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Loitongbam, Bishwanjit Singh

University of International Business and Economics, Beijing

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Influx of Immigrants in the North Eastern States of India: Exodus or Employment Evidence from Manipur

Bishwanjit Singh, Loitongbam^a

Abstract: As far as the pattern of migration movement in Manipur is concerned, the quantum of migration within other occupational categories is much greater than the quantum of migration within the professional categories. This paper examines why the immigrants do not move to industrialized and metropolitan cities but rather to North-East (NE) States of India. The paper suggests that, though it is a mixture of economy, social and political motives, the main reason for their stay in Manipur is politically motivated rather than looking for employment. Otherwise they will move to those industrialized and metropolitan cities as the opportunities in those cities are far bigger than in NES. In other words, the reason behind the unabated influx of immigrant population in NE states seems that the socio-political reasons far outweigh the economic reasons. The paper identifies three possible threats due to unabated influx of immigration to this region. The first and foremost threat is the possibility of turning North East States of India into a ‘Hindu Territory’ annihilating the peaceful coexistence of multi-cultural diversity. The second threat is the indigenes losing their lands and economy. The third and final threat is politicking migrant population. Local politicians or political parties used them as a tool to gain electoral support for themselves or their political parties but ultimately they overshadowed the local leaders as is seen in Assam.

Keywords: Immigrant, North Eastern States, Manipur

^a Name: Bishwanjit Singh, Loitongbam, PhD
Institution: University of International Business and Economics (UIBE), Beijing.
Mailing Address: Keishamthong Maning Longjam Leikai, Imphal West, Manipur, India.
Postal Code: 795001; Email: lbishanjit@yahoo.com / bishanjit99@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The debate over immigration that is a roiling political discourse in the U.S. and Europe recently, has for long shaped the politics of North-Eastern States (NES), particularly Assam¹. It hints that, in the near future, influx of immigrant population will change the ethnic and religious character of this region, thereby threatening the rights of indigenous people. It is, thus, important to examine the reasons and effects of migration movement to our economy and survival. As far as factors affecting international migration are concerned, it is believed that structural factors like political changes, economic variables, social networks, etc. play an important role. Why do the immigrants not move to industrialized and metropolitan cities like Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, etc. but choose the North-East (NE) States of India? This is the main thrust of this paper. It is a theoretical paper which tries to examine whether political and social factors play a more significant role than economic factors in the migration movement in the North Eastern States (NES) of India. Manipur constitutes a fine laboratory for examining the inter-regional interplay of demographic process and the space-economy due to the migration movement. She becomes one of the destination hubs next to Assam and Tripura for migrants and immigrants. She also shares a 398 km long porous international boundary with Myanmar. It is very easy for illegal immigrant to come to Manipur via the border towns and villages or via Cachar or Mao. Influx of migrant and immigrant is so much significant in both political and business that local business hub of Imphal (i.e. Khwairamband Market) is almost controlled by mainland migrants such as Marwaris, Punjabis and Telis (Bhojpuris) and even a non-indigenous person won the Jiribam Assembly Constituency seat held in 8th March 2017 in the 12th Manipur Legislative Assembly, 2017.

¹ The Wall Street Journal, 8th April, 2016, "Why Immigration Is a Major Issue in India's Assam State Elections" <https://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2016/04/08/why-immigration-is-a-major-issue-in-indias-assam-state-elections/>

Other NES which bears serious threat to her survival are Assam and Tripura. Assam is the pioneer in fighting against immigrant people. In the late 1970s, the fraught ethnic and religious environment led to a six-year long student movement that demanded a solution to the state's immigration problem and a special status for Assamese-origin people. It was popularly known as 'the Assam Agitation'. That agitation alarmed the rest of the region. As a result of it, the Assam Accord was signed in 1985 under which it was agreed to deport all those who had entered India illegally after March 25, 1971. Ironically even this accord could not stop illegal immigrants from entering Assam. According to a white paper released by the Assam government, the population of Muslims in the State grew from 12% in 1871 to 25% in 1951 and further increased to more than 34% in 2011 of her population. Tripura is another NES where indigenous people has become a minority and has been sidelined in every walk of life. Out of 60 State Assembly seat, only 20 seats (which are reserved for Schedule Tribe) can be won by indigenous people. Have it not been reserved for Schedule Tribe (ST), it could not be won by Tripuri people. Illegal Bangladeshi immigrant took the center stage.

People do not respond mechanistically to external conditions and the influence of structure on migration behavior is often mediated by perceptions, intentions and goal-setting (Valerie, et al., 1997). International migration and ethnic (cultural) identity have also determined migration movement. Identity refers to how 'self' is defined and categorized in relation to other people and it can occur at different levels (Turner et al. 1987). Identity with reference to a group involves a sense of belonging to the group based on characteristics shared by its members. Fundamental to group identity is the division of people into 'Us' and 'Other'. When group identity is defined in terms of ethnic origin, it is referred to as 'ethnic identity'. People having multiple identities have more tendencies to move where they are at any particular moment and who they are with. A shift in identity enables them to move freely from one place to another through the assimilation of

elements of the nation or culture of the destination areas. How does it work? Immigrants are carrying their identity and their cultural baggage with them to their chosen destinations and in so doing may extend the boundaries of particular cultures.

Inequality, intergroup conflicts and competition can enhance group identity (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Brass (1991) suggests that the identity of an ethnic group is amenable to being manipulated by elites who are in competition. By transforming cultural attributes into political symbols, elites seek to establish a unique identity for their group which in turn serves the purpose of mobilizing the group against rivals. Such manipulation can be seen as a means of control by elites in order to secure their own power and interests. As Johnston et al. (1988) suggest, nationalism is an ideological strategy through which those in control of the state apparatus seek to win consensus support for policies whose benefits are unequally distributed. This is what the Hon'ble PM of India, Mr. Modi, and his party is doing all over the country. The 'politics of identity' (Keith and Pile 1993) thus described, highlights the fact that identity often has to be contested.

Ethnic identity is shaped by the places where people have lived, particularly the places where they have spent the early years of their life. Places provide the milieu where people learn who and what they are and how to act. A place is the location plus everything that occupies that location and is also characterized by its particular history, its cultural practices, and its social and power relationships. All these characteristics can be articulated in people's construction of their own identity.

On this above background, the paper is arranged as: Section II discusses the reasons for the migration movement from economic, political and social perspectives and the possible future

threat to the survival and economy of the indigenous people and Section III articulates the inferences drawn.

2. Reason for Migration and Future Threat to Manipur

2.1. Migration from Economic Perspective

Immigration and the movement of migrant workers has now become an international phenomenon. Does this immigration movement benefit or hinder the economy of North East of India? It can be examined in both short term and long term perspective. In the short run, this immigration movement increases the labor force, aggregate demand, real GDP growth, and labor market flexibility of the foreign country (i.e. NE States in our case). Immigrants are more likely to be of working age which is 20-30 years and those are looking for jobs. They don't come along and they bring dependants. The net immigration leads to an increase in the labor force and increases the potential output capacity of the foreign economy thereby increasing aggregate demand. Immigrants will increase the total spending within the foreign economy. They earn and they spend; they increase both supply of labor and demand for labor. They make wage rates cheaper which increase consumer welfare. All these increase real GDP of the local economy.

Immigrants are generally unskilled and semi-skilled laborer, though there are also skilled laborers. It creates a more flexible labor market. For example, there was a large inflow of workers from the mainland helping to meet the demand for semi-skilled jobs, such as builders and plumbers. Migrant workers and immigrants fighting for their livelihood is ready to take up any kind of unskilled labor jobs or blue-collar jobs or manual labor jobs which the indigenous peoples don't want to do. The indigenous peoples have so much pride that they think such kind of jobs are meant to be done by lower class of people even if they have zero income level. Such mentality makes Manipur a haven for immigrant workers to earn income. In due course of time, they are far better off than the unemployed and voluntary unemployed indigenous people.

Recently some attitudinal changes among indigenous people towards blue-collar jobs have been seen. For example, some of the NGOs like Worker Union Manipur (WUM), Kanglei Economic Development Organization (KEDO), etc. have taken up such kind of jobs, particularly at Khwairamband Market and this gives clear message of living on our feet rather than on knees to the masses. The government has also sought to attract migrants from various regions to meet shortfalls in job vacancies in some public sector jobs, such as engineering, finance, banking, etc. History also proved that it was until Bangladeshi war captives arrived in Manipur that we started adopting the present day method of the rice cultivation and the production of rice increased tremendously thereafter. The short term effects are quite significant and important for the region's economy.

However, the long term effects of the migration on Manipur are what are to be feared. It is directly related to imbalance growth of population, environment degradation, unemployment, and welfare benefits. Rapid increase in the population due to immigration will lead to 'overcrowding' in Manipur which could lead to falling living standards. For example, Manipur could face an acute housing shortage in Imphal city and other cities and towns in the Imphal valley. It will not be prudent to build on increasingly scarce green belt land. It is also very difficult to build more houses because of limited space. Due to constitutional protection, valley people can't own land in hill areas and are reluctant to reside on due to lack of basic amenities and trust. Only 10% of the total area of Manipur which is valley land could not accommodate such kind of unnatural rate of population growth. So, increased population could increase congestion and urban pollution.

When we talk about rural and hill areas, illegal migrants from Myanmar comes to mind. Most the migrants other than Myanmar, though some of them live in Jiribam, directly come to

valley particularly at Imphal city. While migrants from Myanmar first settled in hill areas and then slowly shifted to valley. Since their education level and skills are very low, they are mostly responsible for environment degradation as they are mostly confined to cutting down forest for cultivation, jhum cultivation, selling woods and natural resources to earn income. They have no other options for their livelihood. Their activities accelerated deforestation activities and environment degradation in addition to indigenous people who are also doing the same. The only difference is that they don't care about environment protection and land degradation as sons of the soil did. If their activities make arable land into non-arable land, they don't bother for as they will shift to another place and do the same to the new place. They live a semi-nomadic life unlike indigenous people. It leads to rural pollution as well as environment and land degradation.

Another aspect of immigration is unemployment. Influx of immigrant population can cause unemployment particularly in unskilled and semi-skilled services markets. They bring both increased supply of labor and higher demand for labor. An increase in the labor supply lowers wages. When they arrived in Manipur, at the beginning, it may be difficult for the migrants to find work. So, they are willing to work at any conditions even at much lower wages. Thus they bypass traditional union bargaining for higher wage rates entertained by the local workers. Since businessmen always aim to maximize profits and consumers are looking to lower rates, they opt for immigrant workers as they are cheap, easily handled and relatively well-disciplined. Thus, immigration reduces the wages of natives in competition with immigrants, while increasing profits or the incomes of users of immigrants. As a result of it, they 'take away jobs' from indigenous people in these unskilled and semi-skilled services markets. Another issue felt keenly in Manipur, is the concept that immigrants are more likely to receive welfare benefits. Immigrants can get more welfare benefits than they paid in taxes, mainly because they tended to have more children than native people.

The immigrants arrived in Manipur are mostly confined to Imphal City and they belong to businessmen, semi-skilled or unskilled laborers. They are engaged in several business pursuits such as retailers, plumbers, builders, dealers, running street or established vendors, hawkers, saloons, cobblers, repairing works and so forth. Since the indigenous peoples are reluctant to hold blue-collar jobs as done by those immigrants, this condition makes the migrants enable to occupy a key position in the society. Over time, the migrants thus become professionals and the natives are not in a position either to substitute or to compete with the migrants. Ultimately, migrants grow to be the part and parcel of the Manipuri society. For example, the Chamber of Commerce, Manipur was absolutely controlled by the migrants and their domination over making commercial decision in business sector is quite visible. It is only recently that the Manipur Chamber of Commerce & Industries came into existence, the members of which are mostly indigenes.

2.2. Migration from Political and social perspective

Let's assume that migration is a move to an entirely new place rather than a shifting of residences within a locale. The complementary and substitutability between immigrants and natives in employment, social status and power, need for social support, sense of responsibility and the future of their children, are important when making decision to migrate. The desirability of a location as a migration destination is inevitably influenced by how the place is assessed in terms of attitudes produced in and through it towards people from different cultural backgrounds and access to its opportunities. It has implications for both the production and reproduction of group identity.

For migration movement in NES, it seems political motives and socio-emotional ties outweigh economic aspects of migration. After India got independence in 1947, all the migrated Bengali Muslims till that point were and are made legal citizens of India. Since then illegal

immigration went unabated. Recently BJP leaders say those who arrived in the last two decades before that date should be denied voting rights. But the Centre, despite repeated promises, failed to deport them to their host countries and delayed to take more stringent measures to prevent the unlawful entry of new ones. Because it is all about vote-bank politics and both national and state political parties encourage the infiltration of Bangladeshis for Muslim votes. It is questionable now that why and how does the central government intentionally or unconsciously want to change the characteristics of NES, either through migrating or exercising various means of influence over the socio-political systems of places. The interaction between individuals' construction of the future and how their identities may change after migration, and the kind of strategies they may adopt when their cultural identities are confronted by the change in their social positions after migration would provide a better understanding of this motive.

Let's see how government policies were formulated in order to create a new "Hindu territory" which will unify the NES with the rest of the country. For example, under the Citizenship Act 1955, a person born on or after 26-1-1950, in or outside India can get Indian citizenship if his father is a citizen of India at the time of his birth (Claims & Reputations, pp. 52). During the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971, the then PM of India, Indira Gandhi signed a treaty with the PM of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman allowing 8 to 10 million of refugees mainly Bangladeshi Bengali Hindu which poured into India via NES. Actually they were all settled in this region. It was known as Indira-Mujib Treaty. Recently, a Bill called the 'Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016' was introduced in the Parliament on 15th July 2016. The Bill amends the Citizenship Act, 1955 to make illegal migrants who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, eligible for citizenship. Under this, it will allow all Hindu population settled around the world particularly in neighboring countries to enter India. If we carefully examine the motives behind this move, it might not be

wrong to say that those, such as Hindu, who are allowed entry into India is because of their value in building up the 'core' of the country. It implies that migrant population is used for construction of ethnic identity.

Besides, those who live as a second-class citizen in their host countries become a first-class citizen once they enter into Manipur (or other states of North East). Actually they are even superior to some indigenous people. They feel more comfortable and safe living in this society. Their numbers increase day by day and snatch everything including political power from the clutch of indigenous people. It leads to reduction in natives' status and power resulting from the change in regime and influx of migrant population. Take Tripura as an example. Since identity is a social construction based on status and power, they got the 'identity' they were looking for through migration that was underpinned by access to opportunities, status and power.

In Manipur, the trend of 'construction of group identity' does not end here. Naga political leaders have been trying to encompass other small tribes other than major Kuki-Chin-Mizo Tribes of Manipur by compulsion (or consensus) as Naga. Naga tribes include 19 tribal communities. After the unfortunate incident of Naga-Kuki Conflict (1993-1998), Kuki-Chin-Mizo tribal leaders have realized that rapid increase in population is the only option for their survival and thus influence in political decision making body. As result of it, Naga has increased its number of tribe, whereas Kuki-Chin-Mizoits population. The question is where does this Kuki-Chin-Mizo population come from? Given the fact that natural growth rate of population could not achieve such kind of increase in this speculative time-frame and a mother can't give births 10 children in five years, it is obvious that the external forces play important role in this population politics. Examples of how identities can be changed are found in Assam, Tripura and Manipur. It is very easy, in Manipur, for migrants (including illegal migrants) to get official state

documents such as Aadhar card, Driving License, ST Certificates, ration card, etc. One can get Aadhar card of Manipur by paying a mere Rs.100. It is much easier for illegal Burmese migrant to get a ST certificate from a village chief. Chieftain culture still exists in Kuki-Chin-Mizo society. It is a win-win situation for them. It is aware to all that when someone gets those official state documents, you can't classify them as illegal citizens or migrants by our Constitution.

This interpretation implies that ethnic identity is not merely a neutral description of ethnic group membership but is often a statement of a person's social position and power vis-a-vis members of another group. If so, it will surely annihilate indigenous people on due course of time and thereby killing the peaceful coexistence of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural diversity of India and vibrant democracy in particular. Illegal migrants were reported increasingly to identify themselves as indigenous people such as Manipuri and become absorbed into the dominant culture.

A plurality of group identities can be constructed for instrumental purposes (Bottomley 1979). Ethnic differentiation is not innately inherited but constructed and reproduced through fundamentally political processes. Consequently, alternative 'constructions' of group identity are possible under different circumstances. It is an ongoing process. The immigrants adopted different identities in different contexts, depending on what was deemed appropriate. Instead of being passively assimilated into the dominant culture, the migrant is an active being, who uses his ethnicity expressively and instrumentally conducts himself in ways he sees more appropriate and advantageous in private and public places; knows the distinction between primary and secondary identification and uses the distinction strategically (Chan and Tong, 1993). To the Manipuri citizens of Bangladeshi (or Myanmarese) descent, Bangladeshi (or Myanmarese) was 'primary' whereas Manipuri identity is 'secondary'.

One of the biggest mistakes of Assamese intellectuals is that they were content at the linguistic assimilation of the immigrants. They embraced illegal migrants who accepted Assamese language as their mother tongue as Assamese in the early 1950s. They turned a blind eye to the pressure on land that they cast, as most on the receiving side were the tribesmen. It took a U-turn in the 1970s as A.F. Ghulam Osmani from Barpeta emerged as a leader who stressed on his linguistic identity as Bengali as well as his religious identity. He saw a new contour to the unspoken alliances, where the Bengali Muslims need not pander to the interests of the caste Assamese Hindus. The tacit support of the government made it impossible to make out which Bengali Muslims had migrated prior to 1951 (and hence Indian citizens) from the illegal immigrants who migrated later.

For Manipur, the biggest mistake after King Pamheiba (Garibaniwaz) who had declared 'Ramandi Cult' as the kingdom religion that allowed many people of Aryan and Dravidian origins to settle in Manipur was the abolition of 'Foreigner Permit System' which was used to check the entrance of foreigners in Manipur. Ironically, based on Council Resolution No. 2 of 25-9-47 published in the Manipur State Gazette, Oct'15, 1947, No. 14, pp. 2, Hijam Irabot who was the then President of Manipur Praja Shangkha, was among the committee members who demanded to abolish this System from Manipur. Others were Ningthoujam Binoy Singh, Student Committee and the People of Khwai, Imphal. It is not that our forefathers hadn't seen the future state of our society that unabated influx of migrant population could lead to greater exploitation of the Manipur people. The first Chief Minister of Free Manipur, M.K. Priyabrata in 1947 was against the abolition of this Act and in his order, wrote *the abolition of the System will certainly work in the prejudice of the States interest as it will afford room for the people of Manipur being exploited by the outsiders before Manipur can establish herself* (Manipur State Gazette, Oct'15, 1947, No. 14, pp. 2). Had this permit system not been abolished in 1950 by an order of the then

Chief Commissioner after Manipur's merger with the Union of India, we have not been put in this endangered situation.

2.3. Threats to Indigenous People

The first and foremost threat is the possibility of turning North East States of India into a 'Hindu Territory' annihilating the peaceful coexistence of multi-cultural diversity. PM Narendra Modi openly said that his government will accommodate all the Hindu people including people of Sikhs, Jain, Buddhism, etc. residing in other parts of the world and in neighboring countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, etc. Though he also clarified that the burden will not be shared only by NES but also proportionately distributed to other parts of the country. While campaigning ahead of the 2014 national elections held at Ramnagar, Assam, he said, *"As soon as we come to power at the Centre, detention camps housing Hindu migrants from Bangladesh will be done away with. We have a responsibility toward Hindus who are harassed and suffer(sic suffered) in other countries. Where will they go? India is the only place for them. Our government cannot continue to harass them. We will have to accommodate them here."*²

What does this statement mean to our land and our survival? NES which comprised of 8 states has a total population of 4.58 crores only of which Hindu population accounted for 54% of the total population (Table 1). Hindu population is recorded highest in Tripura (83.4%) and lowest in Mizoram (2.75). Muslim population is the second largest of the total accounting for 25.1% and Christian population accounting for 17.24% is the third and the others occupy a meagre percentage of 3.68 in 2001. Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya are the top three Christian populated states in the region accounting for 87.93%, 87.16% and 74.59% respectively. It shows that the Hindu population has already dominated the region.

² Times of India, Feb 22, 2014, "We must accommodate Hindu Bangladeshi migrants: Modi in Assam" <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/We-must-accommodate-Hindu-Bangladeshi-migrants-Modi-in-Assam/articleshow/30856540.cms>

Table 1: Hindu population in the North East States of India, 2011

State	Persons	Males	Females	Hindu Population	% Hindu pop. of the total
Arunachal Pradesh	1,383,727	713,912	669,815	4,01,876	29.04
Assam	31,205,576	15,939,443	15,266,133	19,180,759	61.47
Manipur	2,855,794	1,438,586	1,417,208	1,181,876	41.39
Meghalaya	29,66,889	1,491,832	1,475,057	342,078	11.53
Mizoram	1,097,206	555,339	541,867	30,136	2.75
Nagaland	1,978,502	1,024,649	953,853	173,054	8.75
Sikkim	610,577	323,070	287,507	352,662	57.76
Tripura	3,673,917	1,874,376	1,799,541	3,063,903	83.40
Total (NES)	45,772,188	23,361,207	22,410,981	24,726,344	54.02
All India	1,210,854,977	623,270,258	587,584,719	966,257,353	79.80

Source: Census of India, 2011

Let's see the number of Hindu population around the neighboring South and South-East Asian countries (Table 2). Out of the top five countries, in absolute terms, four countries (Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Bhutan) are neighbours with NES. It has shared 98% of its boundary with these four countries. It indicates that what Mr. Modi had said can be realized instantly as it is very easy to bring those Hindu people living in these countries in India via NES. The total Hindu population in these four countries is 29,113,345. If all these population has been transferred to this region, then the total Hindu population will become 5.38 crores (i.e. 2.91+2.47 crores) accounting for 92.47% of the total NES Population. This proportion will be far greater than that in the all India Hindu population i.e. 79.8%. It implies that indigenous people will automatically be outnumbered by immigrants without any sharp decrease in natural growth rate of population.

Table 2: Hindu population in the South and South-East Asian Countries

Country	Total Population	Hindu total	Hindu % of population

Bangladesh	170,000,000	13,583,750	0.09
Bhutan	742,737	185,700	0.25
Cambodia	13,995,904	41,988	0.00
Myanmar	47,963,012	893,000	0.02
Nepal	28,901,790	14,450,895	0.81
Thailand	65,068,149	65,000	0.00
Pakistan	196,000,000	3,626,000	1.85
Total	326,671,592	29,220,333	8.94

Source: Census of India, 2011, CIA – The World Factbook &Pew Research Center (2010)

It is true that the burden of the immigrant population will not be shared by the NES alone, as PM Modi promised. It will proportionately be shared and distributed to other parts of the country. Let's consider two cases.

Case I: Given the past experiences, consider only 20% of Nepali Hindu and all the Hindu population from Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar migrated to the NES only.

Case II: Consider only 20% of Nepali Hindu and 60% of the Hindu population from Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar migrated to the NES and the rest to other parts of the country.

On considering the Case I scenario, if 20% of Nepali Hindu and all the Hindu population from Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar migrated to the NES only, then there will be no doubt that NES becomes a Hindu State. Total Hindu population in NES will become 4.23 crores which is 92.37% of the total (Table 3). The migrated population will be 39.35% of the total population. In absolute terms, it will be around 1.76 crores. This migrated population number exceeds the total sum of all the population of the region excluding Assam. Based on 2001 census, the total population of 7 NE states excluding Assam is 1.46 crores. In order to examine the effects of the migration movement on regional demographic pattern, let's classify the 8 NE states into three categories based on population size. Assam is included in the first category as she has the highest population accounting slightly more than 68% of the region. Second Category includes Manipur,

Meghalaya and Tripura and Third Category includes Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim. The migrated Hindu population from these countries is more than 3 times larger than the sum total population of the third category and around 2 times bigger than the sum total population of the second category. It is half of the Assam's population.

Table 3: Expected Hindu Population Increase in NES due to Immigration

Region	Total Population	Hindu Population	% Hindu population of the total
Immigrant from SEA (20% of Nepali Hindu and sum of all the Hindu Population of Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar)	24,76,07,539	1,75,52,629	7.09
NER without immigrant population	4,57,72,188	2,47,26,344	54.02
NER with immigration population	4,57,72,188	4,22,78,973	92.37
All India	121,08,54,977	96,62,57,353	79.80

Source: Census of India, 2011, CIA – The World Factbook & Pew Research Center (2010)

Let's see Case II. When 20% of Nepali Hindu and 60% of the Hindu population from these countries migrated to the NES and the rest to other parts of the country, then the region's Hindu population (which is 77.03%) will be almost same with that of all India which is 79.8% (Table 3a). The migrated population will be around 23% of the total population (i.e. 1.05 crores). It is one-third of the first category. It is still more than one times bigger than the second category and two times greater than the third category. It indicates that the indigenous people population of the region particularly for the medium and the smallest NE states, in terms of population size which are the second and third category, will be outnumbered by outsiders making them as minority like present day Tripura alienating from mainstream and depriving almost all the privileges which are supposed to be enjoyed by natives. In other words, NES will become a 'Hindu Inhabitant' territory. It is just a matter of time.

Table 3a: Expected Hindu Population Increased in NES due to Immigration

Region	Total Population	Hindu Population	% Hindu population of the total
Migrant from SEA (20% of Nepali Hindu and sum of 60% Hindu Population of Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar)	24,76,07,539	10,531,577	4.25
NER without Immigrant population	4,57,72,188	2,47,26,344	54.02
NER with Immigrant population	4,57,72,188	3,52,57,921	77.03

Source: Census of India, 2011, CIA – The World Factbook &Pew Research Center (2010)

It may be biased to examine the effects of migration movement only based on Hindu population. Thus, it prompts us to examine the effects of migration movement of other communities like Muslim, Nepalese, Kuki-Chin-Mizo, etc. in NE states with reference to Manipur. Based on 2001 population census report, Manipur (8.4%) is the third largest Muslim populated State in the NES next to Assam (34.22) and Tripura (8.6%). Meitei Pangals of Manipur originally migrated from the Bangladesh since the early 17th century. They were war captives or war prisoners. During the reign of King Khagemba, they are allowed to settle in the kingdom after marrying Manipuri women and also assigned yek/yumnak (clan/surname) according to their work assignment/allocation and duty.

Based on religion data of 1881 census data, the Muslim population in the state was recorded as 4,881 in 1881 which increased to 190,939 in 2001 (Table 4). If we examine the growth rate of the different communities, one can't confidently say that the growth rate of Meitei Pangal and Outsiders is a natural growth rate of population. Natural growth rate of population is the rate based on death and birth of the population. The growth rate of Muslim population is 3,812 while that of Valley and Hill are 742 and 923 respectively. Even if we consider Muslim population growth is double of that of Hill, it should be about 1,845. It implies that such an

increased growth rate can't be achieved through natural growth rate of population. It solidifies the claim that the phenomenally increased Muslim population in Manipur is due to the migrated population from Pakistan, Bangladesh and from other Indian states like Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, U.P., etc.

Table 4: Estimated Population in Manipur, 1606-1887

Year	Valley (Maximum Meitei)	Hill (Maximum Tribal)	Muslim (Meitei Pangal)	Others
1606	-	-	1,000	-
1748	1,20,000	50,000	-	-
1859	50,00	-	-	-
1868	65,000-70,000	70,000	-	-
1873	65,000	74,000	-	-
1881	130,846	85,238	4,881	105
2001	1,101,070	871,680	202,355	137,634

Source: Dr. M. Manimohon Meetei, 2000 (Unpublished Data)

Table 5 gives the proportion of population to total population by community/caste wise in Manipur from 1881 to 2001. From Table 5, it can be understood that Meitei population has gradually decreased from 59% in 1881 to 48% in 2001 losing 11% population in 120 years. Tribal population has lost 1% population for the same sample period. An important question that arises is where does this missing population go (i.e 11% + 1% =12%)? Or how does indigenous people population decrease? The answer lies on the proportionate population increase in the Meitei Pangal and Others category. Indigenous proportionate population decrease is not due to sharp decrease in the natural growth rate of population. It is mainly due to unabated influx of immigrant population in the state corroborated by the fact that proportionate Meitei Pangal and Muslim population has increased from 2% in 1881 to 8% in 2001 which show a 6% increase. And proportionate Others' population increased by 6% from 1881 to 2001. It proves that the lost 12% of indigenous population is the exact sum of the total increased percentage in Meitei Pangal

and Others population. One can say that other communities/castes are relatively small in number. But they are ‘spring’ that will gradually flood not only the valley areas but also up to the top hills of the Hill areas. Thus, imbalance growth of migration population leads to reduce aborigine population making them minority in due course of time.

Table 5: Manipur Showing Proportion of Population to Total Population by Community/Caste Wise (approximate percentage figure), 1881-2001

Community/ Caste	Census Year								
	1881	1901	1931	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001*
Meitei	59	60	58	59	58	56	55	53	48
Tribal	39	35	35	34	32	31	27	35	38
Meitei Pangal/Muslim	2	4	5	6	6	7	7	7	8
Others	0.1	1	2	1	4	6	11	5	6

Sources: Dr. M. Manimohon Meetei, 2000 (Unpublished Data)

* Including estimated population of 3 sub-divisions of Senapati district.

The word ‘Others’, in Table 4 & Table 5, refers to Mayang Population. It includes the communities/castes of Assamese, Bengalis, Biharis, Marwaris, Punjabis, Tamils, Oriyas as well as other Hindi speakers and others neighbouring tribes of Indian origins and foreigners like Nepalese, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Myanmarese, etc. From Table 6, it is clear that Nepalese occupied around 43% of the total Mayang population in 2001 (Table 6). The percentage increase of Nepalese has recorded highest among them accounting for 0.23% in 1901 to 2.12% in 2001 which show a 1.89% increase. The influx of Nepalese was on the peak in 1971 recording 6,940 persons as per birth place and the highest growth of population in the state was also recorded in this year with 37.53 percent because of this Nepali population (Table 6). They have scattered all over the hill areas particularly in the North, East and West parts of Manipur. It has been followed by Bengali (1.89%), Outsider Tribals (0.34%) and Central and South Indian (0.29%). However,

in terms of growth rate, Outsiders and South Indian, Outsider Tribals and Bengali occupy the top three spots respectively. The growth of Central and South Indian is 315,500, that of Outsider tribals is 10,607 and for Bengali is 10,043 from 1901 to 2001 which are exceptionally high. All these prove that the migration movement is continuously increasing and is just like having a 'Fountain' at the heart of the Imphal City.

Table –6: Manipur- Some Selected Languages & Mother-Tongue of Outsiders, 1901-2001

Census Year	Assamese	Bengali	Hindi	Nepali	Outsider Tribal	Central & South
1901	90 (0.03)	267 (0.09)	11,438 [#] (4.02)	658 (0.23)	75 (0.03)	2 (0.00)
1931	125 (0.03)	2,273 (0.51)	1,049 (0.24)	2,705 (0.61)	210 (0.05)	4 (0.00)
1951	245(0.04)	2,859 (0.49)	950 (0.16)	2,860 (0.50)	624 (0.11)	57 (0.01)
1961	300 (0.04)	10,011 (1.28)	2,379 (0.30)	13,571 (1.74)	230 (0.03)	213 (0.03)
1971	1,736 (0.16)	15,025 (1.40)	11,631 (1.08)	26,381 (2.46)	1,639 (0.15)	2,536 (0.24)
1981	276 (0.02)	18,528 (1.30)	9,909 (0.70)	37,046 (2.61)	2,505 (0.18)	2,641 (0.19)
1991	1,685 (0.09)	19,385 (1.06)	24,041 (1.31)	46,498 (2.53)	4,102 (0.22)	5,740 (0.31)
2001*	1,340(0.06)	27,082 (1.25)	17,939 (0.83)	45,995 (2.12)	8,030 (0.37)	6,312 (0.29)

Source: Dr. M. ManimohonMeetei, 2000 (Unpublished Data)

* Excluding population of Mao-Maram, Paomata and Purul sub-divisions of Senapati district.

Figure includes Marwari, Hindustani and eastern Hindi.

Note: Figures shown in brackets indicate percentage.

The second threat is the possibility of grabbing aboriginal's land and controlling the economy. The migrants have already grabbed many lands both in Hills and Valleys particularly by Nepalese, Kuki-Chin-Mizo and Bangladeshi. Regarding how Nepalese grabs indigenous lands and how far they are hazardous to aboriginal can be understood by the following statement:

Nepali colonial expansion has already subverted the original ethnic character of the hills in North-Eastern India, it now threatens to swamp the Mongoloid and other Non-Europoid autochthons of the region altogether. Nothing poses greater danger to the survival and autonomous development of the people of North-East than to the Nepali interlopers. The Nepali immigrants are land-grabbers and nature-despoilers; and of course, more than anything else, they are colonizers in a hurry.....In Manipur, the Nepalis are very much in the process of becoming the largest ethnic group after the Meiteis.....If the cancerous immigration hasn't yet entered the consciousness of the plainsmen in Manipur, so much the worse for them... (Manipur: Past and Present, Chapter 16, pp.237-238)

Regarding increasing influences of migrants (mainly mainland migrants) over native socio-economic order, Meitei (2016) pointed out that migrants became so powerful and professional that natives were not in a position either to substitute or to compete with them. They absolutely controlled the Chamber of Commerce of Manipur which regulates local market. The paper continues that influx of immigrant population may be a source of increased crime, delinquency, and disintegration of families, communalism, casteism, and cultural disorganization.

All these eventually create conflict among the different communities/castes in which territory plays an important role. The territorial nature of human beings is intertwined with the sense of self and group and hence, if these needs are frustrated, conflict ensues. The loss of tribal land to projects, subsequent forest acts and non-tribal settlements in Tripura is a vivid example creating conflict. In Manipur, illegal immigrants from Nepal, Myanmar and Bangladesh are exerting critical pressures on the fragile life system of the tribal people. In Assam, places like Nagaon, Morigaon, etc. started feeling the pressure due to the encroachment of tribal lands by the immigrant population, particularly by the Tiwas and the Bodos. This conflict ultimately

served the basis of the Nellie riots of 1983, where 3000 Muslims of Bengali origin were killed. The torchbearers of the struggle with Bengali Hindus, which was a linguistic struggle, were Assamese intellectuals and caste Hindus. The tribal areas were the conflict areas of Bengali Muslim-indigenous divide, it was they who suffered the most, and it was they who were the most active retaliators. Similar incidents took place in Kokrajhar in 2012.

In 2016, people all around the world became shocked when the native tribal were getting beaten up by a large group of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh in the street of Agartala, Tripura. And the law enforcement officials stood there watching without even firing blank shots in the air to calm down the situation. Those illegal migrants have outnumbered the locals. This is the reason why there is no limit to atrocities, crime and exploitation in the north-eastern states as the migrants continue to create havoc in the state. When a group is denied physical and economic security, political participation and recognition leading to loss of identity, which is happening in NES, such a group will do whatever is possible to regain it. Tribal lost their land and reserve forests to non-tribal, which is coupled with the insensitivity of non-tribal to the local language and culture. The security of an ethnic group is continuously shattered by violence and aggression of migrants leading to a fear of being annihilated. Indigenes cannot trust the guarantee offered by a majority that it will not abuse power. They are forced to abide by the entry of outsiders for economic reasons.

Conflict deepens when indigenes' sense of security are shattered by non-locals. Armed groups took advantage of the heightened tensions and started an insurgency, projecting migrants as 'foreigners' and asserting their own identity as 'sons of the soil'. Therefore the governments sought to divide the society by encouraging militancy, and followed a policy where separate tribes were encouraged to highlight their differences rather than the similarities. The aspirations

of the tribes for self-development were used as a tool to fuel discord in their society. Concordant with that was the failure of governance machinery, mainly due to the deteriorating Centre-State relationship. The tribes which faced the direct fallout of immigration in form of land also felt left out. This is the crux of this region's social unrest.

The third and final threat is politicking immigrant population. Local politicians or political parties used them as a tool to gain electoral support for themselves or their political parties. Take Tripura as example, the Government provided illegal migrants with government jobs and other facilities in exchange to loyalty and votes to CPI (M) during elections. The Bangladeshis are buying land and getting admissions into Indian Institutes with these legal documents provided by the government.

Since majority rules in Democracy, these migrants have taken the political power from the locals completely. A non-local Bengali speaking Muslim had for the first time won election in the Jiribam Assembly Constituency of Manipur in the 2017 State Assembly Election. He defeated the then incumbent MLA who along with a few others was mainly responsible for the phenomenal increase of Bangladeshi population in Jiribam. Initially, these leaders might have never thought that, one day, the Meiteis might be defeated by these very illegal migrants. But at the end of the day, he was defeated. His vote bank politic brings not only his doom day but also trade off the fate of all the aboriginals. Such myopic eyed local politicians are in abundance in NE states. It might not true to blame and criticize the Centre and central leaders for this. Similarly, for a few thousand rupees truck drivers used to ferry illegal migrants along both NH 2 and 37. Despite request from various civil societies and from government representatives not to do so, it continues unabated. The system of corruption that prevails everywhere also assists these illegal migrants.

3. Conclusion

It is no doubt that there are two ways traffic of migration in Manipur. Manipuri also goes out to other places to find jobs (we called it emigrant) and migrants or immigrants come to Manipur to do the same. Both emigrants and immigrants increase. The main reason behind the emigrant is the long-term occupational goals after having advanced education or special training trained for certain occupations. We can call it professional category. Whereas, immigrants coming to Manipur are mostly uneducated and unskilled people and they are generally looking for manual labors. We name it occupational categories. Very few educated and professional migrant or immigrant comes to Manipur, which is unfortunate. The latter is relatively more beneficial than the former for an economy. It increases the stock of human resources of the host and they tend to return to their native place after a certain period of time. Since they have diverse talent and expertise, they can be employed beyond any particular jobs. On the contrary, there are no comparable to extension of jobs for the former. Also, some migrants may be more vulnerable and more willing to work in the black market (e.g. drugs trafficking, arms smuggling, etc.). The only benefits that unskilled migrants to the locale is they can fill essential occupations for which natives are in short supply and allow natives to be employed at higher-skilled jobs.

It shows that as far as the pattern of migration movement in Manipur is concerned, the quantum of migration within other occupational categories is much greater than the quantum of migration within the professional categories. This paper examines why the immigrants do not move to industrialized and metropolitan cities rather than North-East (NE) States of India. The paper suggests that, though it is a mixture of economy, social and political motives, the main reason for their stay in Manipur is politically motivated rather than looking for employment. Otherwise they will move to those industrialized and metropolitan cities for the opportunities in

those cities are far bigger than in NES. In other words, the reason behind the unabated influx of immigrant population in NE states seems that the socio-political reasons far outweigh the economic reasons. Otherwise the promise made by the PM Modi before the Assam elections to stop the problem of immigration from Bangladesh in the North Eastern states looks like it was only for the purpose of rhetoric! The paper identifies three possible threats due to unabated influx of immigration to this region.

The first and foremost threat is the possibility of turning North East States of India into a 'Hindu Territory' annihilating the peaceful coexistence of multi-cultural diversity. The second threat is the indigenes losing their lands and economy. The third and final threat is politicking migrant population. Local politicians or political parties used them as a tool to gain electoral support for themselves or their political parties but ultimately they overshadowed the local leaders as is seen in Assam.

Migration is okay as long as it is in a short-run hedonistic mode of orientation which is to find jobs and livelihood. In other words, had migrants come to NES and Manipur in particular to earn their livelihood as their primary goals, it would have been a win-win situation. But it is not the case. It becomes clear day by day that they are coming with long-range objectives through a well-organized master. They are coming as poor of the poorest in a very destitute way of life. However based on our observations, it seems that this movement is the politically motivated purposive-rational mode of orientation. They are not returning and they become a part and parcel of the society.

The only means to counter this rapid increase of migrant population is rapid increase in indigenous population growth rate or a legal ways to stop this migration, with the state agencies involved seriously performing their expected duties. An integrated policy that has the potential to

play an important role in improving social inclusion, filling vacancies, improving the ratio of economically active to those who are inactive, addressing NES's demographic challenges, and boosting jobs and growth in the region should be formulated. It is high time to consider China's 'Hukou System' particularly in NES and, if possible, extend it to all over the country and if not at least a modified form which is suitable to this region and the country. If timely action is not taken to address this issue, the region will continue to be embroiled in conflicts.

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