, 2007, p. 5). A study done by experts from a conservation group and the State Forest Department has shown considerable change in the pattern of land-use in the area<sup>64</sup>. According to this study a combined area of 20.05 sq. km, about 4 percent of the total Park area, was deforested within the Park boundary from 1977 onwards. As a result, the woodland in the Park has

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<sup>64</sup> Reported in The Assam Tribune, December 4, 2009

been shrinking (Table 8.2). The same study also showed that the water bodies rich in biodiversity were shrinking, and if this continues, a large number of birds especially water fowl could face serious threats. Disappearing water sources would also affect mega fauna that depended on them. Alluvial grassland, which is the habitat of the one-horned Rhino have also undergone change and any further reduction would affect the habitat of pygmy hog, Bengal florican, swamp deer and elephants (The Assam Tribune, December 4, 2009).

### **8.5.2 Human Impact on the Park's Environment**

The study undertaken in the two fringe villages shows that 26 out of 33, that is, 78 percent of migrants settled there because their land at their original place of residence was washed away by erosion during the floods of 2004 and 2007. Of the 30 respondents who answered the question on their educational background, only one had a college degree and five had attended school but did not complete the diploma. The majority, 24 out of 30 respondents that is about 80 percent had no formal education and mostly depended on agriculture and natural resources for their livelihood.

Migrants' level of education is also reflected through the occupations they held, and only the one with a college degree held a salaried position. Almost 70 percent were engaged in labor-intensive occupations as daily laborers and vegetable growers and 24 percent ran businesses, mostly small grocery stores.

The primary occupation of majority of the respondents is cultivating marketable vegetables. Vegetables like eggplant, tomato, squash, potato, chili etc. that have longer shelf lives than other vegetables and have a higher market value are usually cultivated. They also grow vegetables during off-season and sell them to vegetable traders at a higher price due to its unavailability in a particular season. Vegetables grown are sold in places as far as North Bengal and Meghalaya (Taher, 2011). According to the respondents chemical fertilizer such as NPK (Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium) as well as insecticides are used for plant protection. In addition, the government sprays DDT (Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane), free of charge, to kill mosquitos every year in these villages as a preventative measure against malaria, a deadly disease spread by mosquitos. It has been reported that about 20 percent of all total Malaria deaths in India occur in Assam every year (India Together, 2008, May 10). While the use of chemicals (fertilizers, pesticides, insecticides and DDT) does contribute to increased food production, and a reduction in the spread of malaria, these chemicals also have negative consequences on the environment and general public health. It is inevitable that the effects of these chemicals will slowly spread especially to the water bodies and the food chain and threaten the environment of the park, causing irreversible damage to the ecological balance of flora and fauna in the Park (Bhagabati *et al.*, 2006).

Although the people of East Bengal origin were studied, the author also took cognizance of the fact that there were settlers from other communities within the study area. Hence the environmental impact is not solely attributable to the settlers of East Bengal origin.

Due to insurgency during the Bodo movement which started in 1987, the economy of the area was shattered. Since then, the inhabitants including the people of East Bengal origin, have resorted to cattle raising as an alternative means of livelihood. The cattle are allowed to graze in the buffer zone of the National Park, with no limit or boundary set for cattle grazing in that area (Park Director, 2011). From an environmental and ecological perspective, grazing of domestic animals is considered to be a major threat to the grassland, as excessive grazing cause soil erosion. It also leaves the grasslands barren, and as a result, invasive species such as *Eupatorium sp.*, *Melastoma sp.*, *Leea sp.*, and *Mimosa* replaces the original grasslands, and destroys the original habitat of certain animals such as Rhinos, Pigmy Hogs, and Hare, etc. (Government of Assam booklet, n.d). Furthermore, there is a danger that cattle grazing can spread diseases among the park animals and if due care is not taken the diseases can spread with devastating consequences (Bhagabati *et al.*, 2006).

Various energy sources used by migrants in the Park are shown in Table 8.3; for most, electrical power still remains a distant dream as they cannot either afford it and/or are not legally qualified to get an electrical power supply connection to their homes. The use of wood is the most obvious choice as energy source; for, it is readily available and can be gathered free or at low cost. Therefore, besides the use of grasslands for grazing, the collection of fuel woods and building materials as well as felling of trees in the buffer zone is a problem and a threat to the park. Survey shows that out of 33 households, 30 (i.e., 91%) used firewood for cooking, and 31 households used kerosene oil as a source of power; that is for lighting in evenings.

**Table 8. 3: Energy Sources Used by Migrants in Manas National Park**

Energy Sources	For Cooking and Heating		For Domestic Lighting	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Firewood	30	91	0	0
Kerosene	2	6	31	94
LPG Gas	1	3	n/a	n/a
Electricity	0	0	2	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Assam Migration Survey, 2009-12

The documented total population of the fringe villages was 53,821 according to a 1997 survey on record (Manas at A Glance, Field Director Tiger Project, Government of Assam booklet, d.n). On average, the individual annual per capita consumption of firewood is approximately 25 kg per annum. Therefore, if 91 percent of them do use firewood for cooking, the total estimated amount of firewood consumed per year would stand at a staggering 1,224,428 kg. This undoubtedly causes significant pollution, and has an ill-effect on the Park environment and health of the populace (Misra and Ramakrishan, 1982).

Lack of proper sanitation among the inhabitants of the fringe villages also poses a grave threat to the Park. Various diseases, both air- and water-borne could spread through human excreta. It also creates organic waste. It is seen from the survey that only 2 households out of 33 could afford to have more hygienic concrete septic tank based latrine

with the ceramic squatting plate. The majority of them (67 percent) have make-shift latrines made out of bamboos which are unhygienic. Worse still, nine households (27 percent) had no access to any private sanitation facilities. Poor and unhygienic sanitation has caused a number of gastrological diseases and facilitated the spread of various diseases through flies and insects among both humans and possibly to other animals (birds, Park animals).

### **8.5.3 Poaching**

Like other reserved areas of Assam, Manas National Park suffers from poaching. According to the Park Director, deer hunting by individuals, mainly for meat consumption by families, is a serious "localized" problem and is difficult to check and monitor. In addition, there are also certain ritualistic practices of community hunting among the indigenous tribal population. Because such hunting practices are tradition-based, it is a very delicate problem to tackle because of the sensitivities it evokes in the community. To the indigenous population it is a part of their traditional way of life, and hence, they are reluctant to give it up. The Field Director, therefore, organizes community-based discussions on the needs for sustainable and environmentally-friendly practices with a certain degree of moderation on the scale of such rituals.

Since the movement for deportation of foreigners started in Assam in 1979, the political condition of the state has deteriorated, along with the law and order situation. Taking advantage of this situation, smugglers and poachers have virtually eliminated the rhino and tuskers in Manas National Park (Bhagabati *et al.*, 2006, P.231). Rhinos have been recently reintroduced in the Park. According to the Park spokesperson, an anti-poaching camp has been set up to prevent poaching (Discussion with the spokesperson of the Park, 2011).

### **8.5.4 Man-Animal Conflict**

At times animals, especially wild elephants go astray in the nearby villages and destroy the crops of the inhabitants (Field Survey). Due to a good understanding that exists between the Park management and the villagers, the people of the villages instead of taking matters in their own hand usually inform the authorities. They then arrange for the safe return of the animals back into the Park (Park Ranger, 2011). It is for these reasons, the man-animal conflict is not a big factor in this Park, at least for now.

Another aspect that the Park officials have seriously looked into is to prevent the possible spread of diseases from domesticated animals to animals in the wild. Therefore, as a preventive measure, the animals that graze in the Park are vaccinated to prevent diseases. Regular workshops are held, and villagers, students, forest staff, teachers and NGOs are encouraged to participate in them to learn about disease risks and prevention. These workshops aim to make the people of nearby villages understand the significance of the Park and how they can help protect it. The authorities have also built solar lights,

smokeless “chullahs” (Cooking Stoves), ring-wells, tube-wells, co-operative handloom centers, piggeries to make the people less dependent on Park’s products and resources<sup>65</sup>.

## **8.6 Conclusion**

Due to the haphazard use of natural resources there has been substantial damage to biodiversity in Assam. In recent years, effort is being made to conserve resources and spread awareness among all groups of people on the importance of conservation. The ability to foresee the future prospects as well as the current problems is important for the preservation of resources. However, the main problems at present, such as terrorism, insurgency, etc. make conservation a secondary priority for the policy makers in Assam (Bhagabati *et al.*, 2006).

A comprehensive vision and strategy for conservation of natural resources is still lacking in Assam. Problems resulting mainly from migration and also conflicts arising among different groups of people have kept the issue of conservation as a secondary one.

Lack of a policy for rehabilitation of displaced people affects the environment. The people especially the migrants displaced due to natural calamities or conflicts are usually rehabilitated in the forest areas or on government lands. This affects the biodiversity in the areas selected for settlement (Bhagabati *et al.*, 2006). The indigenous population of the fringe villages have lived in these areas for generations and their culture, as well as their livelihood, is familiar to the area and the reserve forest. Their survival skills and the importance of the forest are taught to them from childhood. The displaced people, who are settled in the fringe villages of the National parks or forest by the government, tend to look to their own interests and try to fulfill their basic needs. In doing so knowingly or unknowingly they destroy the environment around them thus affecting the ecological balance of the areas settled (Taher, 2011).

To save the Manas National Park, the further spread of settlement needs to be stopped and the use of chemical fertilizers, insecticides and also DDT be restricted. Deforestation and encroachment in the buffer zone of the Park needs to be controlled; otherwise, it will destroy the ecology of the area. Cattle grazing should be restricted to designated areas and there should be monitoring for diseases by Park authorities.

A thorough and transparent process for land purchases should be put in place so that no illegal or unauthorized transactions and land transfers take place. This will prevent the purchase of lands by migrant farmers from the timber smugglers who try to sell forest lands they clear illegally. Many migrants do not realize that such lands are not owned by the timber smugglers (Lahkar *et al.*, 2007). In addition, the laws and policies to protect wild life should be strictly enforced.

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<sup>65</sup> Manas at a Glance, Manas Biosphere Reserve, Barpeta Road, Assam, Government of Assam, 2012

Strict measures should be taken to prevent encroachments, deforestation activities and also the haphazard human settlements, in and around the forest land. Assam has already lost huge areas of dense forest but it still enjoys a reasonable level of forest area per capita. What has happened in Tripura should serve as a warning to Assam. In Tripura, the continued cross border migration from Bangladesh has had a detrimental effect on its forest cover per capita. Some migrants have settled in the forest areas thus destroying the ecology of those areas. To quote Chatterjee and his co-workers:

“There has been large scale influx of people in Tripura from Bangladesh during the second half of the century. The increase in population has been about 30%, reducing per capita forest area from 0.97 hectare to a present level of 0.81 hectare” (Chatterjee *et al.*, 2006, p.16).

Let this not be repeated in Assam.

## Chapter 9: Migrants' Economic and Social Adjustment

### 9.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to understand migrants' social and economic situation as well as their adjustment in Assam. In order to meet this objective, an analysis of the economic conditions of migrants surveyed in the Dhubri district which borders Bangladesh is presented. A comparative analysis of their conditions in Assam with their places of origin in Bangladesh is also provided.

Although a number of studies have been undertaken regarding the socio-economic characteristics and impact of migration on the host countries (Padilla, n.d.; Batalova, 2008; Kanapathy, 2001), such in-depth studies are lacking for Assam. This is primarily because most available data are either unreliable or inadequate, the reason being that migrants are often unwilling to identify themselves as being originally from Bangladesh. Equally important, the government departments entrusted with migrant affairs are hesitant to record and report data on migration due to political reasons. The Indian Census provides some information on the number, geographical distribution of settlements and religious affiliation of migrants from Bangladesh in Assam, but, not all these data were available from the most recent 2011 Census at the time of writing. A few villages close to the border with Bangladesh (as well with proximity to the district headquarters township of Dhubri) were surveyed during 2009-12 to obtain first-hand data. Figure 3.10 presented in Chapter 3 shows the location of the places surveyed in the district, including the district headquarters township.

Both culturally and linguistically, these areas in Assam are similar to those across the border in Bangladesh. This, plus the porous border, makes it easy for migrants to enter Assam with very little risk of detection (Deka, 2011). The presence of relatives, friends and fellow countrymen (who had come earlier) further helped them in their settlement process. The study found that 54 percent of the 158 respondents, comprising 21 percent Hindus and 33 percent Muslims, settled at their present places of residence because of relatives, friends or fellow countrymen, who came earlier. Therefore, the Network Theory of migration of (Massey *et al.*, 1994) appears to be relevant in this case.

During the study, in addition to responses to the questionnaire, secondary information on various aspects, such as, total population, number of voters, healthcare facilities, primary occupation, number of employees, mode of transportation, number of schools and colleges were collected from the villages surveyed either through the respective "Gaonburah" (the village headman), local authorities, knowledgeable persons within the community and from the Char Area Development Authority officials and are presented in Table 9.1.

The areas where migrants have settled still lack adequate infrastructure in education, healthcare, transport and communication. Politically, migrants' vote shares vary from 18 to 64 percent, and not surprisingly, the areas with larger vote shares generally enjoy more and higher standard of civic amenities. Moreover, it is evident that access to basic healthcare facilities is still lacking in the areas away from the district headquarters; whereas, the places located in the immediate vicinity of Dhubri Township, enjoy better healthcare access through the government-run Public Health Centers (PHC). Likewise, the access to educational institutions is also poor elsewhere, away from the townships, even at the primary education level. The road transportation and connectivity are poorly developed in these areas, and this has become more acute a problem in summer months when floods are common.

Table 9.2 summarizes the types and number of educational institutions available for migrants' children within the areas surveyed in this study. It is seen that there are very few high schools in the area surveyed, and this compels many to seek high-school education in neighboring areas, including Dhubri Township. There are only 7 colleges (i.e., one college per 49,123 people) to offer post-secondary education. Overall, the access to educational institutions in the communities far from townships is below the district average, even at the lower primary and middle school levels.

Table 9.3 shows healthcare facilities available in the surveyed areas and also in the district overall. It is evident from these data that the migrant areas located more distant from the urbanized areas or townships are very poorly served in terms of healthcare facilities. In rural and remote areas the only public healthcare available is through the Sub-Centers in which there is a very limited and rudimentary infrastructure. There are no resident full-time doctors posted in them; as doctors attend such Sub-Centers part-time, and only a few times a week. The sub-centers are usually manned by one or two full-time paramedics equipped with basic first-aid training. Only eight such Healthcare sub-centers existed in migrant areas surveyed, each serving 42,983 persons as opposed to 6,656 at the overall district level.

**Table 9. 1: Basic Civic Amenities Data from Villages Surveyed in Dhubri District**

Sl. #	Village	Population	Registered Voters	Voters' Percent	Educational Opportunities	Healthcare Facilities	Transportation	Primary Occupation	Employment Percent	Respondents
1	Lakhimari	12,700	2,900	22.8	LP 12, ME 2, HS 2	PHC	Road	Agriculture and business		5
2	Golokganj	13,500	3,200	23.7	LP 13, ME 8, HS 3, College 1	PHC	Road	Agriculture, business and Bazar		9
3	Chalakura River Block	6,500	1,200	18.5	LP 6, ME 2		Boat			7
4	Chalakura Part 4	5,000	900	18.0	LP 5, ME 2		Road	Agriculture and business		5
5	Dudhnath Hill	3,500	650	18.6			Rural Road	Agriculture and business		5
6	Muthakhuwa	8,700	1,700	19.5	LP 10, ME 7, HS 1	PHC	Road and Boat	Agriculture and business		5
7	Bhogdohar	12,700	2,200	17.3	LP 8, ME 2, HS 1	PHC	Road	Agriculture and Farming		12
8	Mankachar	15,000	2,200	14.7	LP 10, ME 2, HS 1		Road	Agriculture, Business, Small entrepreneurs, Employee	30	9
9	Matifata	18,000	3,700	20.6	ME 5	PHC	Road and Boat	Agriculture and business		8
10	Porarchar	13,000	2,100	16.1	LP 10, ME 1, HS 1 (nearby)	PHC	Road and Boat	Agriculture and business		8
11	Ashmeralga	6,000	500	8.3	LP 3, ME 4		Boat	Agriculture and business		4
12	Kaliyalga	6,000	1,200	20.0	LP 5, ME 1		Boat	Agriculture and Farming	12	8
13	Baguntoli	14,700	2,700	18.4	LP 5, ME 2, HS 1	PHC	Road and Boat	Agriculture and Farming	22	4
14	Kalarhat	11,000	2,600	23.6	LP 1, ME 2, HS 1	Sub-centre of PHC	Road	Farming	10-20	7
15	Newghat in Wards 12 and 13 in Dhubri Town	15,500	3,750	24.2	LP 3, ME 2, HS 1	Dhubri Civil Hospital	Road	Business	40-50	6
16	Santinagar in Wards 12 and 13 in Dhubri Town	7,000	3,355	47.9	LP 3	Dhubri Civil Hospital	Road	Business		5
17	Balurchar	6,312	3,100	49.1	LP 3, ME 3		Rickshaw-worthy road	Laborer, Small Entrepreneurs	2-3	2
18	Dhubri	66,338	37,247	56.2	LP 23, ME 16, HS 9, College 3	Civil Hospital, TB Hospital, NRHM, District Health Office	Road , Railways	All service sectors (Govt and Private), Small and Big Entrepreneurs, Laborers	20-25	7
19	Bidyapara	27,818	10,253	36.9	LP 4, ME 2, HS 2	Located in Dhubri Town with same access	Road	Laborer, Govt service, small entrepreneurs	5-8	4
20	Jhakjhak	3,471	1,122	32.3	LP3, ME 2	Public Health Sub-Centre	Boat		1-2	3

21	Jhowdanga	2,389	832	34.8	LP 3, ME 1	Public Health Sub-Centre	Road	Farmer, Service	2-3	1
22	Mahendraganj	1,430	912	63.8	LP 4, ME 1, HS 1	Public Health Sub-Centre	Road	Farmer, Service, Laborer	3-5	4
23	Kukurmara	2,084	869	41.7	LP 5, ME 3, HS 2	Public Health Sub-Centre	Road	Farmer, Small entrepreneurs, Agri-broker in local market	2-3	1
24	Sialtari	1,971	814	41.3	LP2, ME 1	Nil	Small road	Farmer, Labour	1-2	2
25	Sukchar	2,216	796	35.9	LP 1, ME 1, HS 1	Public Health Sub-Centre	Boat	Farmer	2-4	6
26	Kakripara	3,817	1,294	33.9	LP 5, ME 4, HS 1	Public Health Sub-Centre	Road	Farmer, Labour	4-5	3
27	Adabari	6,703	2,142	32.0	LP 6, ME 2, HS 1	Public Health Sub-Centre	Small Road	Farmer, Labourer, Small entrepreneurs, Agri-broker in local market	2-3	1
28	Kalapakini	1,256	405	32.3	LP 1	Nil	Small road	Farmer, Labourer	1-2	1
29	Baldoba	3,380	1,824	54.0	LP 2	Nil	Small road	Small entrepreneur	0-1	12
30	Gauripur	27,496	15,217	55.3	LP 12, ME 8, HS 3, College 1	Hospital	Road, Railway	All service sectors (Govt and Private), Small and Big Entrepreneurs, Labourers	n/a	1
31	Hat Singimari	6,217	2,561	41.2	LP 8, ME 5, HS 1, College 1	Hospital	Road	All service sectors (Govt and Private), Small Entrepreneurs, Labourer, Farmer	n/a	1
32	Sapatgram	12163	n/a	n/a	LP 5, HS 2, College 1	Public Health Centre	Road, Railways	Farmer, Service, Business, Labourer	20-35	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>343,861</b>	<b>114,243</b>	<b>33.2</b>						<b>158</b>

**Abbreviations:** LP = Lower Primary School; ME = Middle English School; HS = High School; PHC = Public Health Centre (Run by the Government in each administrative block).

**Note:** Employment data collected during survey include all types of employment (government services, part-timers and seasonal).

Source: Assam Migration Surveys, 2009-2012.

**Table 9. 2: Summary of Educational Opportunities for Respondents' Children**

Educational Institutions	Data from Field Survey Areas <sup>^</sup>		District Overall Data	
	Number	Population Per Unit Category	Number	Population Per Unit Category
Lower Primary School	181	1,900	1,624	1,200
Middle English School	91	3,779	843	2,312
High School	35	9,825	190 <sup>#</sup>	10,259
College	7	49,123	15 <sup>#</sup>	129,951

**Sources:** \*Statistical Handbook, Assam, 2010, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam

<sup>^</sup> Assam Migration Surveys, 2009-2012

<sup>#</sup> Overall in the district, there are several other private high schools and colleges but not included in the government statistics.

**Table 9. 3: Government Healthcare Access in Surveyed Migrant Areas compared to the Dhubri District Overall**

Population	In Surveyed Migrant Areas <sup>^</sup>		Dhubri District Overall <sup>#</sup>	
	343,861		1,637,344	
Healthcare Facilities	Units	Population served per Unit	Units	Population served per Unit
Public Health Care Sub-Centres	8	42,983	246	6,656
Public Health Care Centres	8	42,983	34	48,157
Dispensary	0	0	13	125,950
Community Health Centre	0	0	5	327,469
Sub-Divisional Civil Hospital	0	0	1	1,637,344
General District Hospitals	1	343,861	1	1,637,344
Specialized (TB) Hospital	1	343,861	1	1,637,344

Source: <sup>^</sup>Assam Migration Survey, 2009-12; <sup>#</sup>Statistical Hand Book Assam 2010.

**Note:** The above data exclude several private outpatient medical clinics and nursing homes with beds. They are usually clustered around the townships and are prohibitively expensive for migrant populace.

## 9.2 A Demographic and Economic Profile of Dhubri District

In order to study the adjustment of migrants it is essential to know the economic and demographic profile of the district studied. According to the 2011 Census, the Dhubri district in Assam is among the most densely populated districts of the state with more than 896 persons per square kilometer. Only the Kamrup Metropolitan district has a higher population density as an urban area. In contrast, the Dhubri district is mostly rural with 89.6 percent of the total population classified as rural and most economic activities are centered primarily on labor-intensive, low-paying agricultural jobs. Economically, life is not much better for those settled in townships either as there are no major manufacturing industries in the district. The district literacy rate was an only 58.3 percent, the lowest in Assam although it recorded the highest population increase of 24.4 percent during the same period<sup>66</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> Source: Census of India 2011 Provisional Population Totals, Paper 1 of 2011, Assam, Series 19 released by Rabendra Kumar Das, Director of Census Operations, Assam, 2011

According to 2001 Census, Dhubri district had 74.2 percent Muslims, 22.7 percent Hindus and the remaining 3.1 percent of the population was made up of people belonging to other religious groups, namely Christians, Jains, Sikhs, etc. In 1971, 64.5 percent of the population of Dhubri district was Muslims and it rose to 70.5 percent in 1991 and increase of 77.4 percent from 1971-1991, and by 2001, the total Muslim population of the district was 74.2 percent (Census 2001). In 2011, the sex ratio in the population was 953 females to 1000 males, an increase of 7 since 2001.

**Table 9. 4: Profile Data for Dhubri District per 2001 and 2011 Censuses**

<b>Human Development Indices</b>		
Human Development Index (HDI) in 2001	0.214	
HDI Rank in 2001	23 (out of then 23 districts)	
Human Poverty Index HPI (1999)	31.98	
HPI Rank	21 (out of 23 then districts)	
<b>Population</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2011<sup>67</sup></b>
Total Population	1,637,344	1,949,258
Population Growth Rate (percent)	23.0	24.4
Density per sq. Km	941	896
Rural/Urban Population (percent)	88.2/11.8	89.6/10.4
Religious Composition (percent)	Muslims (74.2), Hindus (22.7), Others (3.1)	Not Available
Languages Spoken (percent)	Bengali (24), Assamese (70), Others (6)	Not Available
<b>Health</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2008</b>
Infant Mortality Rate up to 5 years of age	74	64
Birth Rate per 1000	27	23.9
Primary Health Care Center (PHC)	23	34
Number of Dispensaries	12	13
Number of beds	-	492
Child Mortality till the age of 5 years		20
Infant Mortality		64
<b>Employment (percent)</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2011</b>
Work Participation Rate	28.8	34.4
Total employment in agriculture sector (Cultivators and Agricultural Laborers)	286,881	171,116
Share of Female Workers	13.5	21.6
<b>Education</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2011</b>
Literacy Rate (percent)	49.9	58.3
Male Literacy Rate (percent)	55.9	63.1
Female Literacy Rate (percent)	40.0	53.3
Enrolment in Primary, Secondary, Higher Secondary and Junior College level (2009)		206,855 (Primary), 135,130 (Middle), 39,603 (High), 5,905 (Higher secondary), 1,345 (Junior College)
<b>Household Status (percent)</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2011</b>
Permanent/Good	12.1	21
Semi-permanent/Liveable	50.5	62
Temporary/Dilapidated	37.4	17
<b>Gender</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2011</b>
Sex Ratio no. of female per 1000 male	944	952
Female Work Participation rate ( percent)	8.04	7.4

Source: Statistical Hand Book of Assam (2010) and Census of India, Assam, 2011 and Assam Human Development Report, Government of Assam, 2003

\*Due to the creation of four new districts out of the existing districts, statistical data of the district have been adjusted and 2011 census data has been affected by it.

<sup>67</sup> 2011 Census data reflects data newly reorganized Dhubri district and have been adjusted accordingly

Table 9.4 shows that the Dhubri district ranks lowest among all the districts of Assam in the HDI (Human Development Index). It also ranks near the bottom in Human Poverty Index at 21st position out of 23 districts of Assam. Moreover, population growth rate in 2011 is the highest among all districts, and in terms of literacy, it ranks the lowest. On the other hand, infant mortality rate have decreased from 74 in 2001 to 64 in 2008, employment increased from 28.8 percent in 2001 to 34.4 percent in 2011 and literacy rate from 49.9 percent in 2001 to 58.3 percent in 2011 an increase of 8.4 percent.

### 9.3 Characteristics of Survey Respondents

#### 9.3.1 Religion

Table 9.5 presents the religious composition of the respondents, and compares it to that of the district as a whole. Of all respondents surveyed in the district, 63.9 percent are Muslims and 36.1 percent are Hindus. Although the percentage of Muslim population in the survey is slightly lower than the district percentage of Muslim population, it does show a similar pattern to the religious composition of the district which is 74.3 percent Muslims and 22.7 percent Hindus. Being a district bordering Bangladesh, it is expected that the cross-border migration to Assam would have an effect on the religious composition of the district.

Other factors that may have contributed to a higher growth rate of Muslim population could be the religious restriction on use of birth control measures and lack of awareness of such measures due to poor education, marriage of girls at an earlier age (longer fertility span), and poverty which encourages some couples to have more children as helping hands to earn more.

**Table 9. 5: Religious makeup of the Migrant Respondents and also in the district of Dhubri (2001 Census)**

Religion	Number of Respondents	Percent	Number in the District Overall	Percent
Muslim	101	63.9	1,216,455	74.3
Hindu	57	36.1	405,065	24.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,621,520</b>	<b>99.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2009-12 and Census of India 2001

#### 9.3.2 Educational Status

*"Looking at educational attainment is a useful starting point because to a large extent income, what kind of job one holds, and socio-economic status in general are closely tied to educational attainment". (Camarota, 2001, p.17)*

Table 9.6 indicate the education level of the population of the district and is compared with migrant respondents. The most striking finding is that a very large proportion of the migrants (34 percent) are considered literate (as per Census' definition), without even completing any particular level of education. The Census definition of a literate is:

*"A person who can both read and write with understanding in any language is to be taken as literate. ... it is not necessary that a person who is literate should have*

received any formal education or should have passed any minimum educational standard" (Census of India, 1991, Series IV, Assam, p. 7).

A study by Mainuddin (2011) on Muslims in West Bengal, India showed that, "below primary level" of education for Muslims is more comparable to that of the state and other communities.

Almost a similar trend seems to exist in Assam as well; for based on the data gathered through the survey, the percentage of Muslim respondents with "below primary" level at 52.5 percent is high compared to 23.2 percent for the district.

**Table 9. 6: Educational Skills of Migrants by Religion, Compared to the Overall District Population**

Level of Education	Muslim Respondents		Hindu Respondents		Total Respondents		Total of District*	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Without any recognized level	41	40.6	12	21.0	53	33.5	13,946	1.3
Below Primary	12	11.9	7	12.3	19	12.0	228,580	21.9
Matric/Higher Secondary/Diploma	0	0	15	26.3	15	9.5	101,129	9.7
Graduate and Above	0	0	3	5.3	3	1.9	23,131	2.2
No Education	26	25.7	19	33.3	45	28.5	674,524	64.7
Not Stated	22	21.8	1	1.8	23	14.6	459	0.04
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,041,769<sup>#</sup></b>	n/a

Source: Field surveys, 2009-12 and Census of India, Assam, 2001

\* As none of the respondents had any professional education degrees (e.g., engineering, medical and law), the district-level figures with such education have not been listed. This is the reason the percentage in the last column does not add up to 100 percent. <sup>#</sup> For literacy data, Indian Census has set the cut off age at 6 years; i.e., the literacy level data reported by Indian Census apply from the age of 6 years and above.

There was a significant variation between the level of education of Hindu and Muslim migrant respondents. A much higher numbers of Hindu migrants are High School graduates (26.3 percent), and 5.3 percent of them had post-secondary college degrees; in fact, this percentage is even higher than that of the overall district average of only 2.2 percent. This demonstrates more competitiveness and eagerness among Hindus to gain a certain level of educational competency and establish themselves with higher social and economic credentials. It was also noted that compared to Muslim migrants, Hindu migrants were more educated when they migrated to India.

The Muslim migrants with little or no education are a major source of the workforce for jobs that demand manual labor with very little or no formal training/education. Usually they work in tasks that are simple, well-defined and repetitive, and under strict and constant supervision. However, with the ageing of the first generation migrant population, there may be shortage of such manual and agricultural laborers in the near future, because the second generation is less willing to work in the labor-intensive agro sector or in the informal sector.

### 9.3.3 Occupation

Table 9.7 shows the distribution of occupations of migrant respondents compared to the various occupational data in the district. Occupations listed in Table 9.7 have been categorized according to the Census definition of “Workers” and “Non-Workers”.

“Work Participation Rate is an important indicator of development. It provides an idea of the extent of people’s participation in economic activity or their rate of employment. In short, the more is Work Participation Rate of the population, the greater would be its development” (Mainuddin, 2011, P. 130).

Comparing the occupational categories of the migrants with those at the district-level, we note that 33.3 percent of the migrants are cultivators, which is 17.3 percent higher than the district overall total of 16 percent (see Table 9.7).

In the household industry category that includes dairy farming, weaving in small scale, basket-making, rice-pounding, pickle-making, food-processing, etc., the percentage of migrant workers is similar to that of the district (about 4 percent). Also, the percentage of migrant population engaged in agricultural type activities such as agricultural laborers, fisherman are similar to that of the district average. However, there is a large discrepancy in the ‘other workers’ category of workers with 52.2 percent of migrants engaged in such activities compared to 70.3 percent of the total ‘other workers’ category in the district. The “other workers” category includes a diverse array of occupations: casual workers who are engaged in multiple simple tasks, helping out small businesses to load and unload supply trucks, shelving, cleaning jobs on need basis, etc. They do not have any defined job schedule nor do they enjoy an assured job that they can plan ahead. Business is also included in this category.

**Table 9. 7: Distribution of Migrants across Occupation and Workers and Non-workers in Dhubri District** (*Some migrants have cited more than one occupation*)

<b>Workers’ Categories</b>	<b>Number of Migrant Respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>District-wise Distribution of Workers</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Cultivators (Farmers)	53	33.3	107,424	16.0
Agricultural Laborers plus other agricultural activities	16	10.1	63,692	9.5
Household Industries	7	4.4	27,822	4.2
Other Workers (Including Business)	83	52.2	470,881	70.3
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>159</b>		<b>669,819</b>	
<b>Others</b>				
Non-Workers	2	1.3	1,146,094	59
Unemployed	20	12.6	-	-
Not Stated	1	0.6	-	-
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>14.5</b>	-	-

Sources: Assam Migration Survey, 2009-2012 and Census of India, 2011

### 9.3.4 Respondents' Prior Occupation in Bangladesh

The figures in Table 9.8 distinguish the occupation that the migrants held in Bangladesh compared to their current occupations in the Dhubri district. It is to be noted that the occupations in the table are different to categories defined by the Census of India.

**Table 9. 8: Distribution of Occupation of Migrants in Bangladesh and Dhubri District, Assam** *(Some respondents cited more than one occupation)*

Types of Occupation	Number in Bangladesh	Percent	Number in Dhubri District, Assam	Percent
Self-employed	59	37.3	90	57.0
Business	24	15.2	67	42.4
Salaried Employee	1	0.6	2	1.3
Unemployed	55	34.8	20	12.7
Not Stated	19	12.0	1	0.6

Source: Assam Migration Survey, 2009-12

The category "self-employed" indicated in Table 9.9 encompasses a diverse array of work, including the part-time free-lancers etc. mainly in the informal sector. More than half; that is 57 percent, of migrants are self-employed and work in the informal sector in India, with a vast range of occupational pursuits as compared to only 37.3 percent who did so in Bangladesh before they migrated.

**Table 9. 9: Occupations of Respondents in Assam** *(Some cited more than one occupation)*

Occupation Types	Number
<b>Self Employed</b>	
Farming	53
Agricultural labourer	2
General Laborer	15
Fisherman	11
Casual work (Rickshaw or pushcart puller, maid, shopkeeper etc.)	9
<b>Business Ownership</b>	
Agriculture Related Business	39
Food Business	7
Mechanical/Small Household Item Repairing	8
Other Businesses	13
<b>Others</b>	
Salaried Employees	2
Unemployed (beggar, housewife, pensioner, student etc.)	20
Not Stated	1

Source: Assam Migration Survey, 2009-12

This group of people are less dependent on wage incomes as their means of livelihood, as they create their own employment and earning opportunities in Assam. They are overwhelmingly concentrated in agriculture and related sectors along with other lower income and less-skilled occupations such as laborers, rickshaw or pushcart pullers, fisherman, agricultural laborer, etc.

Some migrants cited having more than single occupation to supplement their income to raise their living standard and also to purchase properties.

Another major source of income for the migrants is profit from business, with 42.4 percent undertaking such activities in Assam compared to only 15.2 percent when they previously lived in Bangladesh.

The unemployment rate among migrants in Assam is only 12.7 percent compared to 34.8 percent when they were in Bangladesh. This may be due to the fact that a majority of them (51 percent) were under 20-years of age when they migrated from Bangladesh. However, none of the respondents are employed in any high-paying professions in Assam, with the exception of only a few who stated that they worked as salaried employees.

### 9.3.5 Respondents' Initial Occupation in Assam

Although most of the migrants are self-sufficient and earning their own livelihood now, life was not easy for them in the initial phase. Table 9.10 provides a snap shot of migrants' erstwhile means of livelihood in Bangladesh, and in their initial phase in Assam, and Table 9.11 offers a further insight into the specific nature of occupations they had pursued in the initial phase. It is seen that 37.3 percent worked as laborer and another 12.7 percent as agricultural laborer in the initial stage of settlement in Assam and it can be said that, most migrants had to endure a physically demanding occupation in their initial days (or years) before they ventured out to other occupations to become more self-reliant. For them, survival in their new found homeland was more an immediate priority and necessity at the initial stage.

**Table 9. 10: Migrants' Initial Occupation in Assam and their Occupations when they were in Bangladesh**

Types of Occupation	In Bangladesh	Percent	In Assam	Percent
Self-employed	59	37.3	94	59.5
Business	24	15.2	16	10.1
Employee	1	0.6	1	0.6
Unemployed	55	34.8	24	15.2
Not Stated	19	12.0	23	14.6
Total	158	100	158	100

Source: Assam Migration Surveys, 2009-12

**Table 9. 11: Types of Migrants' Initial Occupations in Assam**

Type of Occupation	Number of Respondents	Percent
Agricultural Laborer	20	12.7
Daily Laborer	59	37.3
Business	4	2.5
Fisherman	13	8.2
Small Business/Vender	12	7.6
Teacher	1	0.6
Student	7	4.4
Housewife	6	3.8
Employee in Private Sector	2	1.3
Unemployed	11	7.0
Not Stated	23	14.6
Total	158	100.0

Source: Assam Migration Surveys, 2009-12

Migrants initially took up any job available to them to establish themselves. However, migrants usually worked in lower level jobs than they did in their place of origin (Samaddar, 1999).

More often than not, most of the family members who are in the working-age group are also engaged in the workforce either to increase income or to supplement it for survival. In this study, 73 percent of the respondents said that other members of their families also worked either in the agricultural sector or in businesses or as casual laborers. Female members of many migrant families also helped supplement the income by working as part-time housemaids or cooks or even laborers.

### 9.3.6 Ownership of Property

It is important to note that most migrants own some sort of property or assets in Assam (Table 9.12). In terms of property, house ownership is the highest with 92.4 percent followed by ownership of land 72.2 percent. About 80.4 percent own bicycle and 31 percent motorbike. It is also seen that 45.6 percent own businesses in Assam and is mostly agricultural related. It is worth mentioning that migrants' houses are not always well-built permanent structures of wood or concrete. In most cases, they are mere shelters with no other indoor amenities (see Plates 9.1 and 9.2).

**Table 9. 12: Properties owned by Migrants in Assam**  
(More than one type of property cited by some respondents)

Types of Properties	Number of Respondents	Percent
House	146	92.4
Business	72	45.6
Land	114	72.2
Bicycle	127	80.4
Motorbike	49	31.0
Push Cart/Bullock Cart	7	4.4
Three-Wheeler	3	1.9
Tractor/Power tiller	8	5.1
Truck/Commercial Vehicle	18	11.4
Rickshaw	7	4.4
Boat	8	5.1

Source: Assam Migration Surveys, 2009-12

Majority of migrants (about 72.2 percent) own land. However, there are some migrants among them who would permanently own the land that they are living in after paying their share of the land price to the principal land owner in installments. Here, the understanding among them is that one person (principal owner) would own a plot of land and five other families would settle on it by paying the principal owner in installments to claim the land title in their names in near future.

However, migrants who have become financially more successful own stronger, sturdier and more durable housing made of reinforced concrete (see Plate 9.3). They live more comfortably with basic indoor amenities (toilet and electricity). They are considered "well-

to-do” among fellow migrants, with a “greater say” in their respective community’s problems and welfare.

Most households also try to have a small pond within their residential plot to raise a small fishery and also for supply of water for domestic purposes. The pond water is of poor drinking quality but still they consume it because they cannot afford better drinking water. This is one of the reasons why water-borne diseases are very common in migrant areas, especially during the floods. The most prevalent diseases migrants suffer are fever, cough and cold, malaria, and stomach-related (caused primarily by poor drinking water) ailments, such as: gastroenteritis, cholera, indigestion, diarrhea, and dysentery. A few incidents of serious illnesses – jaundice and typhoid -- are also reported in the district.<sup>68</sup>

The “pond fishery” serves two purposes: one, it acts as a source of nutrition in the form of fish for their meals, and second, it allows surplus fish caught to be sold in the local market for some additional income and to rear livestock such as ducks. Like the pond, they also maintain a small “vegetable patch” within their residential plot to grow vegetables and fruits, some for personal domestic consumption, and the remainder to sell at the local market for extra cash. The roof of their houses are often used to raise orchard type vegetables like pumpkin, gourds, etc. (see Plate 9.1).

**Plate 9.1: Typical Migrant House which is built of bamboo, with mud plaster and a combined roof of tin and straw roof. The roof also acts as “cucumber and pumpkin patch”! The plate also shows the fishery pond in the background.**



<sup>68</sup> Baseline Survey of Minority Concentrated Districts, District Report Dhubri: A study Commissioned by Ministry of Minority Affairs Government of India. Conducted by Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati, n.d

About 80 percent of the migrants own a bicycle, which is not only a simple low-cost convenient mode of transport in the migrant areas with very poor and narrow roads, but it is also a carrier often used to ferry goods and conduct small businesses. For many migrants, a bicycle is considered a status symbol, and a proof of economic prosperity of a household.

**Plate 9.2: A Migrant’s house built of bamboo with corrugated tin roof**



**Plate 9.3: Financially successful migrants can afford better housing built with RCC structures**



As shown in Table 9.12, 45.6 percent own small businesses. According to census classification, “small business” falls in the ‘other work’ category of occupation. These businesses are run either from their dwelling or from small premises in the local market hired at a nominal rent. A few of the respondents owned more than one business; for example, one runs a grocery store, but also owns a car with a loan from the bank or other organizations to run an “unofficial” taxi service on an on-call basis. About 32 percent of respondents try to generate extra income by undertaking additional means; such as, by owning a pushcart, bullock cart, three-wheeler vehicle to ferry goods and people, tractor, power tiller, truck, commercial vehicle, rickshaw or boat, etc.

In this context, it is worthwhile to compare the success of migrants in land and business ownership in Assam compared to when they lived in Bangladesh. Table 9.13, shows that 83.5 percent of the migrants owned land in Bangladesh compared to 72.2 percent in Assam. It appeared that, more migrants had land ownership when they were in Bangladesh, and it took them a while to build up enough capital in Assam.

**Table 9. 13: Land and Business Holdings of Respondents in the Dhubri District**

Number of Respondents	Types of Holding	Current Holdings of Respondents in Dhubri District		Erstwhile Holdings of Respondents in Bangladesh	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
158	Land	114	72.2	132	83.5
	Business	67	42.4	25	15.8

Source: Assam Migration Surveys, 2009-12

Many respondents, with the benefit of hindsight, recounted that the initial struggle to survive in Assam soon after the migration proved to be a catalyst to developing entrepreneurial skills. This motivated most of them to be businessmen. There is now a general acceptance and recognition among both migrants from Bangladesh and the local Assamese populace that migrants are far more entrepreneurial than the indigenous population, and this is attributed to their initial hardship in Assam. Government incentives, too, helped; for example, right after independence in 1947, the government aided refugees who came to Assam by providing them with various incentives to establish businesses, such as low interest loans, ready-made stalls for business, etc. (Census of India, 1951, Assam, Manipur and Tripura, Part I-A, Report, p. 362-63). This tradition still continues in Assam. It was, therefore, no surprise among the migrant respondents that the percentage of those running businesses has increased almost three-fold from 15 percent in Bangladesh to 42 percent in Assam.

### **9.3.7 Migrant’s Proficiency in Assamese, the Official Language of Assam**

Proficiency in the language at destination is one of the necessary elements for migrants’ economic development and success. It is also an important desirable factor that helps the adjustment and assimilation process for migrants (Moghaddas *et al.*, 2006). In addition, proficiency in the local language helps migrants achieve interpersonal communication with

the indigenous community of host country and to secure employment and conduct business at the destination (Kim, 1988).

Assam is a multi-ethnic state, and hence, it recognizes three languages as official languages: Assamese for the Brahmaputra Valley, Bengali for the Barak Valley, and Bodo in the BTAD areas. Among them Assamese is spoken by the majority of the population. However, most business and government official communications are conducted in English.

There are striking similarities between Assamese and the Bengali language which is the language spoken by the migrants from Bangladesh. Assamese and Bengali along with Oriya language of Odisha, have evolved from the Magadhi Prakrit's Kamrupa dialect<sup>69</sup>. Both Assamese and Bengali languages have many common vocabularies and similar script with the exception of two alphabets. Phonetically, however, certain words are pronounced differently, and it's the phonetics which is the main hurdle for migrants in developing their verbal proficiency in the Assamese language. Besides the two main languages, Bengali and Assamese, a large number of native dialects are also spoken in the western districts of Assam and in northern Bangladesh. Phonetically, most of these dialects sound like a fusion of Assamese and Bengali languages.

When questioned about their proficiency in Assamese to the respondents, only 6 out of 158 respondents (3.8 percent) claimed to be fluent, while 7.6 percent claimed to have some degree of verbal and writing abilities. Together they make up 11.4 percent of all respondents. The 3.8 percent respondents who are fluent in both verbal and written communication in Assamese had migrated to Assam at an early age and had studied in Assam. When asked about their verbal abilities in the Assamese language, they fared much better as 27.2 percent stated they were fluent and another 15.2 percent claimed to be somewhat fluent. Therefore, together, slightly more than half (53.8 percent) of the respondents possessed some degree of skills in Assamese language. Surprisingly, 46.2 percent said they could neither speak nor write Assamese. One possible reason why they have not picked up any Assamese language skills is that their activities are confined in and around the migrant communities and hence, they have not had opportunities to interact with Assamese-speaking communities in their day-to-day activities.

After Indian independence in 1947, most of the Muslim migrants adopted Assamese as their official language although they continued speaking Bengali at home. They accepted Assamese as the medium of instruction in school and also identified themselves as Assamese in Censuses (Weiner, 1983, p. 285). According to Weiner, the reason for accepting the local language was because of the introduction of the Immigrant Expulsion (from Assam) Act of 1950 by the Indian Parliament, and thereafter another Act declaring

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<sup>69</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assamese\\_language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assamese_language) and [www.bharatonline.com/assam/travel-tips/languages.html](http://www.bharatonline.com/assam/travel-tips/languages.html)

squatter settlement in Assam as illegal. Fearing deportation, the Bengali speaking Muslim settlers from East Bengal, started supporting the local people on issues that were important to them such as declaring themselves as Assamese in the census just to increase the number of Assamese speakers and accepting Assamese as the medium of instruction in schools in their areas (Weiner, 1983, p.285). Another reason is that most of the migrants were economically backward and suffered under the Hindu zamindars (landlords) in East Bengal, and hence, decided not to support the Hindu Bengalis again in Assam and accept their leadership in their new residence (Ahmed, 2010).

It is interesting to note that children of 40 percent of respondents are married to local people. This seems to suggest that their efforts to assimilate with the local population cannot simply be attributed to the compulsions or expediency to get them legally accepted; rather, in many cases, some assimilation has indeed taken place driven by their "heart". When asked about the future of their children in Assam, most of them (60 percent) are generally optimistic.

#### **9.4 Current Status of Respondents and their Children in Assam: How they have integrated?**

##### **9.4.1 Current Status of Respondent's Children**

To evaluate the current situations of respondents' children in Assam in terms of their progress, they were classified into two categories:

- a) **First-generation children:** Those who were born in Bangladesh and had accompanied their parents/families during migration while they were still children.
- b) **Second-generation children:** Those who were born in Assam to their migrant parents.

The first and second-generation children have done better than their parents in terms of their education, employment and income. This may be due to the fact that they have had the benefit of knowing the local language and also their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter which were taken care of by their parents.

As most of them were born in Assam or came as a child, they also had access to free education in government schools in Assam, eligibility for employment and credit from recognized financial institutions to start their own business. They enjoy free and equal access like any Indian citizen does to various low-interest credit schemes run by the nationalized banks of India, insurance companies and various other government-run approved lending agencies. In contrast, their migrant parents were confined to their initial settlements with very little civic amenities and healthcare. They were also less educated as they could not avail (or afford) the educational facilities provided by the government, due to their economic condition at the time of migration. They were compelled to raise any capital needed for their ventures from private money-lenders at very high interest rates because most of them were not legally eligible to secure a loan from banks.

Table 9.14 shows the responses received on the current status of migrants' children. In some cases, responses overlap or are multiple; for example, some children who are students are also working part-time elsewhere or helping out in their family business in their spare time. It is noted that not all of the respondents chose to answer the question with regard to the status of their children.

It is evident that most migrants' children (44.9 percent) are self-employed. Some were continuing with the business of their parents and did not look for a salaried job, even if they had the requisite educational qualifications. Comparing the occupations of migrants with those of their children, it is noted that like their parents the majority of the children are also self-employed (parents 57 percent and children 44.9 percent). However, among the self-employed, the number of children engaged in agriculture-related activities is less than their parents. Fourteen percent of children who are engaged in farming or daily-wage earning jobs come from poorer sections among the migrants, with little formal education.

Survey data also suggest that it could still be difficult for a migrant child to find a regular salaried job, as only 8.2 percent are engaged in salaried jobs. The competition for a salaried job is open and is tougher with far more eligible candidates from all communities, migrant and indigenous alike. It is also noted that migrants value education for their children and are very quick to recognize that educated children have better prospects in Assam. This is the reason, migrants – rich or poor – work very hard to send their children to schools and 25.3 percent of their children were students.

**Table 9. 14: Current Status of Respondents' Children**

<b>Current Status of Children</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Studying	40	25.3
Daily laborer/farming	22	13.9
Unemployed	6	3.8
Self-employed	71	44.9
Salaried Employee	13	8.2
No answer	6	3.8

Source: Assam Migration Survey, 2009-2012

#### **9.4.2 Current Occupation of Respondents in Assam**

Table 9.15 lists the current occupation of migrant respondents in Dhubri district in Assam and compares it with non-migrants of the district. The respondents are mostly self-employed or owners of small businesses. Migrants generally form a large constituent of seasonal agricultural laborers (particularly during planting and harvesting periods), daily manual laborers, and in recent times, in the fast-paced construction workforce in urban and semi-urban areas (The Assam Tribune, May 7, 2012). Employers, too, prefer migrant workers for two reasons: they cost less in terms of wages, and are harder working than the local workers (Barua, 2009).

Comparing the occupations of respondent migrants with non-migrants in the district, it is seen that cultivator or farmer as a profession, is higher among the non-migrants at 44.4 percent of the total work force as compared to 33.3 percent of the respondents. The inference drawn from this disparity is that agricultural land ownership is higher among non-migrants than migrants. The number of agricultural laborers and other related agricultural workers is also less among the migrants 10.1 percent compared to 15.9 percent among non-migrants, because migrants only work as agricultural laborers during plantation and harvesting seasons, and during the non-plantation period, they work as daily-wage earning laborers, rickshaw pullers, construction workers, etc. and hence responded as laborer as their profession rather than agricultural laborer.

**Table 9. 15: Current Occupational Status of Migrant Respondents (more than one occupation for some) and Non-Migrants in Dhubri District**

Occupation	Number of Respondents	Percent	Distribution of Non-Migrant workers in the District	Percent
Cultivators (Farming)	53	33.3	144736	44.4
Household and related Industry*	7	4.4	8372	2.6
Agricultural Laborers and other related Agricultural activities#	16	10.1	51875	15.9
<b>Total Agricultural Workers</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>47.8</b>	<b>204983</b>	<b>62.9</b>
Other workers including Business+	83	52.2	120948	37.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>325931</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Others</b>				
Non-Workers	2	1.3		
Unemployed	20	12.6		
Not Stated	1	0.6		
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>14.5</b>		

Source: Field surveys, 2009-12 and Statistical Hand Book Assam (classification of workers was done according to Census of India definitions). \**Household Industries*: weaving, diary, food processing, pickle making, basket making, pottery making, blacksmith which are work done in one's house. #*Other related agricultural activities*: fishing, hunting, plantation, forestry, poultry etc. +*Other work categories*: laborers, casual workers such as rickshaw-puller, maid, shopkeeper, pushcart puller, etc.

There is, however, a striking difference in the other work categories between migrants and non-migrants (Table 9.15), as 52.2 percent of the migrant workforce are in the category of 'other workers' as compared to 37.1 percent of non-migrant workers. The reason for this is that traditionally they had been encouraged by the government to be self-employed, especially during partition and through certain governmental incentives, such as, low interest loans, pre-fabricated housing structures (commonly call "stalls") at low-cost or at a nominal rent to start some kind of small businesses<sup>70</sup>. These incentives encouraged migrants to be self-sufficient without having to depend on some salaried wages or government employment for their livelihood. This tradition continues even now, particularly among their descendants. The other reason may be due to the fact that their economic condition compelled some migrants to take a longer period to be able to

<sup>70</sup> Census of India, 1951, Assam, Manipur and Tripura, Part I-A, Report, p. 362-63

purchase agricultural land, and hence, they presumed engaging themselves as entrepreneurs would fetch them a quicker foothold in their new country, India.

### 9.4.3 Human Development Index (HDI)

As per the Assam Human Development Report 2003, the Dhubri district ranks the lowest in most human development indicators estimated on data available through government and census records (see Table 9.16 for the HDI of Dhubri district compared to Assam).

**Table 9. 16: Human Development Indicators of Assam and Dhubri District**

Location	HDI	Income Index	Education Index	Health Index
Dhubri District (2003)	0.2	0.1	0.5	0.1
Assam (2007-08 and 2003)	0.4 (2007-08)	0.3	0.6	0.3

Human Development Report 2003, Assam, Government of Assam

Table 9.17 presents a few other key indicators and compares them with both the state (Assam) and pan-India level indicators. The years for which data could be sourced appear within parentheses. Here too, it is evident that the district of Dhubri lags behind both at the state and national level. In particular, Dhubri district fares poorly in terms of income and health indices in Assam. Overall, the district ranks at the bottom in the HDI. The Table also shows that the district has a marginally higher HDI value than its GDI, indicating the inequality in the level of development for women in regards to income, education and health. In addition, in the Human Poverty Index (HPI), the district is placed 21<sup>st</sup> out of 23 districts reflecting a higher number of people in human poverty. Being a migrant-dominated district with the lowest level of literacy and lack of adequate industries, it will be a challenge for the government of Assam to develop the district and decrease the number of people in human poverty.

**Table 9. 17: Economic and Human Development Indicators of Dhubri District, Assam and India**

Location	HDI	HDI Rank	Gender-related Development Index (GDI) <sup>71</sup>	GDI Rank	Human Poverty Index (HPI)	HPI Rank
Assam	0.444 (2007-08)	16	0.585 (2006)	26 among 35 federal units	0.316 (2004-05)	n/a
Dhubri	0.214 (2003)	23 out of 23 districts in 2003	0.206 (2003)	21 among 23 Districts	31.98 (2001)	21 out of 23 districts
India	0.467 (2007-08)	n/a	0.590 (2006)	122	0.283 (2005)	n/a

Source: Assam, Economic and Human Development Indicators (UNDP), 2011, at <http://www.undp.org.in> and Human Development Report 2003, Assam, Government of Assam.

<sup>71</sup> The GDI is defined as a "distribution-sensitive measure that accounts for the human development impact of existing gender gaps in the three components of the HDI". It takes into account not only the average or general level of well-being and wealth within a given country, but focuses also on how this wealth and well-being is distributed (Klasen S. UNDP's Gender-Related Measures: Some Conceptual Problems and Possible Solutions. Journal of Human Development [serial online]. July 2006; 7(2):243-274.) [Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender-related\\_Development\\_Index](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender-related_Development_Index)]

#### 9.4.4 Development Indicators for Migrants in Dhubri District

Presented in Table 9.18 are the development indicators among the migrants surveyed and the district or states estimates. It is seen that the overall economic development of the migrant surveyed areas is low due to a lack of education, employment opportunities and also traditional agricultural practices. In terms of human development, not much improvement is noted either.

In summary, the major deficiencies in the basic requirements in the areas surveyed are health care availability, education facilities, transportation and communication and also employment opportunities. It is, therefore, essential to enhance the quality of life of the inhabitants of these areas, and also provide them with greater economic security.

**Table 9. 18: Development Indicators among the Migrants surveyed**

Indicators	Survey Results	District/State estimate	Deficit/excess
<b>Literacy Rate ( percent)</b>	57.0	58.3	-1.3
<b>Number of Lower Primary School (population per unit)</b>	1,900	1200	-704
<b>Work Participation Rate ( percent)</b>	70	29	+41
<b>Health Care Facilities (people served per unit)</b>	19,103	5,440	-14,136
<b>Employment ( percent)</b>	20	57 (Assam)	-37

Source: Field Survey and Statistical Hand Book Assam, 2010

\* Data for comparison are taken from Table 9.1 and Statistical Hand Book Assam, 2010

The lack of adequate educational facilities can be addressed by increasing the number of educational institutions at all levels -- Primary, Middle English, High School and also for adult literacy. As an incentive some educational aid/grants should be provided to those who cannot afford it.

Unemployment and underemployment are common in these areas. Steps need to be taken to encourage self-employment or entrepreneurship rather than making migrant's dependent on salary from governmental organizations or from the private sector. Steps should also be taken to modernize the agriculture sector to encourage youth to pursue the profession.

The overall condition of housing, especially in the rural areas is unsatisfactory. There is lack of basic amenities such as safe drinking water and also proper sanitation in most areas, which needs priority attention.

Healthcare access is poor. In addition to a lesser number of facilities, poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and also practice of traditional methods of treatment, makes people less willing to avail themselves to the benefits of the public health services that are available. Awareness of the existence and benefits of health services and the spread of education, especially among females, must be the prime concern for the development of these areas.

#### 9.5 Migrants Social Networking and Self-Governing Practices

When discussing the issues pertinent to the adjustment of migrant in their new-found home (Assam), some additional questions also came up for discussion. These were raised

with the respondents, village-heads and prominent persons in the community in the field surveys and focus group discussions. To summarize, these questions pertained to the following issues:

- Unity among old (already settled older migrants), new and recent migrants
- What other benefits migrants enjoy other than financial gain and employment opportunities
- How is crime solved or dealt within a migrant village or community

In the Focus Group Discussion with the village headmen, influential people of the villages and migrants, it was revealed that there had been conflicts between the “older” and “newer” migrants. Within the migrant community, those who came to India prior to the 1971 war of liberation, and during the famine that followed thereafter in 1974, are considered “older” migrants. Others who had migrated post-1971 are considered “newer” migrants in their community.

Any conflict that arises among the migrants is solved in the village by the village-head or matbors,<sup>72</sup> without involving the police or the legal system. However, if and when a conflict arises between a migrant and local people, it is often reported to the police. In most instances, such case are eventually settled through negotiations and personal deals, without having the need to go through a lengthy legal process, which could be prohibitively expensive and may drag on for years. Usually it is the migrants who push for such a deal, lest their details should be searched and the whole community would be in trouble. The practice of this process is common and was corroborated by migrants themselves during the Focus Group Discussions.

Initially the migrants settle in places (scattered settlement) or villages (permanent settlement) next to where the old migrant settlements (Hazarika, 2000), following the line system adapted by the British government (Ahmed, 2009). They are patronized by the ones already in place or in the village by offering shelter, helping them to get a job and also by providing information necessary for survival and adjustment initially in their new place of residence.

The term “jati bhai”, meaning “blood brother”, is used to strengthen the relationship created between the old and new settlers. However, as noted during the field surveys, at present such a relationship does not exist in every migrant village, and the main reason for this is land acquisition. As revealed in one Focus Group Discussion, the new migrants are financially more secure, and hence, are in a better position to purchase land with cash.

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<sup>72</sup> “Matbors” refers to the powerful persons in the community. Matbors are relatively wealthy and are surrounded by a number of loyal physically-strong sycophants, who also provide the “muscle power” when needed to resolve an issue. They are neither elected nor recognized by any authority but they enjoy the clout to dominate over others. Matbors are more feared than revered.

They are less fearful of any consequences and do not hesitate to confront deadly violence, should there be a need. As mentioned earlier acquiring land still seems to be the highest-priority goal of most migrants; for, land ownership gives an identity (recognition) and social stability.

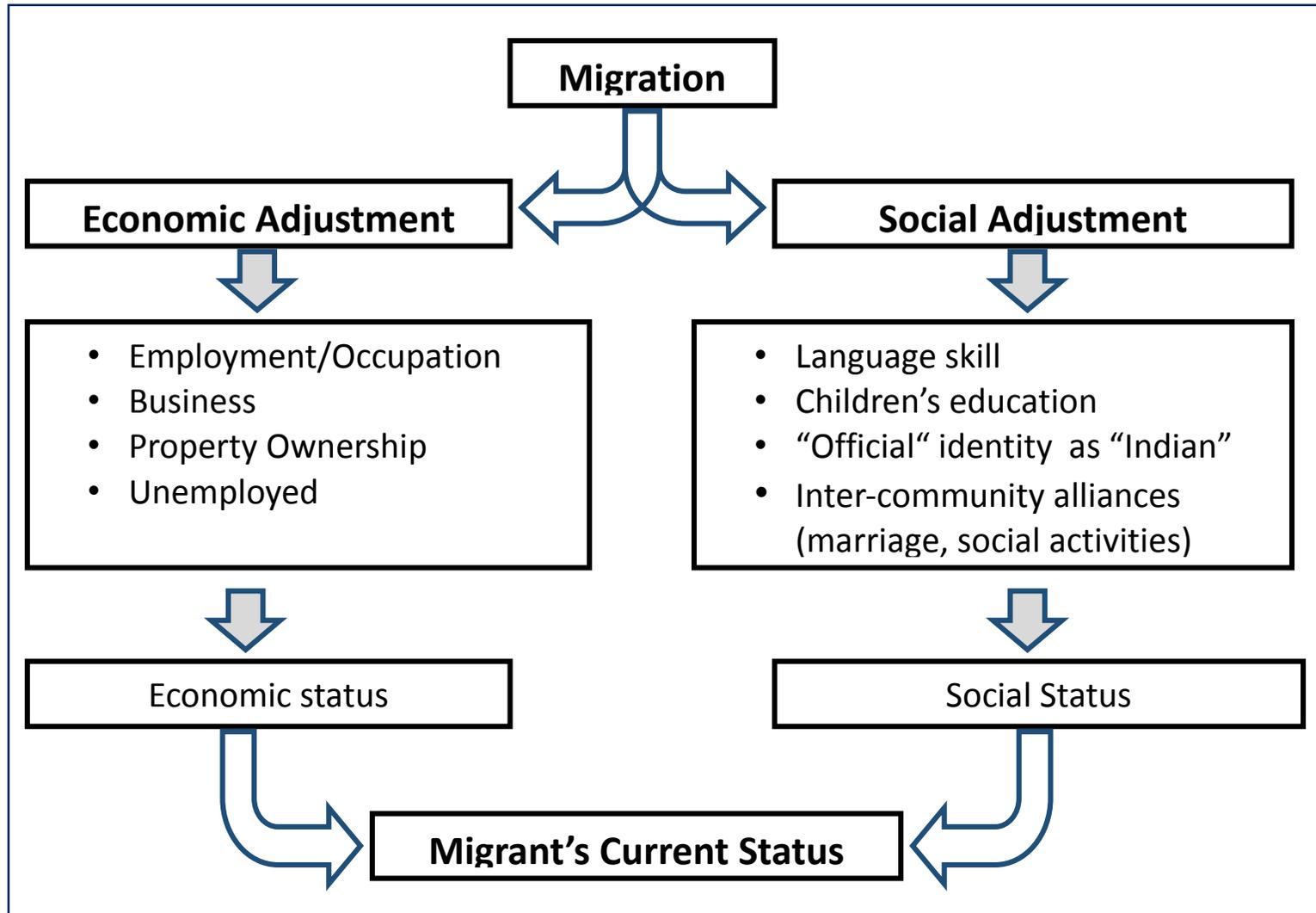
In this chapter the migrants' way of life along with their progress and assimilation in the society in Assam has been analyzed based on the data gathered through field survey. In summary, the roadmap migrants in Assam have adopted to attain their current social and economic status can be conceptualized by the flow diagram presented in Figure 9.1.

**Economic Status:** After migration, economic stability in the new country or place settled is essential, and more importantly, to obtain the basic needs -- food, clothing and shelter. Initially the migrants take up any jobs that come their way, usually labor-intensive ones. Once they are secured, they move on to jobs or work of their choice. The study shows that more than half of them (57 percent) are self-employed with a vast range of occupations, mainly in agriculture and related activities. This group does not depend on wages as their only source of income but they also generate their own income through other means. Profit from businesses is another source of income, and it was noted during field surveys that 42.4 percent of respondents had chosen this approach.

The next important step after establishing themselves economically is to purchase properties. House and land are the two most sought after assets as possession of land helps them to get an identity (recognition) and stability. This mindset was also quite obvious among the migrants in the pre-partition period (Mullan, 1931). To increase their standard of living or to supplement their income, they also purchase other properties and utilities, such as bicycles, thellas (push cart), rickshaws, cars, trucks, tractors, boats for fishing, etc.

**Social Status:** A normal social life with the complete social acceptance by the indigenous population still remains a far cry for most migrants. As Ramachandran (2005) stated, for the migrants the first step after migration is to procure the documents which will help them identify as an Indian citizen by any means possible. After obtaining the necessary documents, the other social processes, such as assimilation with the indigenous population, club membership, learning the official language (Assamese), children's education, and for some, matrimonial alliances with the indigenous Muslim or Hindu communities follows. However, as the migrants come from a different culture and linguistic background, complete assimilation would take a longer time (Misra, 1981).

Figure 9. 1: Roadmap adopted by migrants in Assam to their current status



## **9.6 Conclusions**

Based on the analysis presented here, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. During field surveys it was noted that although migration has helped migrants increase their economic standing to a certain degree, they still lack complete societal acceptance by the indigenous population. As the migrants have a different cultural and linguistic background to those of the indigenous populace, their assimilation in Assam will take a long time.
2. The study shows that more migrants own properties in Assam than in Bangladesh.
3. Among migrants themselves, there seems to be some conflict between the older and newer migrants. However, in most cases, the migrant community itself tries to find ways to resolve such conflicts themselves, and try to avoid engaging legal processes for fear of detection and deportation.
4. If and when a conflict arises between a migrant and local (indigenous) person, it is reported to the police. Even in such instances, most cases are eventually settled through negotiations and personal deals without having to go through the lengthy and expensive legal process. Usually it is migrants who push for such a deal, lest their details will be searched and the whole community would be in trouble.

## Chapter 10: Conclusions, Policy Implications and Recommendations

" .. such an influx [of illegal migrants] is 'external aggression' within the meaning of Article 355 of the Constitution of India, and that the Central Government has done precious little to stem this tide, thereby resulting in a violation of Article 355 ... The culture of an entire people is being eroded in such a way that they will ultimately be swamped by persons, who have no right to continue to live in this country."

Indian Supreme Court Justices Ranjan Gogoi and Rohinton Fali Nariman in their 70-page judgment related to illegal Bangladeshi migrants in Assam in New Delhi on December 17, 2014 and directing the Assam government to update the National Register of Citizens by January 2016<sup>73</sup>.

### 10.1 Introduction

This study has sought to build a better understanding of migration from Bangladesh to Assam. It has not been possible to use conventional data sources in this study because of the nature of migration. Accordingly a number of sources have been consulted governmental and non-governmental organizations; scholars and researchers; journalists who have been actively following and reporting on the issue; Indian Border Security Force (BSF) officers who are mandated to secure and control the movements across the Indo-Bangladesh borders; police officers involved in both political and law and order matters related to migration to Assam; non-governmental organizations working in those areas; the indigenous population who are affected by migration; the government census officials who are responsible to document migration data; political party leaders, administrative officers, individual experts, student leaders; and the last but not the least, the migrants and their leaders have all been consulted.

Factors that influence the migration process, its trends, magnitude, impacts as well as adjustment of migrants in Assam have been included in this study. A strong emphasis has been placed on verifying the authenticity of data by validating them with data gathered through field surveys, focus group discussions and numerous interviews with migrants, field workers and experts, which were completed during 2009-2012. In several instances, the author noted contradictions in her own findings with those reported elsewhere; and such occurrences have been pointed out in the text

Migration from Bangladesh is a sensitive social and political issue in Assam, as well as in India today. This sensitivity presented a number of challenges in the field survey. Primary among them was the denial of migrants of being from Bangladesh, and not being able to gain access to all migrant settlement areas. There were also delays in government permission to access data, the remoteness of certain locations due to poor transportation infrastructure and bad weather conditions due to floods, and also several violent incidences

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<sup>73</sup> Reported by The Assam Tribune, December 18, 2014 and the full text of the Supreme Court Judgment is available at: <http://www.legalcrystal.com/case/8615/supreme-court-of-india-assam-sanmilita-mahasangha-and-ors>

during the survey period. In view of these, the author had to make several field visits at different times of the year.

To gain access to the areas surveyed, the author approached both government agencies, NGOs and other socio-political entities. Permission from government agencies were most difficult to obtain; in a few cases, where permission was granted, the process was unduly delayed. What was interesting however was that many government officials were ready and willing to provide off-the-record comments on the issue. In contrast, NGOs and other civil society were more forthcoming in facilitating field work.

Although there was a general sense of denial among the government officials and pro-migrant entities on the issue of migration the reality is that large-scale migration from Bangladesh to Assam has taken place over many decades, and is continuing unabated. It has reached a scale big enough to permanently alter Assam's demography, socio-political environment and economic conditions.

Keeping in mind the foregoing limitations of this study, a summary of key findings, measured against the objectives is presented followed by a number of conclusions. In addition some implications of policies arising out of the study and recommendations for future research are also presented.

## **10.2 To What Extent Were the Study Objectives Realized?**

The primary aim of this study was to obtain a better understanding of the scale, composition, causes, processes and impact of migration from Bangladesh to Assam, with a special focus on migrants' adjustment at their destination. As both regular and irregular migrants have been referred to in this study the issues relevant to regular (documented) and irregular (undocumented) migration have been addressed in the specific context of Assam. Five research objectives were set for this study.

### **10.2.1 Objective #1: Reasons motivating migration from Bangladesh/East Bengal to Assam**

Motivation to migrate is a complex phenomenon because people move due to a combination of reasons. However, the common underlying reason for both Hindus and Muslims migrants to Assam is the potential for economic gain. The linkages and familiarity in terms of language, culture and geography between their point of origin in Bangladesh and Assam, together with strong social networks, was a major facilitating factor. In addition, the potential for land ownership, insecurity, avoidance of the prospect of natural calamities in Bangladesh, and the existence of a porous border were other factors. However, networking is one of the most important underlying factors of migration found in this study. Prior to migration, potential migrants seek information in relation to areas of settlement, sources of earning, initial support, cultural ties and religious freedom, and more importantly, security at the place of destination. This study confirmed that most migrants had an established network, be they relatives, friends or even people of the same community or employers. Such network provided them with substantial support by giving

the initial shelter and relevant information before and after departure. In addition to these underlying causes there were also three important events that contributed to migration to Assam: (i) the partition of India in 1947, (ii) the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war, and (iii) the 1974 famine in Bangladesh.

### **10.2.2 Objective #2: Trends, patterns, processes and scale of migration and the demographic transformation of the state**

The trends and patterns of migration varied distinctively in broad three periods: pre-partition period (prior to 1947), post-partition period until Bangladesh's liberation (1947-1971), and after the liberation of Bangladesh (post 1971).

The Pre-Partition Period migration can be attributed to the colonization practice of the British Rule, land distribution, land reclamation, communal pre-partition politics and increased development activities in Assam. The migration process during this period was often a result of planned and coordinated efforts by the government and was regarded as a part of policy implementation.

Partition and Post-Partition Period Migration trends and patterns are very complex as several factors contributed to them, and both voluntary and forced migration took place during these periods.

Recent migration is more drawn to economic prosperity and political stability. Some are also attracted by the thriving and lucrative illegal cross-border trade. However, scarcity of agricultural land makes them more drawn to urban areas where they work on construction sites or as domestic workers. Due to the booming real estate business, Assam faces labor shortages and migrants from Bangladesh are moving to urban areas because of work opportunities and also higher incomes. Some are only transitional and later migrate from Assam to elsewhere in India or the Middle East in search of better opportunities via Assam. However, prior to leaving Assam, migrants ensure that they procure all required legal residency documents

**The Demographic Transformation of Assam:** Migration from Bangladesh may lead to a demographic transformation of the state in respect to religion in the near future as is evident from Census data presented in Table 10.1. There is a decrease in the percentage of the Hindu population in every district of Assam during 1991-2001 and a corresponding rise of Muslim population during the same decade. The largest concentrations and increases were in the districts of Dhubri, Goalpara, Nagaon, Hailakandi, Karimganj, Morigaon and Barpeta.

**Table 10. 1: Distribution of Hindus, Muslims and Others in Districts of Assam, 1991-2001**

Districts	1991 (percent)			2001 (percent)		
	Hindu	Muslim	Others	Hindu	Muslim	Others
Dhubri	28.7	70.5	0.8	24.7	74.3	1.0
Kokrajhar	66.4	19.3	14.3	65.6	20.4	14.0
Bongaigaon	64.0	32.7	3.3	59.2	38.5	2.3
Goalpara	39.9	50.2	9.9	38.2	53.7	8.1
Barpeta	40.3	56.1	3.7	40.2	59.3	0.4
Nalbari	77.5	20.0	2.6	76.1	22.1	1.9
Kamrup	74.3	23.4	2.3	72.8	24.8	2.4
Darrang	60.5	32.0	7.5	57.7	35.5	6.7
Sonitpur	80.2	13.3	6.5	76.6	15.9	7.5
Lakhimpur	79.7	14.5	5.8	79.1	16.1	4.8
Dhemaji	93.9	1.5	4.6	96.0	1.8	2.2
Morigaon	54.6	45.3	0.1	52.2	47.6	0.2
Nagaon	51.7	47.2	1.1	47.8	51.0	1.2
Golaghat	86.1	7.1	6.8	85.9	7.9	6.2
Jorhat	93.6	4.3	2.1	92.9	4.8	2.4
Sivsagar	89.3	7.6	3.1	88.2	8.2	3.6
Dibrugarh	91.3	4.5	4.2	90.8	4.5	4.7
Tinsukia	90.2	3.1	6.7	89.5	3.5	8.3
Karbi Anglong	84.8	1.6	13.6	82.4	2.2	15.4
North Cachar Hills	72.9	2.2	24.9	69.9	2.5	27.6
Karimganj	50.2	49.2	0.7	46.7	52.3	1.0
Hailakandi	43.7	54.8	1.5	41.1	57.6	1.3
Cachar	63.4	34.5	2.1	61.4	36.1	2.5

Source: Census of India, Assam 1991 and 2001

Table 10.2 presents the population increase of three major religious communities in Assam from 1971 to 2001 and in respect to the percentages they make up of the total population of Assam.

**Table 10. 2: Population increases in three major communities of Assam and their percentage of the total population of Assam by religion (1971-2001)\***

Religious Communities	1971		1991		2001		Percent change	
	Population	Percent of Total	Population	Percent of Total	Population	Percent of Total	1971-1991	1991-2001
Hindu	10,604,618	72.5	15,042,365	67.1	17,296,455	65.0	41.8	15.0
Muslim	3,592,124	24.6	6,373,204	28.4	8,240,611	31.0	77.4	29.3
Christian	381,010	2.6	746,226	3.3	986,589	3.7	95.9	32.2
Others	47,400	0.3	247,458	1.1	97,505	0.4	422.1	-60.6
Assam	14,625,152	100.0	22,409,253	100.0	26,621,160	100.0	53.2	18.8

Source: Census of India, Assam, 1971, 1991, 2001.

\* No census was conducted in Assam in 1981 due to students' agitation against the influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh.

A comparison of the Hindu and Muslim population increases suggests a decrease in Hindu population during the 1991-2001 decade. The Hindu population was reduced to 65 percent in 2001 from 72.5 percent in 1971. The increase in Muslim population was higher than the Hindu population during 1991-2001. The Muslim population recorded a significant increase from 24.6 percent in 1971 to 31 percent in 2001. Muslims now constitute about one third of the population of Assam (Gupta, 2014). According to the 2011 Census, among 27 districts in Assam, the Muslim population is about 60 percent in six districts and 40 percent in another six districts. As the increase in Muslim population is higher than the Hindus it can be inferred that the religious composition in the state will continue to change,

and like Kashmir, Assam may become another Muslim dominated state in India in the future (Bezboruah, 2005).

### **10.2.3 Objective #3: The Political, Economic and Environmental impacts of migration on the state**

**The Political Impact:** The issue of migrant influx from Bangladesh remains a central political issue in Assam as the indigenous population (Assamese and tribal populace) fear that they might lose their language, culture, and ultimately, their identity. Increasingly, migrants from Bangladesh are gaining more political clout and Assam's main opposition party in the state legislature at present is AIUDF, a migrant-based party.

If the migration continues Assam may become another Muslim majority state in the Indian Union, and if that happens the political scenario of the state will be more complex with regard to citizenship issues, elections and governance.

**The Economic Impact:** The migration from Bangladesh has had a tremendous impact, both positive and negative, on land-use, and the overall economy of the state. Initially the agricultural sector greatly benefited due to migration as migrants introduced better techniques for cultivation and also multiple cropping on the same plot of land, as well as new varieties of crops like jute, lentils, vegetables and pulses, previously unknown to Assam. Recently the migrant community has taken to vegetable cultivation rather than traditional crops and the produce is sold in the neighboring states in addition to Assam.

The center of the migrants' economy still remains primarily agriculture-based although the next generation (i.e., children) appears to be less motivated to follow their parents' occupation. They are moving away to other jobs in urban centers. Nevertheless, migrants still remain the source of cheaper labor in the state, and it has had a positive impact as the cost of products and services to consumers is lowered.

Large industries or businesses in the private sector are not commonly seen in Assam. Due to six long years of anti-foreigner movement from 1979 to 1985, and the Bodo-land movement thereafter, the state slipped into lawlessness. Incidences of violent activities and frequent strikes have continued and have created an unfriendly atmosphere for business. The law and order situation is too poor to attract any major direct investment into the state.

On the other hand, Government's provisions for entitlements to migrants settled in the Char areas have been a huge drain on its exchequer. Of the 2.5 million population spread around these areas, 80 percent are migrants. Because the char areas, by nature, are temporary and change their locations and shape after every major floods, the government is unable to institute any revenue collection scheme. Therefore, the government is compelled to incur huge expenses to pay for development and benefits such as flood relief, support for education etc. to the char population without any revenue collection potential.

**The Environmental Impact:** Migration has impacted on the environment adversely; particularly the ecology of the forests and natural parks (Bhagabati *et al.*, 2006). A Case study on Manas National Park is included in this study. An assessment made by the Forest Survey of India, found that the forest cover in Assam had shrunk more than 66 sq. km over the previous biennial assessment. There is evidence of the adverse impact of migration on the Park's ecosystem. Its forest cover and natural water, rich in biodiversity, are shrinking and the poaching of wild animals is increasing. Cattle grazing within the parks buffer zone is another problem as it increases the chance of spreading diseases and also destroys the natural grassland suitable for some animals, replacing it with invasive species. The study of two migrant villages in the fringe of Manas National Park has shown that migrants' along with in-migrants, as well as the indigenous people's settlement within two kilometers of the park boundary, will have an adverse impact on the parks' ecosystem.

#### **10.2.4 Objective #4: The Social and Economic adjustment of migrants at their place of destination**

To establish themselves the migrants, faced numerous hardships. With hindsight, most migrants feel that their initial hardship in Assam had, in fact, been good for them; as it motivated them to be more entrepreneurial and self-reliant. Most migrants are self-employed with some running their own small businesses, which also employ workers from the migrant communities.

Many migrant areas still lack basic civic amenities like healthcare facilities, adequate access to education, transport and road-connectivity. The level of education is poor among migrants; and among the community itself, Hindu migrants are noted to be more educated than Muslim migrants.

Although there is yet no widespread and strong social acceptance of migrants by the indigenous population, more and more migrants are interacting with the local population through their businesses and work. Many migrant children study in the same schools with children from other communities. More than half of the migrants surveyed have developed some degree of proficiency and skills in the local language, Assamese. There are a few examples of inter-community matrimonial alliances as well.

#### **10.2.5 Objective #5: Policy Implications**

The Government of India, as well as Assam at different times, formulated policies and laws in connection with the migration. After the British Rule ended in 1947, new specific policies became a necessity as the country that the British had ruled was partitioned into two: the Hindu-majority India and the Muslim-majority Pakistan. The following are some of the policies implemented by the Governments of India and Assam with relevance to migration, residency and citizenship:

##### **The Prevention of Infiltration from Pakistan (PIP) Act of 1964**

The Prevention of Infiltration from Pakistan Act was introduced to control the influx of population from East Pakistan. It was enacted by the state government. The

implementation of the Act on the ground was left to the Assam Police team headed by a high-ranking officer. This responsibility was later transferred to the national force, the Border Security Force (BSF), created after the 1965 India-Pakistan War. However, within a few months, the Act was suspended (Hazarika, 2000, p.63). The reason for its suspension was political because the promulgation of the PIP Act led to deportation of some migrants from Assam, causing a furious revolt within the Congress Party, the political party of India ruling Assam at that time. The Muslim members of the Congress government had threatened to resign *en masse* which would have led to the collapse of the ministry. Hazarika (2000, p. 63) argues that the PIP Act had collapsed because "*Chaliha (Chief Minister) had to choose between political expediency on one side and the long-term interest of Assam and India*".

### **The Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983**

The Illegal Migrants Determination by Tribunals Act (*commonly known as the **IMDT Act***) is an Act to provide for the establishment of Tribunals for determining in a fair manner if a person is an illegal resident of India or not. This Act enables the Central Government to expel illegal migrants from India and other matters connected therewith. Enacted primarily for Assam, this act replaced all similar previous Acts, such as Entry into India Act, 1920, Foreigners Act, 1946; Immigrant Expulsion from Assam Act (1950), Passport Act (1967) or any rule or order made under any such Acts. The Supreme Court of India on July 7, 2005 nullified the IMDT Act as this Act puts the onus of providing the proof of Indian citizenship on the complainant rather than the accused whereas in other Indian states and territories this was not the case. Available at [www.indiankanoon.org/doc/815726](http://www.indiankanoon.org/doc/815726)

### **Assam Accord 1985**

The Assam Accord was signed between the central government, and the agitation leaders (All Assam Students union and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad) on 15th August, 1985. According to the Accord, the date of 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1971 was agreed upon as the cut-off date on both sides for detection and deportation of foreign nationals. Several issues were discussed in the accord, such as the base year for detection and deletion and also deportation of illegal migrants; speedy economic development of the state; the safeguarding of culture, language, identity and heritage of Assamese people; improvements in education, science and technology; issuance of citizenship certificate; securing international border to prevent infiltration; introducing relevant laws to prevent encroachment of tribal lands in tribal belts and blocks, and maintaining the birth and death registration (Assam Accord, 1985, center for development and peace studies at [cdpsindia.org/assam\\_accord.asp](http://cdpsindia.org/assam_accord.asp)).

### **Issue of National identity card**

Inserted by Act 6 of 2004 (3-12-2004), the Central Government may make it compulsory for every citizen to register, and a national identity card would be issued to him/her. The Central Government may maintain a National Register of Indian Citizens and for that purpose establish a National Registration Authority and the procedure to be taken will be

as prescribed (The Citizenship act, 1955, published in 2011). The process of the issuance of National Register of Citizens (NRC) cards was suspended in Assam due to violent protests from the migrants. In an order dated December 17th, 2014, the Supreme Court of India has directed the government of Assam to complete the NRC by January 2016<sup>74</sup>.

The above laws were introduced to maximize the benefits and minimize the negative effects of migration.

### **10.3 Recommendations**

Based on the outcomes of this study and the challenges identified, the following recommendations are made:

#### **10.3.1 Preventing Infiltration**

1. **Reinforce border protection:** More vigilance is needed along the border with occasional checks by authorities as well as volunteers of political parties and social organization. This study shows that the most common route of entry for the migrants is by river. Therefore, there is a strong need for an effort and investment towards upgrading and reinforcing river patrolling with modern technology. This is of paramount importance to control as 40km of the Bangladesh-Assam border runs through the riverine areas.
2. **Negotiate an Accord with Bangladesh regarding the transfer of illegal migrants:** With no formal Agreement or Accord between the governments of India and Bangladesh regarding repatriation of illegal migrants, and also denial by the government of Bangladesh regarding its citizens migrating illegally to India (and hence refusing to accept them back without proper documentary proof), has made the problem gradually get worse. Both the governments of Bangladesh and India should come to an agreement for extraditing illegal migrants, as well as criminals, and anti-social elements of each country, following an establish legal and tribunal framework. Unless both countries accept the problem openly as well as officially, the problem cannot be solved. The time for denial is long past for both countries.
3. **Develop Free Trade between India and Bangladesh:** For economic gain to both countries free trade should be established between India and Bangladesh. With the establishment of free trade, the inland water route between the two countries, especially with Assam could be developed. This will provide access to the Chittagong Port of Bangladesh by India for commercial purposes. With the introduction of free trade, it is envisaged that the prevailing illegal trade across the border will decrease, benefitting both countries in terms of revenue generation. Also free trade will help to boost the economy of both countries especially the

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<sup>74</sup> Reported by The Assam Tribune, December 18, 2014 and the full text of the Supreme Court Judgment is available at: <http://www.legalcrystal.com/case/8615/supreme-court-of-india-assam-sanmilita-mahasangha-and-ors>

border areas and with economic development, especially in Bangladesh, it is envisioned that migration for economic reason may slow down.

4. **Issue Limited-Period Work Permits to Willing Workers for Seasonal Labor Needs:** Demand for labor is one of the reasons for migration. Therefore, with more job opportunities and higher wages in Assam compared to Bangladesh, and high unemployment rate in Bangladesh, the migration is bound to continue. Temporary work permits with a set period of time can be issued to anyone who finds an employer to sponsor him/her for a job. The employer should be made responsible for the return of the employee to Bangladesh after the contractual term is over.
5. **Set up a National Immigration department:** A national immigration department should be set up to investigate the problem both at origin and destination of migration, to talk about solutions, and also to act as an extra vigilance body at the border areas to prevent infiltration (Hazarika, 2002).
6. **Check corruption at every level:** Huge amount of money changes hands illegally at the border due to migration and it is widely alleged that the security personnel of both Bangladesh and India are involved in much of the illegal activities. Although most migrants avoided a direct answer to a specific question on the need to bribe the security personnel at the border, however, many of them admitted they had to pay hefty bribes to them. Strict, tangible and enforceable vigilance measures need to be implemented at the border to check such illegal and corrupt practices. The issuing of various documents required for establishing citizenship is another area where money is exchanged as bribe. Measures should be taken on such activities by government workers, however, at the grassroots level corruption for different reasons such as certifying ones residence status, purchase and selling of land often involves a bribe and it needs to be controlled.

### **10.3.2 Other Measures**

1. **Need for a clear record of land ownership in all areas in villages and towns:** Each village and town should have an accurate description of land, titles and deeds and a record of disposition. Being an agriculture-based country, the ownership of land is important to its residents. Description of land ownership, and a detailed map of land in every village or township should be kept and maintained in the local offices as well as by district authorities. Without such authentic records, it is almost impossible to differentiate new and old settlements. Naresh Chandra, former Indian Ambassador to the UAS, has stressed the importance of this matter (Chandra, 2002, Dialogue).
2. **Strict "checks and balance" measures** should be in place for land transactions. Details of the last 25 years of the purchases with authentic documental proof, such as place of last residence, educational records, and birth certificates are to be provided to the authorities for purchasing land. Computerized records of each

individual along with their family members who settle in a particular plot after purchase, should be kept at the village level.

3. **Introduce biometric tamper-proof voter's identity card:** Tamper-proof biometric voter's card should be introduced and only those with authentic documental proof of citizenship and a permanent residential address would be allowed to register as voters. The electoral roll should be computerized with photograph of each voter and their detailed information.
4. **Creation of an authentic databank at grassroots level:** Lack of authentic data at present is hampering the study of the migration; especially when related to the conditions of migrants at their place of destination, as well as the impact on the state. Due to a lack of authentic data no clear picture can be drawn about the number, length of the stay, to account for their descendants and also their socio-economic conditions at their place of destination. Without such authentic and reliable data, the implementation of policies related to migrant areas will remain a challenge. A sound and effective strategy for development and infrastructure (healthcare, education, transport) building can emerge only when it is based on reliable statistics. Such data will also facilitate the proper budgetary allocation and utilization of funds set aside for migrants.
5. **Collection of authentic data at the grass root level** can be done by volunteers from student organizations of both majority and minority groups, workers of various political parties, organizations associated with development and improvement of migrant-inhabited areas and NGOs. The data should be stored in a shared data bank for a transparent quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) assessment. Once the data are verified and validated, it should be made available with complete transparency without any bias from the special interest groups or political parties. These data will be of immense help to researchers in this area, both nationally and internationally. Access to quality data will inevitably cut costs while adding to any research efforts, government policies and also development.
6. **Develop migrant inhabited areas and encourage education of women:** Development of the migrant inhabited areas is important for the development of the state and also for the betterment of society. Development in education, healthcare, transport facilities, job opportunities, training in various fields, businesses, etc. are important for economic improvement. Women's education is essential for various reasons, especially to check population growth, and to improve healthcare for both women and children. This could also help in delaying marriage among migrant communities where usually a girl child is married off after attaining puberty.

An educated woman will be more aware of the circumstances around her in the field of politics, economic development, culture and the environment, which will help her to take better decisions. The development of these areas will also help

migrants to upgrade to the standard of the local people, and eventually may lead to a better and more productive assimilation with the indigenous population.

- 7. Bring the issue of migration to the political agenda of all political parties as a national security issue:** As said by Hazarika (2002), the issue of migration should be brought into the political agenda of all political parties as was done in Denmark, where there was a change of government on the issue of migration. Illegal unchecked migration is likely to pose a national security threat. At present in Assam two parties the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Asom Gana Parishad have it on their agenda. The other political parties such as the Communist Parties, the Congress, Samajbadi Party, etc. also need to consider it (Hazarika, 2002).

#### **10.4 Limitations and Suggestions for future Research**

Although this study has presented an in-depth understanding of migration, its process, trends, patterns and impact, as well as the process of adjustment of migrants in their host country, it has a number of limitations.

The political sensitivity of the subject matter made it difficult, as well as time consuming, for obtaining authentic information from participants. The migrant respondents were cautious in providing information due to fear of being detected and deported, and also the relevant organizations approached were very cautious in providing information. Due to the lack of cooperation from most entities, government entities in particular, the gathering of data on migrants became a more time-consuming task for the researcher. Some areas were inaccessible due to security concerns and also the poor transportation network. In addition, government officials had restricted visits to certain areas on various pretexts.

To allay the fear and apprehension expressed by many respondents, the author had to produce the introductory letter that Prof. Graeme Hugo had written. This letter together with her assurance that she was not connected to any government law enforcement agency had convinced most of the respondents to be forthcoming with their answers.

While studying the impact of migration related to environmental aspects, some additional questions in the questionnaire would have been useful in developing a better understanding of the issues involved; for example, more details on the land-use, types of vegetation at present and in the past, conversion of agricultural/forest lands for housing and industry, infrastructure growth rate vis-a-vis requirement, clearing of forests, domestic energy use practices, would have resulted in better data to analyze the impact of migration on the environment. Likewise, it was difficult to source data on wild animal behavioral patterns, seasonal migration of birds and the use of chemicals and pesticides. There are also a number of restrictions imposed by the Park officials which hindered independent and easy access to the Park lands for the study. Nevertheless, the author was able to study some of these aspects independently by incorporating two fringe villages in the field surveys. This came at a cost; as the author had to make a number of additional trips to the area.

To establish the political aspects, some important questions would have been useful; such as, the political party most of the migrants prefer, and why do they vote for them. These questions could not be asked because of the obvious sensitivities associated with this issue. In the period, 2009-12, when the field surveys were conducted, there were many violent incidents linked to the migration issue; for example, in 2011-12 there were violent incidents between Bodos and migrants which resulted in almost 100 deaths and the uprooting of almost 400,000 to 500,000 people from their homes. Consequently, the author had to carefully navigate her movement during the field surveys.

Another limitation was that respondents could not be asked, whether they were, at any time, detected as illegal migrants and referred to the foreigners' tribunal, and which political party they had approached for help in this regard. There were two reasons for this, one was the fear that the respondents would refuse to participate in the study if these questions were asked, and the other was that no one was willing to answer such a question in the pilot test. Undoubtedly, an answer to this question would have added value to the analysis on the political aspects of migration.

While analyzing data in relation to migrants' social and economic adjustment in Assam, it would have been better if a comparative analysis could be presented based on a similar field survey among non-migrants in the study areas. Due to time and cost factors, such data could not be collected. This has restricted a site-specific comparative analysis between the migrants and non-migrants; rather, a comparative analysis has been provided with the total population of the district. Therefore, it is recommended that this aspect be considered in future research on this topic.

This research cannot be generalized to the total migrant population of Assam as it is based on a small sample geographically limited to western Assam only. The selection process for respondents to the field survey was through personal networking, and in a few cases, with a help of recognized NGOs.

### **10.5 Closing Remarks**

In this chapter, overall conclusions from the findings of the study and the achievement of the objectives set in the study have been discussed. Recommendations with regard to measures to be taken to check the migration, development of migrants, as well as their inhabited areas, to minimize the negative impact of migration have been made together with a few suggestions for future research.

Although the migration from Bangladesh is being projected by some quarters to be only a major problem for the state of Assam with no benefits whatsoever, the findings from the study suggest that this is not necessarily true. This research showed a mixed outcome for Assam, both positive and negative. In addition, migrants contributed significantly to augment the agricultural output of Assam, and introduced multiple-cropping practices resulting in effective land utilization. They also brought jute, a cash crop, which was easily adaptable to Assam weather and soil conditions.

It is important for the policy makers to address the problem of migration by taking into account the long-term effect of migration on the state, as well as the country as a whole, instead of looking at the short-term expediencies or utilizing migrants as a convenient vote bank. A long-term measure solution is necessary for this problem so that both indigenous and migrant communities can live and work together in harmony and prosper in a socially-responsive and environmentally-friendly manner. To that end, all stakeholders must forsake the strategy of denial; rather, first, accept the fact that migration from Bangladesh is real and continuing. All stakeholders must also recognize the reality that there is no easy turning back; the migrants that are already in Assam have to be accommodated within the socio-political framework of the state. Therefore, any migration policy developed must be synchronized and in alignment with this reality.

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## Appendix 1: Acronyms Used

AAGSP	All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad
AAMSU	All Assam Minority Students Union
AASU	All Assam Students' Union
ABSU	All Bodo Students Union
ACF	Adivasi Cobra Force
AGP	Assam Gana Parishad
AIUDF	All India United Democratic Front
ALRD	Association for Land Reform Development
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BLT	Bodo Liberation Tigers
BPL	Below Poverty Line
BSF	Border Security Force
BTC	Bodoland Territorial Council
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tract
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPI	Communist Party of India
DDT	Dichloro-Diphenyl-Trichloroethane
DHD	Dima Halim Daogah
DIG	Deputy Inspector General of Police
FGD	Focus Group discussion
HCR	Head Count Ratio
HPC-D	Hmr People's Convention-Democracy
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IMDC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IMDT	Illegal Migrants Determination by Tribunal
INC	Indian National Congress
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
KLNLF	Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front
KLO	Kamatapur Liberation Organization
MULTA	Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam
NDFB	National Democratic Front of Bodoland
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPR	National Population Register
NPRTI	National Population Training Institute
NRC	National Registration of Citizen
PHC	Public Health Centers
PIP	Prevention of Infiltration from Pakistan
PTCA	Plains Tribal Council Association
SRDI	Soil Resources Development Institute
ULFA	United Liberation Front of Assam
ULFBA	United Liberation Front of Barak Valley
UN-DESA	United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nation Population Division
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UPDS	United People's Democratic Solidarity
UTNLA	United Tribal Liberation Front

## Appendix 2: Glossary of Terminologies

- Aman rice:** Crop that is transplanted in July-September and harvested in November-January.
- Aus rice:** A type of rice crop that is harvested in July-August,
- Bathans:** Vast uninhabited lands used for grazing for livestock (goats, cattle and buffaloes).
- Beels:** Inland fresh water bodies.
- Block:** A Block is an administrative unit, primarily for rural areas, to provide administrative support at the grass root level. A block comprises of several villages, and several blocks constitute a sub-division, which is a part of a district.
- Caste Hindu:** A social structure in which classes in the society are determined by heredity.
- Char areas:** Char is a "temporary" river islet formed post-flood by silt deposits carried by the river Brahmaputra during monsoon season. These islets are also called Chapori. Usually these areas become accessible and cultivable during winter months when occurrences of flood and heavy rainfall are rare.
- Classification of migrants by 'Last Residence':** Introduced during 1971 Indian Census operation with a view to make migration statistics more meaningful. All information regarding migration were tabulated with the exception of place of birth. The question on 'Nationality' was dropped from 1971 Census onwards, and therefore, there is no statistics that can classify migrants according to their nationality (Census of India, 1971 Preface).
- Colonization Scheme:** According to the colonization plan during British Rule, a family was given 30 bighas (1 Bigha=0.35 acres or 0.15 hectare) of land against the payment of a lump sum amount for cultivation and settlement.
- Displaced Persons:** As refugees during partition of India had citizenship rights in both India and Pakistan, the Government of India used the term 'displaced' rather than refugee at that time to classify them. (Annual Report of the Department of Rehabilitation 1965-66 (New Delhi) Department of Rehabilitation, Government of India, 1967, p.107).
- Double cropping:** Practice of using the same land for two crops, one in winter and the other in summer.
- Doubtful (D) Voters:** Category of voters who are disenfranchised by the government on account of their lack of citizenship credentials. Persons who could not provide evidence of citizenship were marked as 'D' voters in the electoral roll by the Election Commission. They are barred from voting as well contesting in elections, and are referred to the Foreign Tribunals set up under the Foreigner Tribunal order of 1964 to determine their citizen status (The Hindu, 2012, April 10).
- Enemy Property Act:** Now known as the Vested Property Act in Bangladesh. This Act gives the right to the state to confiscate the properties of the minorities who they deem as the enemy of the state.
- Gaon Panchyat:** Village Governing Body.
- Gaonburah:** The village Head. It is an elected position, with a nominal monthly honorarium from the rural government office. The head brings significant local issues to government's attention, and often presides over meetings at the village level. He/she has plays a role of moderator in conflict resolutions on wide range of matters; such as, land-boundary disputes, property divisions among siblings when members of the family wish to separate, etc.
- Grow More Food scheme:** A scheme introduced during World War II to increase food production to meet the Allied Forces' needs.
- Hawala:** A scheme practiced in Bangladesh for people to transfer money through personal contacts across the border.
- Indian National Congress:** is the national political party of India that led India's movement for independence and Mahatma Gandhi was the most influential personality who guided the party strategies.
- Indigenous Muslim Population:** The origin of the indigenous Muslim population of Assam can be traced back to 13<sup>th</sup> century, before the Mughal rule in India during 1501 to 1857. They settled in Guwahati, Hajo and adjacent areas, and around the tea growing areas of the eastern districts of Assam, mainly Jorhat, Golaghat, Sibsagar and Dibrugarh (Hussain, 2004). In addition, Barak Valley hosts indigenous Cachari Muslims, and erstwhile undivided Goalpara district has a large

indigenous Muslim population. Originally, they were mostly Rajbanshis, later converted to Islam (Mannan, 2011).

**Internally Displaced Persons (IDP):** IDPS are persons who have not crossed an international border to find sanctuary but have moved elsewhere in their home country for security. The IDPs legally remain under the protection of their own government (UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency available at [www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c146.html](http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c146.html)).

**Lakh:** A numerical unit in the Indian sub-continent to denote the number of 100,000.

**Land Settlement Policy:** The policy that opened up government lands to immigrants and allowed them to possess as much as 30 bighas of land or more for settlement.

**Line system:** Under this "system" a line was virtually drawn to segregate those areas where migrants were allowed to settle from areas closed for migrants' settlement.

**Literate:** As per Census of India definition, a literate is "a person, 6 years or older, who can both read and write with understanding in any language". A person need not be formally educated to be classified as a literate. (Census of India, 1991, Series IV, Assam, P. 7).

**Matbors:** Influential persons in the community. Matbors are relatively wealthy and are surrounded by a number of loyal sycophants, who also provide the "muscle power" when needed to resolve an issue. They are not elected or recognized but enjoy the clout to dominate over others. Matbors are more feared than revered.

**Mukti Bahini:** Bengali name for "Freedom Force". Mukti Bahini fighters fought alongside the Indian armed forces to win the 1971 war against Pakistan to liberate Bangladesh.

**Muslim League:** The political party formed during the freedom struggle in India. It is now a prominent party in Pakistan.

**Pail Patta:** Titles for plots of wasteland leased to peasants without any levy/rent for three years.

**Refugee:** In this study, the term "refugee" denotes a person uprooted and displaced from his/her area of residence during and since the partition of India in 1947 (Basu Roychoudhury, n.d). Its meaning is not the same as defined later by the United Nation Convention of 1951 and the United Nations Protocol of 1967.

**Satras:** Old religious institutions of a sect of Hindus which discourages idol worship.

**Scheduled Tribes:** The Constitution of India, article 366 (25) defines Scheduled Tribes as "Such tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to the scheduled tribe is prescribed. However, it does not contain the criterion for the specification of any community as scheduled tribe." An often used, the criterion is based on attributes such as: [i] **Geographical isolation** (*they live in cloistered, exclusive, remote and inhospitable areas such as hills and forests*), [ii] **Backwardness** (*their livelihood is based on primitive agriculture, a low-value closed economy with a low level of technology, low levels of literacy and health*), [iii] **Distinctive culture, language and religion** (*communities have developed their own distinctive culture, language and religion*), and [iv] **Shyness of contact** (*they have a marginal degree of contact with other cultures and people*).

**Sylhet Referendum:** July 1947 to gauge the preference of Sylhet residents to either India or Pakistan during partition.

**Waste Land:** The barren land with no private ownership titles.

**Zamindari system:** refers to the now defunct landlord system that prevailed during the British Rule in India. The word Zamindar literally means "land" (Zamin) and "lord" (dar). Under this system, the land ownership is vested with the landlord, who allows landless peasants to use the land on specific terms (e.g., shared crop/produce, charges, levies etc.), which are often favorable to the Zamindar (i.e., the landlord).

### Appendix 3: A Note on Various Location Names Used in the Thesis

It is important to highlight that there have been a number of administrative reorganizations in India since independence in 1947. Such reorganizations have been both at the state and district levels. Assam has been split along the ethnic lines into four states: Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram. Assam's districts have also been divided into smaller administrative units. Furthermore, it has been a recent trend in India to change names of places given by the British to their original Indian names to break away from the "colonial past". As a consequence, many places and states in India have given up their anglicized names for heritage-based names; for examples, state of "Orissa" is now called "Odisha", cities like, "Bombay", "Madras" and "Calcutta" have been renamed as "Mumbai", "Chennai" and "Kolkata", respectively. In Assam, places like "Gauhati" and "Nowgong" have been renamed as "Guwahati" and "Nagaon", respectively.

In this study, all locations have been referred their current names. However, when references to older literature are made and quoted, the names, as used by authors, have been retained to avoid any confusion. The following table (Table A3.1) summarizes the erstwhile and current regional names used in the context of this study.

**Table A3. 1: Erstwhile and Current Names of the Locations Cited**

Erstwhile Name	Administrative Unit Type	Current Unit Name After Split
Assam	<b>State</b> in Union of India	Assam
		Meghalaya
		Nagaland
		Mizoram
		Arunachal Pradesh
Goalpara	<b>District</b> in current state of Assam	Goalpara
		Dhubri
		Kokrajhar
		Chirang
		Bongaigaon
Kamrup	<b>District</b> in current state of Assam	Kamrup
		Barpeta
		Nalbari
		Kamrup (Metropolitan)
		Baksa
Darrang	<b>District</b> in current state of Assam	Darrang
		Udalguri
		Sonitpur
Nowgong	<b>District</b> in current state of Assam	Nagaon (new name for Nowgong)
		Marigaon
Lakhimpur	<b>District</b> in current state of Assam	Lakhimpur
		Dhemaji
		Dibrugarh
		Tinsukia
North Cachar and Mikir Hills	<b>District</b> in current state of Assam	Karbi Anglong
		Dima Hasao (North Cachar Hills)
Sibsagar	<b>District</b> in current state of Assam	Sibsagar
		Jorhat
		Golaghat
Cachar	<b>District</b> in current state of Assam	Cachar
		Hailakandi
		Karimganj

## Appendix 4: Data Tables Used in Various Analyses

**Table A4. 1: Migrants from Bangladesh by Birth in Assam's Districts**

Districts	Population			Migrant Population Distribution									
	Total	Migrant	Migrant%	Male	Female	Rural		Urban		Percentage			
						Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Rural	Urban
Kokrajhar	800,659	11,314	1.41%	6,460	4,854	4,750	3,430	1,710	1,424	57.10%	42.90%	72.30%	27.70%
Dhubri	1,332,475	13,202	0.99%	6,850	6,352	3,550	3,370	3,300	2,982	51.89%	48.11%	52.42%	47.58%
Goalpara	668,138	10,811	1.62%	5,831	4,980	5,320	4,610	511	370	53.94%	46.06%	91.85%	8.15%
Bongaigaon	807,523	21,195	2.62%	11,690	9,505	8,990	7,670	2,700	1,835	55.15%	44.85%	78.60%	21.40%
Barpeta	1,385,659	20,470	1.48%	10,640	9,830	8,550	7,530	2,090	2,300	51.98%	48.02%	78.55%	21.45%
Kamrup	2,000,071	21,692	1.08%	11,632	10,060	5,650	4,970	5,982	5,090	53.62%	46.38%	48.96%	51.04%
Nalbari	1,016,390	6,990	0.69%	3,970	3,020	3,930	3,000	40	20	56.80%	43.20%	99.14%	0.86%
Darrang	1,298,860	17,317	1.33%	9,622	7,695	7,940	6,470	1,682	1,225	55.56%	44.44%	83.21%	16.79%
Marigaon	639,682	6,240	0.98%	3,570	2,670	3,220	2,340	650	30	57.21%	42.79%	89.10%	10.90%
Nagaon	1,893,171	43,171	2.28%	23,757	19,414	17,397	14,214	6,360	5,200	55.03%	44.97%	73.22%	26.78%
Sonitpur	1,424,287	15,410	1.08%	8,670	6,740	6,520	5,000	2,150	1,740	56.26%	43.74%	74.76%	25.24%
Lakhimpur	751,517	4,410	0.59%	2,480	1,930	1,930	1,610	550	320	56.24%	43.76%	80.27%	19.73%
Dhemaji	478,830	4,710	0.98%	2,800	1,910	2,760	1,910	40	0	59.45%	40.55%	99.15%	0.85%
Tinsukia	962,298	7,110	0.74%	4,080	3,030	1,910	1,350	2,170	1,680	57.38%	42.62%	45.85%	54.15%
Dibrugarh	1,042,457	4,530	0.43%	2,540	1,990	1,550	850	1,490	640	56.07%	43.93%	52.98%	47.02%
Sibsagar	907,983	1,170	0.13%	680	490	500	400	180	90	58.12%	41.88%	76.92%	23.08%
Jorhat	871,206	1,562	0.18%	892	670	100	60	792	610	57.11%	42.89%	10.24%	89.76%
Golaghat	828,096	1,650	0.20%	950	700	850	630	100	70	57.58%	42.42%	89.70%	10.30%
Karbi Anglong	66,723	5,800	8.69%	3,280	2,520	2,710	2,130	570	390	56.55%	43.45%	83.45%	16.55%
Dima Hasao	150,801	690	0.46%	410	280	200	100	210	180	59.42%	40.58%	43.48%	56.52%
Cachar	1,215,385	34,011	2.80%	17,450	16,561	11,990	11,140	5,460	5,421	51.31%	48.69%	68.01%	31.99%
Karimganj	827,063	28,568	3.45%	14,715	13,853	11,820	11,180	2,895	2,673	51.51%	48.49%	80.51%	19.49%
Hailakandi	449,048	6,086	1.36%	3,126	2,960	1,933	1,660	1,193	1,300	51.36%	48.64%	59.04%	40.96%
Assam	21,818,322	288,109	1.32%	156,095	132,014	114,070	95,624	42,825	35,590	54.18%	45.82%	72.78%	27.22%

Source: 1991 Indian Census

**Table A4. 2: Migrants from Bangladesh by Birth in Assam's Districts**

Districts	Population			Migrant Population Distribution									
	Total	Migrant	Migrant %	Male	Female	Rural		Urban		Percentage			
						Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Rural	Urban
Kokrajhar	905,764	8,183	0.90%	4,395	3,788	3,000	2,515	1,395	1,273	53.71%	46.29%	67.40%	32.60%
Dhubri	1,637,344	7,320	0.45%	3,715	3,605	1,756	1,582	1,959	2,023	50.75%	49.25%	45.60%	54.40%
Goalpara	822,035	7,222	0.88%	3,638	3,584	3,258	3,205	380	379	50.37%	49.63%	89.49%	10.51%
Bongaigaon	904,835	12,155	1.34%	6,552	5,603	4,695	4,081	1,857	1,522	53.90%	46.10%	72.20%	27.80%
Barpeta	1,647,201	8,758	0.53%	4,549	4,209	3,059	2,770	1,490	1,439	51.94%	48.06%	66.56%	33.44%
Kamrup	2,552,324	12,261	0.48%	6,668	5,593	3,391	2,862	3,277	2,731	54.38%	45.62%	51.00%	49.00%
Nalbari	1,148,824	4,278	0.37%	2,363	1,915	2,343	1,901	20	14	55.24%	44.76%	99.21%	0.79%
Darrang	1,504,320	8,349	0.56%	4,504	3,845	3,537	3,011	967	834	53.95%	46.05%	78.43%	21.57%
Marigaon	776,256	3,561	0.46%	1,927	1,634	1,744	1,472	183	162	54.11%	45.89%	90.31%	9.69%
Nagaon	2,314,629	24,258	1.05%	12,899	11,359	8,907	7,677	3,992	3,682	53.17%	46.83%	68.37%	31.63%
Sonitpur	1,681,513	8,595	0.51%	4,685	3,910	3,498	2,873	1,187	1,037	54.51%	45.49%	74.12%	25.88%
Lakhimpur	889,010	2,064	0.23%	1,159	905	976	780	183	125	56.15%	43.85%	85.08%	14.92%
Dhemaji	571,944	2,184	0.38%	1,227	957	1,044	818	183	139	56.18%	43.82%	85.26%	14.74%
Tinsukia	1,150,062	4,415	0.38%	2,381	2,034	848	672	1,533	1,362	53.93%	46.07%	34.43%	65.57%
Dibrugarh	1,185,072	2,185	0.18%	1,141	1,044	435	361	706	683	52.22%	47.78%	36.43%	63.57%
Sibsagar	1,051,736	622	0.06%	343	279	248	223	95	56	55.14%	44.86%	75.72%	24.28%
Jorhat	999,221	854	0.09%	463	391	38	25	425	366	54.22%	45.78%	7.38%	92.62%
Golaghat	946,279	979	0.10%	529	450	260	219	269	231	54.03%	45.97%	48.93%	51.07%
Karbi Anglong	813,311	3,504	0.43%	1,963	1,541	1,733	1,382	230	159	56.02%	43.98%	88.90%	11.10%
Dima Hasao	188,079	444	0.24%	262	182	105	73	157	109	59.01%	40.99%	40.09%	59.91%
Cachar	1,444,921	22,868	1.58%	12,083	10,785	7,750	6,724	4,333	4,061	52.84%	47.16%	63.29%	36.71%
Karimganj	1,007,976	15,964	1.58%	8,345	7,619	6,689	6,040	1,656	1,579	52.27%	47.73%	79.74%	20.26%
Hailakandi	542,872	3,121	0.57%	1,531	1,590	903	860	628	730	49.05%	50.95%	56.49%	43.51%
Assam	26,685,528	164,144	0.62%	87,322	76,822	60,217	52,126	27,105	24,696	53.20%	46.80%	68.44%	31.56%

Source: 2001 Indian Census

**Table A4. 3: Field Survey Location and Number of Respondents**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Assamerlga	4
Beguntoli	4
Baladoba	12
Bhogdahar	12
Barpeta Road	2
Bamundongra	4
Bolowa	1
Chasra	1
Chalakura Part 1V	5
Chalakura River Block	7
Construction Site , Guwahati	6
Cycle Factory	1
Dhubri Market	7
Dhubri Bidyapara	4
Dhubri Balurchar	2
Dhubri Adabari	1
Dhubri Shantinagar	5
Duthnath Hill	5
Gauripur	1
Geetanagar	4
Golakganj	9
Hatsigimari	1
Jhakjhak	3
Jhaudanga	1
Kakirpara	3
Kalapani	1
Kalarhat	7
Katiarlga	8
Kukurmara	1
Khandakarpara	2
Lakhimari	5
Mahendraganj	4
Mankachar	9
Matifata	8
Mulhakhuwa	5
Nagarjhar	1
Narangi Tiniali	7
Nowghat	6
Pandu	2
Porarchar	8
Satragonara	1
Sapatgram	2
Sialtari	2
Sukhchar	6
Railway Colony, Guwahati	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>

Source: Assam Migration Survey, 2009-2012

**Table A4. 4: Muslim Population Growth compared to Population Growth for Other Religious Communities, 1971-2001**

Districts	2001		1991		1971		Muslim Pop Growth (Percent)			Other Pop Growth (Percent)			All Pop (Percent)
	Muslim Pop	Other Pop	Muslim pop	Other pop	Muslim pop	Other Pop	1971-91	1991-01	1971-01	1971-91	1991-01	1971-01	1971-01
Dhubri	1,216,455	420,112	938,789	393,686	548,582	297,828	71.1	29.6	121.8	32.2	6.7	41.1	93.4
Kokrajhar	184,441	720,784	154,801	645,858	77,081	380,473	100.8	19.2	139.3	69.8	11.6	89.4	97.8
Bongaigaon	348,573	555,916	264,393	538,130	136,208	354,265	94.1	31.8	155.9	51.9	3.3	56.9	84.4
Goalpara	441,516	379,539	335,275	332,863	180,033	253,483	86.2	31.7	145.2	31.4	14.0	49.7	89.4
Barpeta	977,943	668,475	776,974	608,685	471,350	497,537	64.8	25.9	107.5	22.3	9.8	34.4	69.9
Nalbari	253,842	894,167	202,653	813,737	105,121	575,783	92.8	25.3	141.5	41.3	9.9	55.3	68.6
Kamrup	625,002	1,895,813	467,544	1,532,477	247,404	959,496	89.0	33.7	152.6	59.7	23.7	97.6	108.9
Darrang	534,658	969,117	415,323	883,537	199,579	634,995	108.1	28.7	167.9	39.1	9.7	52.6	80.2
Sonitpur	268,078	1,409,794	189,859	1,234,428	82,261	824,148	130.8	41.2	225.9	49.8	14.2	71.1	85.1
Lakhimpur	143,505	741,738	109,010	642,507	52,311	428,527	108.4	31.6	174.3	49.9	15.4	73.1	84.1
Dhemaji	10,533	556,714	7,114	471,696	1,348	229,414	427.7	48.1	681.4	105.6	18.0	142.7	145.8
Morigaon	369,398	406,522	289,835	349,847	171,075	252,826	69.4	27.5	115.9	38.8	16.2	60.8	83.0
Nagaon	1,180,267	1,133,186	893,322	999,849	491,079	760,557	81.9	32.1	140.3	31.5	13.3	49.0	84.8
Golaghat	74,808	870,236	58,859	769,237	27,070	496,637	117.4	27.1	176.4	54.9	13.1	75.2	80.5
Jorhat	47,658	951,090	37,651	833,555	25,433	629,118	48.0	26.6	87.4	32.5	14.1	51.2	52.6
Sibsagar	85,761	962,044	69,260	838,723	43,557	610,779	59.0	23.8	96.9	37.3	14.7	57.5	60.1
Dibrugarh	53,306	1,128,585	46,814	995,643	27,701	728,908	69.0	13.9	92.4	36.6	13.4	54.8	56.2
Tinsukia	40,000	1,108,518	30,095	932,203	15,970	638,540	88.5	32.9	150.5	46.0	18.9	73.6	75.5
Karbi Anlong	18,091	794,884	10,421	652,302	4,929	374,381	111.4	73.6	267.0	74.2	21.9	112.3	114.3
Dima Hasao	4,662	182,767	3,340	147,461	655	75,392	409.9	39.6	611.8	95.6	23.9	142.4	146.5
Karimganj	527,214	480,431	406,706	420,357	257,523	324,585	57.9	29.6	104.7	29.5	14.3	48.0	73.1
Hailakandi	312,849	229,295	246,016	203,033	158,149	149,546	55.6	27.2	97.8	35.8	12.9	53.3	76.2
Cachar	522,051	920,822	419,150	796,235	267,708	555,807	56.6	24.6	95.0	43.3	15.7	65.7	75.2
Assam	8,240,611	18,380,549	6,373,204	16,036,049	3,592,126	11,033,026	77.4	29.3	129.4	45.4	14.6	66.6	82.0

**Table A4. 5: Migrant Population\* from Pakistan Classified by Place of Birth in Assam, 1971**

Birth Place	Total Population			Rural			Urban		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Pakistan	903,429	484,850	418,579	711,466	377,419	334,047	191,963	107,431	84,532

Source: Census of India Migration Tables (Assam), D-1 series. Above figures also include persons from West Pakistan as both East and West Pakistan were parts of the same country at that time, and hence, in the Census Report they were classified as one country.

**Table A4. 6: Duration of Residence in the Place of Enumeration, 1971**

Type	Total Migrants			Less than 1 yr		1-4 yrs		5-9 yrs		10-19 yrs		20+ yrs		Period not stated	
	Person	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Rural	624,580	316,680	307,900	17,110	14,930	48,910	52,290	56,440	65,080	60,870	62,730	108,680	89,180	24,670	23,690
Urban	139,570	78,030	61,540	1,600	1,270	7,315	6,580	10,735	9,370	16,170	15,810	40,075	26,335	2,135	2,175

Source: Census of India 1971, Migration Tables, D-2 series

**Table A4. 7: Variances in Estimates of Migrant Number by Different Sources**

#	Source	Remarks
1	Border Security Force, India	According to the Border Security Force of India there are about seven million illegal nationals of Bangladesh origin today and they are concentrated in Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Nagaon, Kamrup, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts of Assam (Commanding Officer, BSF, 2009). Among the illegal settlers, 85% are Muslims and the rest are Hindus and others.
2	All Assam Student Union	The All Assam Student Union and other organizations behind the anti-foreigners movement in the state had put the figure to be as high as 4.5 to 5 million in mid-1980s (Hussain, 2004).
3	Sanjoy Hazarika	According to Hazarika (2000), no less than one-third of Assam's 22.38 million populations are migrants from Bangladesh and their descendants, and about 10-14 million Bangladesh national migrants were settled elsewhere in India (Hazarika, 2000). A study from the Institute of Development Studies, Dhaka points out that about 4.65 to 5 million migrated from Bangladesh between 1961 to 1974 (Hazarika, 1994).
4	Intelligence Bureau, Govt. of India	Indian home Ministry's Intelligence Bureau sources place Assam's unauthorized migrant population from Bangladesh at about four million (Saikia, 2002).
5	Assam State Legislature and Indian Parliament.	Hiteswar Saikia, a former Chief Minister of Assam, stated on the floor of the Legislative Assembly of Assam that about 3 million Bangladesh nationals had illegally entered Eastern India state of Assam (Saikia, 1987), but due to political pressure he had to withdraw this statement later (Sinha, 1998). At the federal level, the Union Home Minister, Indrajit Gupta told the Indian Parliament on May 6, 1997 that about 10 million illegal Bangladeshi migrants had made India their "quintessential home" and among them 4 million are in Assam (Chatterjee, 2009). On July 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2004, in a written reply to a question in the parliament the former Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Sriprakash Jaiswal stated that as of December 31, 2001, there were 12,053,950 illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators in India and their number within Assam were 5 million; that is, Assam alone had 42% of the total number of illegal infiltrators. According to a report in the Sentinel on August 24, 2010, local English daily, this number in Assam had gone up to 6 million by 2010.  It is obvious that the government's own figures are inconsistent and they appear to be changing depending on who was in power at the time.
6	American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University and University of Toronto	A study done by the American Academy of Arts and Science, Harvard and the University of Toronto showed that out of the total inhabitants counted in Assam, one third is immigrants from Bangladesh. According to this team, 20 million Bangladesh nationals are present in India out of which 2 million came in 1971 (Hazarika, 2000).

**Table A4. 8: Occupations of Respondents in Assam***(Some cited more than one occupation)*

<b>Occupation Types</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Self Employed</b>	
Farming	53
Agricultural laborer	2
Laborer	15
Fisherman	11
Casual work (Rickshaw or pushcart puller, maid, shopkeeper etc.)	9
<b>Business Ownership</b>	
<b>Agriculture Related Business</b>	
Seasonal Fruit Business	1
Rice Business	16
Grocery Store	7
Milk Business	3
Rice Mill	2
Betel-nut Shop	5
Vegetable Seller	1
Poultry Business	3
Flower Shop	1
<b>Food Business</b>	
Tea Shop	2
Sweetmeat Shop	2
Restaurant	1
Snack Making Business	1
Cashew Making Business	1
<b>Mechanical</b>	
Radio Shop	1
Bicycle Repair Shop	1
Hardware Store	2
Goldsmith	1
Cycle Belt	1
Pottery Business	2
<b>Other Businesses</b>	
Pharmacy	1
Government Supplier	1
Jute Craft	1
Boat Renting	1
Broker	1
Rickshaw Owner	1
Stationery Store	3
Cloth Business	3
<b>Not Stated</b>	1
<b>Others</b>	
Employee	2
Unemployed (beggar, housewife, pensioner, student etc.)	20
Not Stated	1

Source: Assam Migration Survey, 2009-12

**Table A4. 9: List of Bomb Explosions in Assam during 2009-2012**

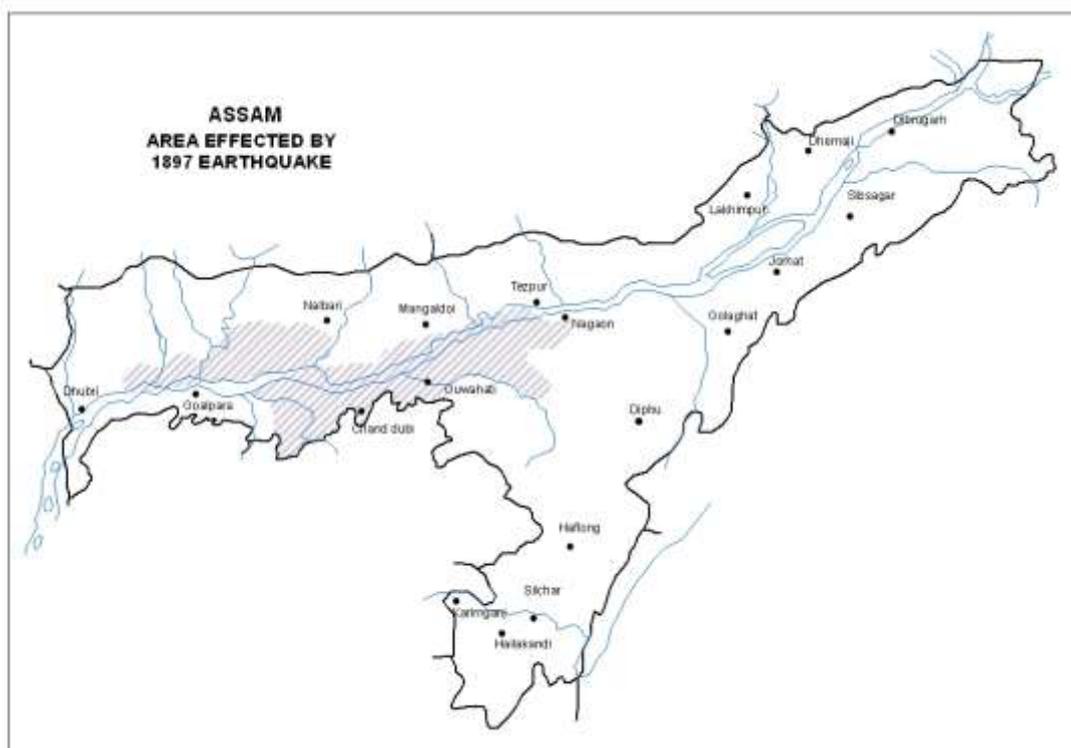
#	Month Year	Districts Affected	Outfit Responsible	Killed	Injured
1	January 2012	Tinsukia, Dima Hasao	ULFA-ATF, NS	0	3
2	February 2012	Guwahati	ULFA-ATF	0	2
3	March 2012	Hailakandi, Sivasagar, Kokrajhar, Tinsukia, Dima Hasao	NS, ULFA-ATF, HTF	0	4
4	April 2012	Tinsukia, Dima Haso, Jorhat, Sivasagar	ULFA-ATF, HTF,	0	0
5	May 2012	Nagaon, Tinsukia,	ULFA-ATF, NS	1	0
6	July 2012	Goalpara	ULFA-ATF	1	6
7	August 2012	Goalpara, Baksa, Dhubri	ULFA-ATF, NS,	0	3
8	September 2012	Tinsukia, Guwahati, Bongaigaon, Golaghat, Sivasagar, Dima Hasao	ULFA-ATF, NS	3	41
9	October 2012	Dima Hasao	NS	0	0
10	November 2012	Dima Hasao	NSCN-IM	1	6
11	January 2011	North Cachar Hills District	NS	0	0
12	March 2011	Dima Hasao, Guwahati	NS, ULFA	0	5
13	July 2011	Kamrup	APA	0	100
14	August 2011	Goalpara	ULFA-ATF	0	0
15	September 2011	Nalbari	ULFA-ATF	0	0
16	October 2011	North Lakhimpur, Cachar, Dima Hasao	NS, HTF	0	2
17	November 2011	Dima Hasao, Sivasagar	HTF, ULFA-ATF	2	0
18	January 2010	Kokrajhar, Sibsagar, Udalguri, Chirang, Dhemaji, Golaghat	NS, NDFB	2	14
19	March 2010	Baksa, Sonitpur, Udalguri	ULFA, NS, NDFB	0	2
20	April 2010	North Cachar Hills	NS	0	0
21	June 2010	North Cachar Hills	NS	0	0
22	July 2010	Kokrajhar, Sonitpur, Udalguri, Goalpara	NS, NDFB, ULFA	6	56
23	August 2010	North Cachar Hills	Hills Tiger Force	0	1
24	September 2010	Udalguri	NDFB	0	2
25	October 2010	Dhubri, Dima Hasao	NS, Unspecified	0	0
26	January 2009	Guwahati, North Cachar Hills	ULFA, BW	5	50
27	March 2009	Karbi Anglong, Sonitpur, Kamrup	NS, ULFA, KLNLF	1	20
28	April 2009	Dhubri, Karbi Anglong, Kamrup	ULFA, NS, KLNLF	11	64
29	May 2009	Karbi Anglong, North Cachar Hills	NS, BW	0	2
30	July 2009	Tinsukia, Sonitpur	NS	2	0
31	November 2009	Nalbari	ULFA	8	53
32	December 2009	Bongaigaon, Sonitpur	NS, NDFB	2	36

Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal at:

[http://www.satp.org/satporqtp/countries/india/states/assam/data\\_sheets/blast](http://www.satp.org/satporqtp/countries/india/states/assam/data_sheets/blast)

**Abbreviations for Insurgency Linked Outfits:** **NDFB**=National Democratic Front of Bodoland, **KLNLF**=Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front, **ULFA**=United Liberation Front of Assam, **BW**=Black Widow, **APA**=Adivasi People's Army, **HTF**=Hill Tiger Force, **ULFA-ATF**=United Liberation Front of Assam-Anti Talk Factions, **NSCN**=National Socialist Council of Nagaland and **NS**= Not Specified

**Figure A4. 1: Areas in Assam Affected by 1897 Earthquake**



Source: Taher (2011)

## Appendix 5: Field Survey Questionnaires for Data Collection and Letter of Introduction

### Appendix 5.1: Survey Questionnaire for Data Collection for PhD Research on Migration from Bangladesh to Assam, India

The questionnaire is comprised of two parts: Part A dealt with general questions related to migrants and migration process whereas Part B was designed to specifically focus on climate and environment-specific questions. Some additional follow up and open-ended questions were asked depending on the answer provided for further clarification or additional data. If and when they occurred, these were to be recorded separately.

#### Part A: General Questions

1. Place (District)
  - Dhubri
  - Barpeta
  - Goalpara
  - Kamrup
  - Nagaon
  - Other
2. Village Name \_\_\_\_\_
3. Age \_\_\_\_\_ Years
4. Male  Female
5. Single  If Single, Go to Q. 7 Family
6. Family Makeup: Husband  Wife  No. of Male Children \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Female children \_\_\_\_\_  
 Parents – Father  Mother   
 Extended Family, if any – Brother  Sister  Parents-in-law
7. Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_
8. Place of last residence \_\_\_\_\_
9. Did you move directly from your birthplace in Bangladesh to India?
  - i. Yes , if Yes, go to Q.12
  - ii. No
10. If you first moved to a city or another place within Bangladesh, and then to India, name of the city or place: \_\_\_\_\_
11. How many times did you move within Bangladesh before coming to India? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Did you own land in Bangladesh? Yes  No 
  - a) If yes, how much in area? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) Was it agricultural land or residential land? \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) What did you do with the land in Bangladesh?
    - sold it
    - still owns it but entrusted someone on earning sharing basis
    - possessed by someone else after you moved
    - Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
13. Education level
  - no formal education
  - formal education, up to Primary level or below Primary level
  - attended school but not completed (below High School Level)
  - high school completed
  - tertiary education (specify the highest level) \_\_\_\_\_
14. Your occupation in Bangladesh
  - unemployed
  - self employed
  - employed by Government  Private  Permanent  Casual  Others
  - business, specify type of business \_\_\_\_\_
    - still owns the business but run by someone else

- sold it
  - lost it due to hardship or poor sale
  - lost it due to competition
  - forced out through harassment
  - lost for other reasons, (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
15. (a) Were any other members of your family helping to supplement the family income in Bangladesh? Yes  No
- (b) If yes, who and how? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Your current occupation in India
- unemployed
  - self-employed (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  - employed by Government  Private  Permanent  Casual
  - Farming
  - Others (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  - business, specify type of business \_\_\_\_\_
17. (a) Were you by any chance abused in Bangladesh?
- Yes, go to (b)
  - No
- (b) Type of abuse (Check all that apply to you and provide details, if any)
- Not getting land for cultivation from landowner every year
  - Asking you to leave your place of residence
  - Getting life threatening threats
  - Insulted
  - Being beaten
  - Being fired from a job for no reason
  - Grabbing of land by force
  - Demand for money
  - Forced to marry someone without your consent
  - Forced to borrow money at higher interest rate
  - Pay money to middleman ("Dallal" or "Dada")
  - Others (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
18. Other hardship that prompted you to leave Bangladesh (check all that apply)
- Increased frequency of floods
  - Low crop yield due to decreasing land fertility
  - Cyclones
  - Drought
  - Unpredictable changes in weather and rainfall
  - Erosion
  - Increased salinity
  - Land does not support livestock-
  - Others (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
19. Reason(s) why you wanted to come to Assam (check all that apply)
- a) Because other people from Bangladesh settled here
  - b) Relative already settled here
  - c) Better opportunity for business
  - d) More work for daily laborers
  - e) Facilities for agricultural workers
  - f) Opportunities for fisherman
  - g) Easily available land to settle
  - h) Vast amount of unoccupied land
  - i) Facilities for cultivating and then selling fruits and vegetables
  - j) Rearing opportunities for livestock (Goat, cow, duck, hen)

- k) Dairy farming
- l) Schooling in Bengali medium available
- m) Presence of relatives
- n) Government support
- o) Opportunity for business
- p) Assam's close proximity to Bangladesh
- q) Other Reasons (Specify): \_\_\_\_\_
20. Where did you first settle when you came to Assam? \_\_\_\_\_
21. Did you move from the first settlement after you came to Assam?
- Yes, go to next question Q22
- No, go to Q23
- 22 a) How many times did you move? \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Where did you move to? \_\_\_\_\_
23. Why did you settle in this (current) place? \_\_\_\_\_
24. What is your current occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
25. What was your initial occupation when you first came to Assam? \_\_\_\_\_
26. a) How long did it take to get your first job or work in Assam? \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Please tell me about your any noteworthy experiences in your job search.
- c) Were you offered a reasonable salary commensurate with your experience?
27. Are your family members helping you to supplement your income?
- If yes who? \_\_\_\_\_
- What type of the work do they do? \_\_\_\_\_
28. Do you own any properties in Assam, like (check all that apply)
- a. House
- b. Business , specify \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Agricultural land
- d. Personal mode of transport  Specify Car  Motor Bike  Bicycle
- e. Other, specify \_\_\_\_\_
29. Did you settle in Assam on your own?
- Yes , go to Q31
- No , go to next question
30. If not, who helped you to settle?
- Family member
- Friends
- Relatives
- Middle-man (agent)
- Government
- NGOs
- Political parties
- Volunteers
- Others, specify \_\_\_\_\_
31. When you came, did you come alone or with your family members?
- With whom did you come? \_\_\_\_\_
32. What in your opinion the future holds for you and your children in Assam? (Check all that apply)
- generally optimistic about the future -- an expectation of better life than in Bangladesh
- acceptance by indigenous community will remain a challenge
- acceptance by the indigenous community will improve with time
- life will be same as in Bangladesh in terms of material aspects but more secure
- children will have a better future
- Other opinions, please specify
33. On your children's life in Assam (check all that apply)
- a) Medium of instruction at the school of your children

- Assamese
- Bengali
- English
- School type?     Public             Private             Madrassa

b) Will you like your children identify themselves as Assamese or Bengali?

- Yes, because \_\_\_\_\_
- No, because \_\_\_\_\_

c) Do you take part in the local cultural activities of Assam?

- Yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_
- No, because \_\_\_\_\_

d) Can you speak and write Assamese?

- Yes, speak and write             fluent    not too fluent
- Yes, speak only                     fluent    not too fluent
- No, because
  - difficult to learn
  - little day-to-day contact with Assamese community

e) Any of your children married to Assamese?    Yes     No

If yes, how was the marriage accepted by

You \_\_\_\_\_  
Assamese family \_\_\_\_\_

34. Looking back, was moving to Assam a correct decision on your part?

- yes, because \_\_\_\_\_
- no, because \_\_\_\_\_

35. On reflection, which are the factors amongst the following that prompted you to move from Bangladesh? Check all that apply, and if possible, rank them, 1 (one) being the most important factor

- Financial gain
- Social acceptance and freedom
- Educational opportunity for children
- Insecurity in Bangladesh
- Lack of equity in social and political life
- India is a secular democracy and stable
- India is a bigger economy and more stable
- Partition of India
- Wars of 1965 and 1971
- Freedom to practice own religion
- Famine
- Frequent floods
- Coastal areas affected by tidal surges more often
- Depleting natural resources
- Livestock and fishery not as productive and economic
- Degradation of fertile land due to flood , dams and soil erosion
- Involvement in any untoward incident
- Health issues; e.g., disease, arsenic poisoning etc., specify \_\_\_\_\_
- Others (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

36. Do you still have links with Bangladesh in any of the following ways? (Check all that apply)

- Close family members and relative still in Bangladesh
- Still hold ancestral properties
- Visits to Bangladesh
- Send remittances for, (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Share or partnership in business
- Trying to get the remaining members across to India
- Others (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

37. How long have you been in Assam? \_\_\_\_\_ Years
38. Have you ever considered migrating back to Bangladesh again?
- Yes, because \_\_\_\_\_
  - No, go to Q39
39. Do you wish to move again from this place to another within India?
- Yes to \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_
  - No
40. Do you have all the documents required as proof of residency?
- Yes
  - No
  - Some, Specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Part B: Climate and Environment Specific Questions**

*[Additional Questionnaire for those who cite or apparently identify likely climate change factors, such as increased frequency of natural calamities like floods, tidal surges etc. or man-made factors (Farakka Barrage, arsenic poisoning). Some of responses were to be verified further with independent and government sources and records as migrants may not have the specific or confirmed data in answers to certain questions.]*

1. Which of the following was the most severe climatic hazard that prompted you to move from Bangladesh?

- Flood
- Drought
- Cyclone
- Sea-level rise
- Tidal surge and Salinity ingress
- Construction of Farakka Barrage
- Arsenic poisoning
- Other, Specify \_\_\_\_\_

2. How many times were you affected by any of the above? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Which of the following were affected?

- Injured/sick/ loss of life Yes  No  how many times?
- Damage to house Yes  No  how many times?
- Damage to property Yes  No  how many times?
- Destruction of agricultural crops Yes  No  how many times?
- Livestock affected (cattle, poultry) Yes  No  how many times?
- Water-source damage (wells and ponds) Yes  No  how many times?
- Facilities for fishing Yes  No  how many times?
- Navigation facilities Yes  No  how many times?
- Agricultural land destroyed Yes  No  how many times?
- Land lost due to erosion Yes  No  how many times?
- Land lost due to inundation Yes  No  how many times?
- Destruction of roads and bridges Yes  No  how many times?
- Affected by diseases Yes  No  how many times?
- Plantation Trees uprooted by cyclone Yes  No  how many times?
- Plantation trees dying for drought Yes  No  how many times?
- Others (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. How long did it last? \_\_\_\_\_ days/weeks

5. Did you get any advance warning?  Yes  No. If Yes, how many days in advance? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Did you make any preparation beforehand? If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

7. In your opinion, which year do you think was the most severe? \_\_\_\_\_

8. How did you cope with it?

9. Did you receive any help from the government?

10. Did natural calamities or environmental impact affect your decision to migrate?

a) Where was your livestock kept during calamities?

b) Did they survive?

## Appendix 5.2: Letter of Introduction from Prof. Graeme Hugo, Principal Supervisor

23 April 2009	 THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE AUSTRALIA
	DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHICAL & ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES FACULTY OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES
	PROFESSOR GRAEME HUGO DIRECTOR, NATIONAL KEY CENTRE FOR SOCIAL APPLICATIONS OF GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS LEVEL 8, NAPIER BUILDING UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE SA 5005 AUSTRALIA TELEPHONE +61 8 8303 3996/8303 3900 FACSIMILE +61 8 8303 3772/8303 3498 MOBILE 0415 205 161 graeme.hugo@adelaide.edu.au CRICOS Provider Number 00123M
<b>TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN</b>	
<p>This letter is to introduce <b>Ms. Madhumita Sarma</b>. Ms. Sarma is a student at the University of Adelaide in Australia who is undertaking research in India and Bangladesh in the preparation of her PhD thesis. She is doing this work under my supervision. I would greatly appreciate any help or assistance you can give her in her research. I can totally assure you that all information she collects will be considered confidential. No individual information or details will be presented in her thesis. She will depersonalise all information and data collected will be aggregated so no individuals will be identifiable. I would be very happy to respond to any questions you have about her work.</p>	
<p>Telephone: 61-8-83035646 Email: <a href="mailto:graeme.hugo@adelaide.edu.au">graeme.hugo@adelaide.edu.au</a> Fax: 61-8-83034341</p>	
<p>Once again many thanks for your help and assistance.</p>	
<p>Yours sincerely,</p>	
<p>Graeme Hugo Professor of Geography</p>	