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DEVELOPMENT DIMENSION OF CHARS IN ASSAM AND ITS CONSTRAINTS

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ABSTRACT

Chars in Assam are floating sand areas on the banks of the river Brahmaputra. These are temporary deposit of sands. Immigrants, failing to occupy suitable agricultural land in the state, have concentrated in such Chars with high density. With higher rate of fertility, population size in Chars has been tremendously inflating putting much pressure on the economy, agriculture and environment. The paper highlights the development constraints of these Chars caused by excessive growth of immigrants.

KEYWORDS

Chars, immigrants, fertility, density.

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A PROLOGUE

An American Economist Henry George, author of the book *Progress and Poverty*, advocated that national revenue should be raised by a single tax on land value, instead of multiple taxes on variety of things¹. Such days are gone. Yet the logic has relevance to ponder.

For, hearing such advocacy, Bernard Shaw believed that if the condition of civilized societies is to be improved, it must be done by legislation aiming at equality, reducing in various ways of fortunes of the rich to uplift the poor. He later on realised that for a good society instead of laws, good men and women, righteous in spirit and kind hearted are essential. Feeling the necessity of goodness, Shaw abandoned Christianity, but maintained sacredness of personal life and insisted that it is the duty of all men and women to strive to leave a better world for future generations, where animals are our fellow creatures, based on reason, not on faith or due to force of religion (Ward, 1982)².

Recent settlement of immigrants in to the state has been different from earlier times. Most recently, they use to live in *Chars* of the river Brahmaputra in the state. The Brahmaputra, emerging in the ice lake Manas Sorubar has a total length of 3,848 kilometers, is flowing through India traversing 916 kilometers in Arunachal and Assam and then enters Bangladesh to meet the Bay of Bengal. *Chars* are sandy deposits of the Brahmaputra and these are temporary in nature. Torrent current of the Brahmaputra often wash away and create new *Chars*. The people of Assam used these *Chars* as pastoral ground of cattle and collection area of raw materials such as weeds and thatching straw.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to examine the population growth in *Char* areas, their living condition and future threat to the state economy, if any.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objective and analytical research methods have been used. In order to render the materials readable and comprehensible for general readers hypothesis formulation has been avoided.

The study has been confined to 55 development Blocks where *Char* villages are growing up with habitation of East Bengali Muslims / Muslim Bangladeshi immigrants. Data made available by the *Char* development authority, census data and other published work have been analysed impartially and critically with a view to finding out the imperatives. Poverty negates development freedom³. So, causes of poverty in *Char* areas has been looked in to with the phenomena of poverty in other areas of the state and the country.

The period of discussion covers from 1951 to 2011 with an analysis prior to 1951 period, and posterior to 2011 for the state. As regards the *Char* areas, analysis is limited to 1993-2004, whereas data has not been collected for subsequent period by the *Char* development authority of the state and not available.

In addition to data presentation collected from secondary sources, graphical presentation has been made using the computer software.

CHARS IN ASSAM BECOMING DWELLING HABITATS OF IMMIGRANTS

Chars in Assam are the alluvial areas alongside the river valleys of Brahmaputra and Borak, formed by the river sediments. Geographical areas of this study have been delimited to river valley of Brahmaputra alone, which have been a much debated areas of academics, polity and politics. Because *Chars* alongside the Brahmaputra valley, and in its midst had come into existence after the great earthquake of the 1950s. The river bed of the Brahmaputra had risen up creating number of *Chars* such as Burha Chapori in the midst of Brahmaputra and by the deposited sediments on its alongside. Excluding the tea garden areas owned by the British companies on periodical lease for 999 years like that, *Chars* were the reserved cultivable land for the natives of Assam, irrespective of castes and tribes.

As the *Char* dwellers are entering this area much latter than 1951, they may fall in the category of illegal migrants. However, any person entering this part of the country or India prior to 1950 is a genuine citizen of the country; none has argued on this. Evidence of in-migration into Assam is a historical fact. Occurrence of Bengal Famine of 1943 led to large sale in-migration of destitute with their concentration in Surama valley. There from, they diffused in the plain districts of Assam.⁴ Muslim League in Goalpara, under the leadership of Maulana Abdul Hamid Ansari spearheaded settlement of immigrant Muslims and there from they have diffused for settlement in Assam.⁵ Thus, the Muslim population in Assam, including Garo hills (now Meghalaya) in pre-independence period had increased as under with decadal increase of immigrants. Due to first partition of Bengal Presidency in 1905 by the British Raj and merging of Assam with East Bengal (now Bangladesh) from 1912-1921 spiked immigration of Muslim populations into Assam province. Following strong protest of public against the merging, Assam was separated in 1921, but inflow of Muslim immigrants from Bengal province in search of land and job had continued. So, under grow more food policy, immigration of Muslim population into Assam increased by 64.90% during 1911-1921, and by 60.99% during 1921-1931. However, it decreased to 38.23 during 1931-41 as

¹ Henry George, 'Progress and Poverty: An Inquiry in to the Cause of Industrial Depression and Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth: The Remedy,' D. Appleton and Company, Bond Street New York City, London, ISBN. 9781420968880 (1886)

² A.C. Ward, 'General Introduction to the Works of Bernard Shaw, in Arms and The Man', by Bernard Shaw, orient Longman' Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, New Delhi, Dover Publications, (1982), ISBN 9780143039761, pp. 90-92

³ Amartya Sen, 'Development as Freedom'. Oxford University Press, New York (1999) ISBN. 0-19-289330-0, pp.1-2

⁴ Arun Chandra Bhuyan, & Sibopada De, 'Political History of Assam, Govt of Assam, vol- 3, 1940-47, 4th edition, Publication Board of Assam, Guwahati, (1980) pp.158-162

⁵ Assam Police Abstracts of Intelligence, Goalpara 16th December 1944 no 3032

Assam was deeply involved in Swadeshi movement leading to quit India movement in 1942. The incitation of Muslim immigrants into Assam was to achieve a Pakistan in Assam⁶. Another Scholar observes that economic and political factors motivated immigration of Bengali Muslims into Assam in between 1891 and 1947.⁷ The increase in Muslim population during 1911-1921 was 64.90%, during 1921-1931 was 60.99%, however its growth decreased to 38.23% during 1931-1941 (table-1).

TABLE 1: MUSLIM POPULATION IN ASSAM,1911-1941

Year	Muslim Population	% increase
1911	3,55,320	-
1921	5,85,943	64.90
1931	9,43,352	60.99
1941	13,03,962	38.23

Source: A.C. Bhuyan and S. De'Political History of Assam, Govt of Assam, vol- 3, 1940-47,4th edition, Publication Board of Assam, Guwahati, (1980), p.262

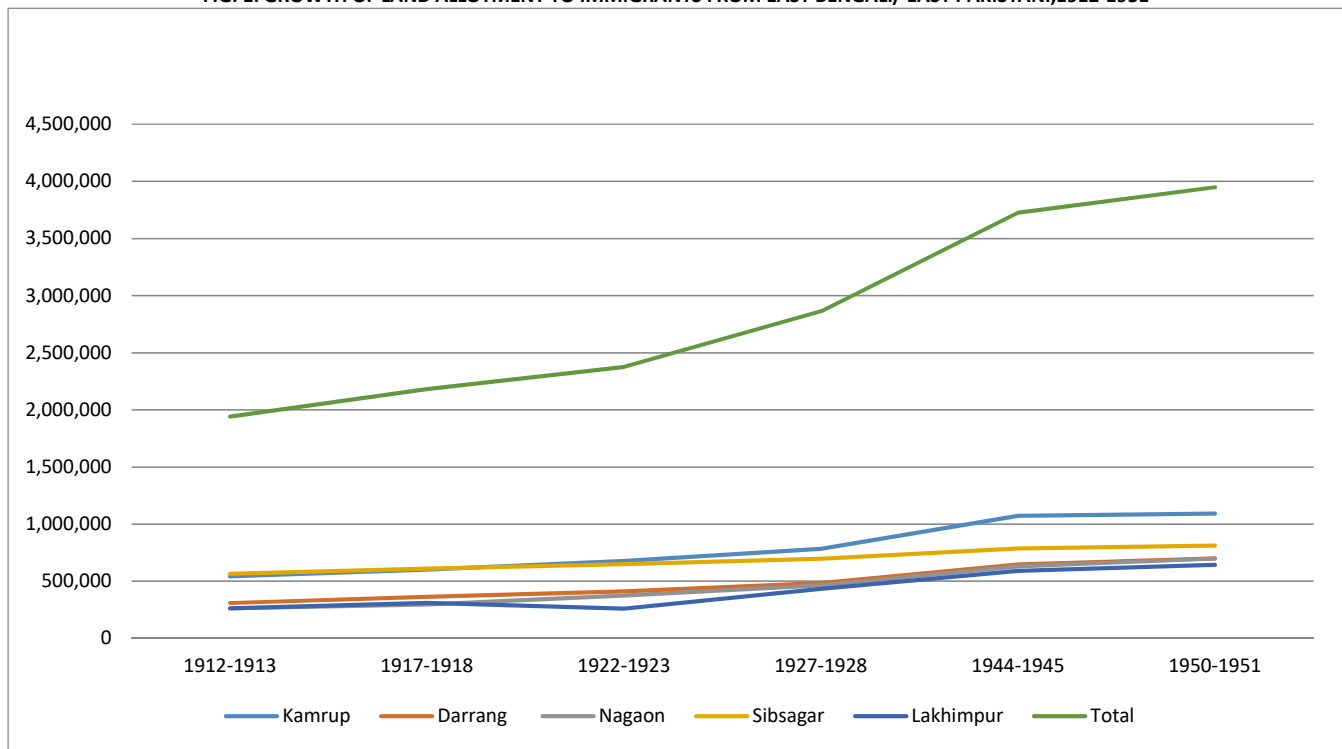
LAND ALLOTMENT TO IMMIGRANTS FROM EAST BENGALI/ EAST PAKISTANI,1912-1951

In 1941, Japan with 353 bombers attacked Pearl Harbor sinking 19 ships and killing over 2000 Americans. As part of independence struggle of India, Assam was experiencing transition under war-II of 1939-45. Both from Bengal and Mymensingh, lakhs of people migrated into greater Assam, particularly into the Brahmaputra valley. In percentage terms immigration increased in a decade by 38.23% in 1941 over the year of 1931(table-1).

Under such situation in pre- independence period Bordoloi ministry laid the terms to Syed Muhammed Saadullah (1885 -1955) for reviewing the land settlement policy. However, the trend has continued after independence under 'grow more food policy' and in large scale after 1971 till 2021. However, it should not happen. Instead of reviewing the land settlement for natives of Assam, the then govt. allotted increasing acres of land to east Pakistani, now Bangladesh. Population problem and anthropogenic pollution of environment was less thought, rather vote bank politics governed most. Land allotted had increased from 1940,998 acres in 1912-1913 to 3726,202 acres in 1944-45 and then to 3948,377 acres in 1950-51 (table-2).

In terms of index it has grown with continuation from the base year 1912-13 (=100.00) to 203.4199 in 1950-51. During this period land allotment to immigrants from East Bengali/ East Pakistani has doubled over the year of 1912-1913 (table-2).

FIG. 1: GROWTH OF LAND ALLOTMENT TO IMMIGRANTS FROM EAST BENGALI/ EAST PAKISTANI,1912-1951



The tragedy of history of the state is that many original inhabitants have no agricultural land and many others do not have land patta till 2021 AD. As per govt. report on 14th Sept, 2020 at least 60,000 indigenous landless families are yet not getting land.⁸

TABLE 2: LAND ALLOTMENT TO IMMIGRANTS FROM EAST BENGALI/ EAST PAKISTANI (in acres)

District	1912-1913	1917-1918	1922-1923	1927-1928	1944-1945	1950-1951
Kamrup	542,199	602,573	678,128	783,178	1072,783	1092,906
Darrang	309,935	363,235	412,281	485,348	645,644	700,231
Nagaon	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
Total	1940,998	2182,720	2376,724	2862,462	3726,202	3948,377
Index	100.00	112.4535	122.4486	147.4737	191.9735	203.4199

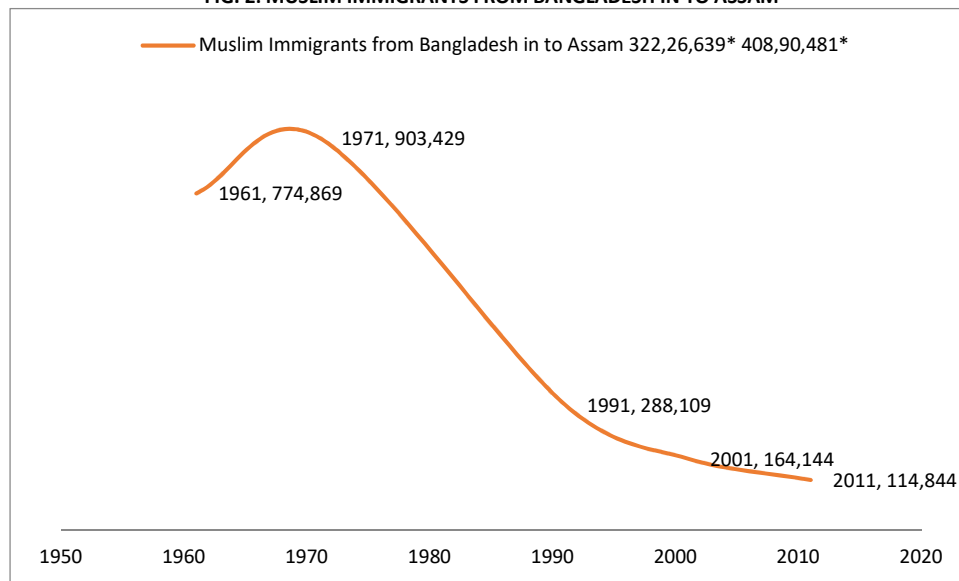
Source: Roychodhury, 'Asamot Bangladeshi', Jagoron Sahitya Prakashan, Guwahati, Reproduced by Madhumita Sarma, M.Sc. in 'A Study of Migration from Bangladesh to Assam, India and its impact', table-5.2. Ph.D. thesis submitted to The University of Adelaide, Australia, March 2015, p.124. [http:// digital library Adelaide.edu au](http://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au)

⁶ Arun Chandra Bhuyan, & Sibopada De, 'Political History of Assam, Govt of Assam,' Vol-3, 1940-47, Publication Board of Assam, Guwahati (1980), pp.272-273
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⁸ <https://.timesof india.com> guwahati. Pabin Kalita/TNN/Sept 14,2021st>.

MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS FROM BANGLADESH INTO ASSAM, 1941- 2011

The inflow volume of immigrants has been gradually declining as per data furnished in table-3 from 1991 onward with a -68.11% decrease to 114,844 persons in 2011, and with -30.03% decreases over the previous decade.

FIG. 2: MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS FROM BANGLADESH IN TO ASSAM



The actual figure of inflow would be more than this. Before 2031, the absolute volume of Muslim immigrants into Assam from Bangladesh would treble to the size of 1971 geared by population explosion, poverty and land scarcity in religiously dogmatic Bangladesh. The down swing trend is not the result of individual family size control, but the consequence of constrained land scarcity everywhere in India and south Asian region.

TABLE 3: BENGALI MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS FROM BANGLADESH INTO ASSAM 1941- 2011

Year	Muslim Immigrants from Bangladesh in to Assam	Decadal % increase or decrease
1941	322,26,639*	-
1951	408,90,481*	26.9% increase
1961	774,869	-98.11
1971	903,429	16.59%
1991	288,109	-68.11%
2001	164,144	-43.02%
2011	114,844	-30.03%

*M. Sharma referring MC Bhuyan puts these figures as 2300,000 and 3000,000 respectively, in table-1.6.

Source: Madhumita Sarma, 'A Study of Migration from Bangladesh to Assam, India and its impact' (2011), Table 5.7, p. 113 and Registrar General of India, Census of India, Assam Part II, (2001 & 2011)

CITIZENSHIP ACT STANDS WHAT FOR

India gained independence in 1947. The independent federal state Assam emphasised on agriculture as policy of development. Prior to independence, the British govt. laid no restriction in movement of peasants from east Bengal (now Bangladesh) to Assam. The trend continued in post-independence period to settle on fertile Char areas and involve in agriculture. Little attention was paid to implement the provisions under the Citizenship Act 1955 under section 2(1)b, which defines illegal migrant in much confusions.

Section 2(1)(b) of the Citizenship Act of 1955 defines an "illegal migrant" as a foreigner:

i). who enters India without valid pass port or travel documents, or ii) one who enters India with valid pass port or travel documents but remains therein beyond the permitted period of time ⁹.

This provision of the Act has been made under articles 5-11 under the constitution of India¹⁰ which clearly states a citizen of India as one who is the domicile of India at the commencement of the constitution (on 26th January, 1950). The subsequent additions to such phrase provided pores for illegal infiltrators to settle without hesitations. Illegal migrants to be declared and punished under the Citizenship Act of 1955, has been diluted and subsequent Laws have been soaked as such persons are the factors in periodic election with their names in upgraded electoral list. This may be argued on the basis of two socio-economic survey reports, 1992-93 and 2003-04 conducted by Char areas Development Authority, constituted under government of Assam.

THE CHARs, HEAP OF IMMIGRANTS, POVERTY AND CENTER OF POPULATION BOOM

Char areas of Assam are the largest concentration of illiterates with 68% below the poverty line. Char areas of Assam with 5% total land area of the state include 14 districts, 55 blocks, 2300 Char villages sheltering over 27 lakh population. Their main occupation is agriculture, but almost 95% peasants are in below poverty line with bigger family size ¹¹. As per PTI report 6 December 2015, Ajmal national rural education programme, which is more concerned with political game, has focused on Illiteracy issues of Char areas. The literacy rate has marginally improved from 15.45% to 19.31% between 1992-93 and 2003-2004.¹² Literacy does not govern the life style and views of life and hence, poverty and the total quality of life (TQL).

⁹ the Citizenship Act of 1955, Section 2(1)(b)

¹⁰ N H Jhabvala, 'the constitution of India', articles 5-11. published by Parimal J. Shah for C. Jamndas & Co, Mumbai, 19th edition, (2020), pp.12-16

¹¹ (i) Sarat K Nath, 'Exploring Char Dominated Blocks of Assam: A Study of Socio-Economic Dimensions', AEGAEUM Journal, (2020), ISSN NO 06-3808, p.288 (ii) Directorate of Char areas; Socio-economic Survey of Report of Assam, reports it to be 2251 nos. of villages. Accessed on 19th May, 2021

¹² Directorate of Char areas: Char Area Development Authority, Government of Assam, Dispur, Assam, 'Socio-Economic Survey of Report, 1992-93 and 2003-2004'. IMAGE: Research Journal, vol.II, Sivasagar (2013), ISSN 2347-534xPp.80-82

TABLE 4: HEALTH INDICATORS OF CHAR AREAS POPULATION, AS IN 2013

Areas/Region	Life Expectancy	Mean Years of Schooling index (Mysi)	Per capita income (PCI) in Rs
Char villages	63.8	4.76	21,516
Assam	54	6.17	24,660

Source: AEGAEUM Journal, vol.8 Issue no. 6-2020, ISSN NO. 06-3808, p.4 referring HDR Survey,2013; Also, Assam Human Development Report, 2014, Planning and Development Department, Govt. of Assam, pp.56-58

An important indicator of quality of life is life expectancy. In *Char* villages of the state, the life expectancy is 63.8 years, which is much better than the state average 54 years for Assam (table-4)¹³. The mean years of schooling is a bit lower than state's average that cannot be considered as significant factor of utter backwardness of *Char* areas.

In spite of that *Char* people must remain alert that health status of people of this area may abruptly touch the lowest ebb at the event of pandemic disease occurrence, like Covid -19, due mainly to contamination as the outcome of densely populated congested area. The public leaders of the concerned area are required to cut down fertility level of individual married families in order to reduce the population density in *Char* areas. They have already occupied the spared lands in the state, hence it is their onus in reducing the population size, those are living on temporary washable, and erodible *Chars* on the bed of the Brahmaputra river.

IMPROVED LITERACY RATE CANNOT ERADICATE POVERTY

In the field of literacy, in *Char* areas it is much lower than state's average. In *Char* areas literacy rate is as lower as 19.31% in 2003-04 against the state's average of 63.25 in 2001. Such poor literacy in *Char* areas is due to non-affordability of parents caused by large number of siblings, maximum of 20 and averaging 7 numbers.

Against this, adult literacy of India is 74.4% in 2018 that has increased from 48.2% in 1991.¹⁴ Where does lie the way out of it? One may read Chinese experience. China embarked on wide-ranging economic reforms. During the pre-reforms period, it included a dramatic reduction in infant and child mortality rates, reduction of fertility and a remarkable increase in longevity. The child mortality in china has been reduced to 12 by 2020 against 39 of India in the same year.

TABLE 5: CHILD MORALITY IN CHINA & INDIA,1960-2020

Year	Child Morality in China/1000live births	Child Mortality in India per 1000 live births
1960	204	250
1970	143	218
1980	73	178
1990	54	134
2000	43	99
2010	21	65
2015	14	49
2020	12	39

Source: statista.2020, Accessed on 19th May2020

Similarly, China succeeded to reduce the IMR to a single digit of 9.29 by 2020 because of her determined and conscious efforts and a decision above the religious faction. China puts the spared resources for wellbeing and improvement of existing human resources, rather than adding more population for vote bank (table-6). But, India fails, her IMR is as high as 29.848 by 2020 (table -6). To reach the level of China, India's IMR declining rate must not be less than 10%. How could this be possible, if some pockets grow like slums with higher fertility?

TABLE 6: IMR OF CHINA AND INDIA,2017-2020

	China's IMR	Decline rate	India's IMR	Decline rate
2020	9.295	3.13%	29.848	3.48%
2019	9.595	3.02%	30.924	3.36%
2018	9.894	4.59%	32.000	4.24%
2017	10.370	4.4%	33.46	4.27%

Source: Statista,2020; Accessed on 19th May2020

The old theory that "**literacy reduces fertility level**" is not working in south India and Bangladesh. Improved literacy cannot guarantee peace and prosperity. The deliberation of Professor Homeswar Goswami, on "*Revisit of Demographic Predictions: Relevance of Fertility Decline Theory in Developing countries*" is supportive of this fact¹⁵. What needs is the reduction of IMR (infant mortality rate) and fertility. Similarly, Caldwell opines:¹⁶

"Demographic transition theory must be modified on its fertility-side to include the role of government. In a broader sense, it can still remain a theory of social change and the diffusion of ideas...".

Demographers have embarked on mortality and fertility decline for demographic transition leading to zero population growth (Thompson, 1929)¹⁷. For transition, prior mortality decline is required but, it does not ensure continuing fertility decline as Notestein (1943, 1945), Davis (1945) and Kirk (1945) has viewed.¹⁸ For, **decline in fertility depends on shift of individual values, limiting the family size of married couples and rational thinking in limiting the fertility, not on spread of education and improved literacy rate**. Fertility level in *Chars* of Assam is very high. It needs to be contained to contain the damaging effects of high rates of population growth (Kirk and Pillet,1998).¹⁹ Public leaders and Public policy makers may embark on such development key for better living of the *Char* people.

¹³ China without much increase in GNP, from the great famine in 1958- 61 has been able to raise the life expectancy of its people at birth to above 76.91 years in 2019, world Bank data, retrieved on dated10th October 2021.

¹⁴ <https://knoema.com>> Literacy and India's Adult literacy rate, 1960-2019.

*** Statistics about functioning of India are now **Iron curtain**; data are not made available though the policy of transparency has been said to be followed.

¹⁵ Presidential lecture at the NEEA conference, Manipur University, 2020

¹⁶ John C. Caldwell, 'Demographic Transition Theory', Springer, (1993) ISBN: 9789048171163, 9789048171163, P.311

¹⁷Thompson, W. S. (1929). Population. *American Journal of Sociology*, 34(6), 959-975. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2765883>

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¹⁹ Kirk, D., & Pillet, B. (1998). Fertility Levels, Trends, and Differentials in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s and 1990s. *Studies in Family Planning*, 29(1), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.2307/172178>

Such high rates of population growth in *Chars* would cause land scarcity, poverty and anthropogenic pollution, growth of slums, famine and plundering. The loss of peace could not be bought by human numbers acting inhumanly. To contain all such future evils, the only way is to *rigorously* minimise the fertility of all married couples to a replacing level. If not ready to accept such policy measure, one should remain ready to see the ugly faces population booming.

As regards the poverty in *Char* areas, the Multi dimensionality poor index is 44.5, which is higher than 30.10 of Assam. Multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) for the *Char* areas (18.57) has been recorded to be higher than state's average of 12.49 in 2013 (table-7). The state is much poor, with higher poverty level than any country of the world. In the land of this poor state, new areas of backwardness have been emerging with astounding poorness, congestion of habitats and higher fertility promising to sink in Floating *Chars* soon. These are the *Char* areas occupied by the immigrants.

TABLE 7: POVERTY INDICATORS OF CHAR AREA POPULATION

Areas/Region	Multidimensionality poor index	Head count Index of Vulnerable	Multi-dimensional poverty Index (MPI)
<i>Char</i> villages	44.5	17.6	18.57
Assam	30.10	16.54	12.49

Source: HDR Survey,2013 & AEGAEUM Journal, (2020), ISSN NO 06-3808, p.288

The expanding population in *Char* areas could scarcely be accommodated in other areas of Assam and states of the NER, as these are thickly populated, resource less and badly suffering from unemployment problem. By 2020, density of population in Assam has grown to 1775.54 persons. Mizoram has lowest density (32.27 persons), Arunachal Pradesh too has low density (34.0) in 2020(table-8). The hill states have low accommodation facility, with hilly areas and poor in resources and cultivable land. Therefore, they have attempted for land encroachment of the bordering states.²⁰ Arunachal has also doing the same.²¹

TABLE 8: POPULATION DENSITY IN NORTH EAST STATES OF INDIA

State in North East India	% change of density in 2011 over 1991,	*Pop. density in 2020 (projected)	% Change of density in 2020 over 2011
Arunachal Pradesh	1.7	20.00	34.0
Assam	1135.42	447.24	1775.54
Manipur	100.04	150.12	183.14
Meghalaya	104.28	168.19	222.01
Mizoram	17.18	62.07	32.27
Nagaland	86.87	125.04	148.79
Sikkim	49.02	92.00	79.12
Tripura	920.5	399.10	1396.85
India	1019.94	419.81	1603.67

Sources: Census 2011; ii. DES, Guwahati: Socio-economic indicators of North East states of India.

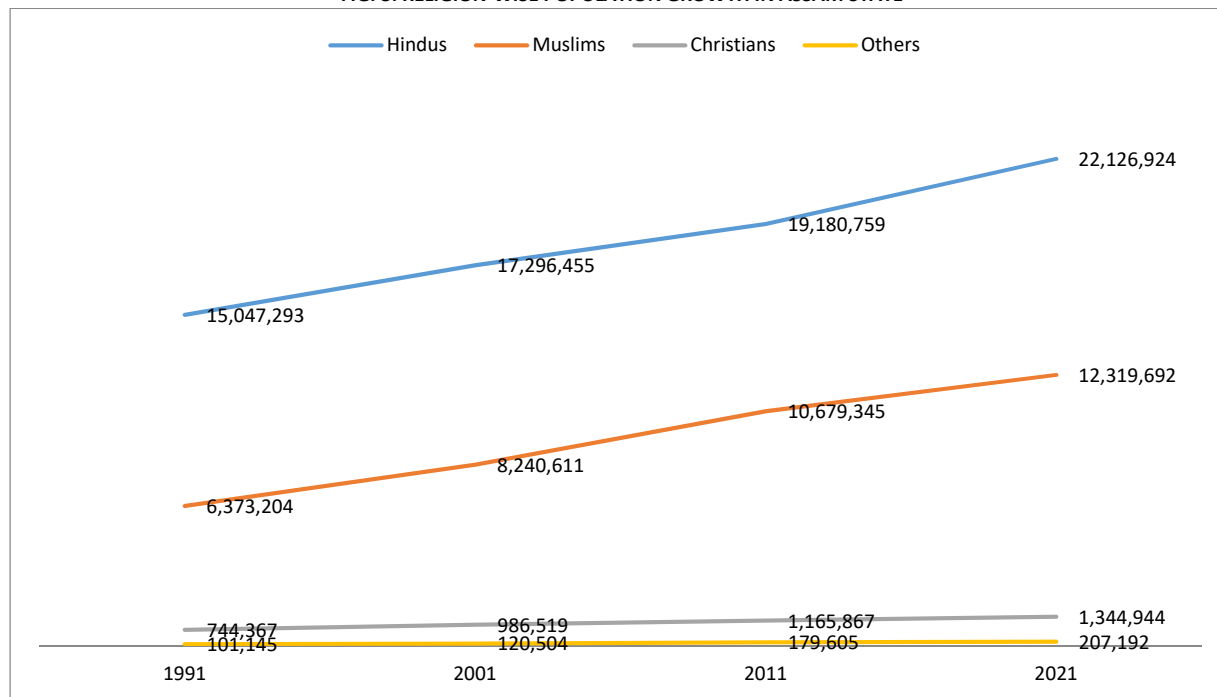
Projected population of various states. <https://www.census 2011.co.in/states>;retrieved on 22june 2020

SPECTRUM OF POPULATION COMPOSITION IN ASSAM BY 2021

By 2021 AD, in the state, the size non –Hindu population, is likely to be 138,71,828 persons, if the proportion of 2011 continues to exist. Natural law does not permit the pattern to be so. The general trend of the 19th, 20th, and 21st century is the linear growth of Muslim population and other religious groups in the state. Hindu population in the state has been growing over the decades, but with a Hindu growth rate.

The graph (fig-3) shows that both the non-Hindus and the Muslim population are growing fast from 2001 onward, indicating increasing share of people of other religion in the state.

FIG. 3: RELIGION-WISE POPULATION GROWTH IN ASSAM STATE



²⁰ Incidents killing Six Assam police personnel resisting encroachment of Mizos. The Assam Tribune, by PTI-30July2021, After that Assam Police said it will take lawful action against Vanlalvena who had allegedly made a threatening statement over the border clash in which five policemen and one civilian were killed..... A team of Assam Police CID, which arrived at Delhi, visited Vanlalvena's residence and the Mizoram House looking for him without success..... the CID team pasted notice on his residence. Source: assamtribune.com retrieved on27th August,2021.

²¹ Parimal Suklabaidya, Assam Minister, after visiting the area near Assam- Arunachal border following the reports of encroachment and destruction of forests said, not an inch of forest land will be allowed to be encroached upon by neighbouring states and also by local people and will be evicted in due course of time. The Times of India. Rokibuz Zaman/TNN/updated July,2021. m.timesofindia.com retrieved on 2th august 2021

With higher share (66.45%) in population of the state, Muslims are growing to be the majority caste in the state. As such, the word minority labeled against them requires being withdrawn in order to convince them security in all terms, viz: Laws, religion, and population composition. Accordingly, the minority provisions accorded, which are enjoyed by the creamy layer needs to be regulated, upbringing their mindset for competition and human resource development while providing scholarships to meritorious poor students.

On the other hand, had Muslim population grown at 2.24% per annum; its size would be 239,21,732 nos (23 million) in 2021 over the year of 2011. The fact that the projected Muslim population in 2021 in table-9 would be doubled and then the trend of population growth would be abruptly rising as shown in figure -4 gearing up the problem of unemployment, problem habitation and livelihood for all.

FIG. 4: POPULATION GROWTH TREND IN ASSAM, RELIGION WISE, 1991-2021

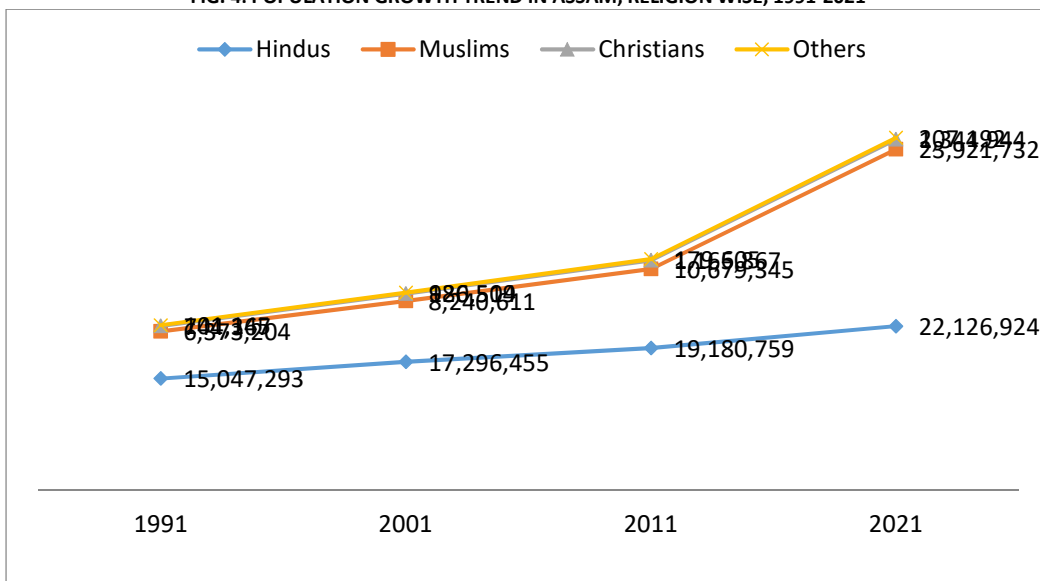


TABLE 9: RELIGION- WISE POPULATION IN ASSAM, 1991 & 2021

Religion/ year	1991	2001	2011	2021
Hindus	15,047,293	17,296,455	19,180,759	22,126,924
Muslims	6,373,204	8,240,611	10,679,345	12,319,692
Christians	744,367	986,519	1,165,867	1,344,944
Others	101,145	120,504	179,605	207,192
Total	22,414,322	26,655,528	31,205,576	35,998,752

Source: Assam religious data:www.indiacensus.net. Retrieved on 16th May 2021**Census reports of 1991,2001 and 2011.

Statistics of Char areas are our main concern of study. To look after the affairs of Char areas, a separate Directorate of Char area Development, govt of Assam, has been created. This Directorate furnished some data for the period of 1992-93 and 2003-04 for the Char areas only. No further data has been published by this authority till date. As per furnished data, during this period, 1992-2004, the nos. of Char villages established has increased by 7.75%, contrary to the deserted look in some ancient villages of the state due to decrease in households.

The demographic scenario is fear-provoking signaling the danger of population boom in Chars, generating another densely populated Cox Bazar²² therein with 55.62% increase in population within a span of 12 years in the modern age of development, i.e. during 1992-2004. If this rate has continued, the population in Chars has crossed over 13.855 lakh by 2016 and by 2022 it would be crossing about 72.028 lakh. The poverty level, in the absence of land property to feed may reach 80% by 2016 and over 90% by 2021.

TABLE 10: POPULATION, LAND OCCUPATION AND POVERTY IN FLOATING CHAR VILLAGES, 1992-2004

Year	Nos of Char Villages	Total population	Total land occupied in hectors	% of bpl population
1992-93	2089	1600244	239,000	48.90
2003-04	2251	24,90,397	360,927	67.90
% increase	7.75	55.62	51.02	+19.00

Source: Directorate of Char Areas Development, Govt. of Assam ‘Socio-Economic Survey Report’, 1992-93 and 2003-04, & IMAGE: Research Journal, vol. ii, Si-vasagar, Nazira (2013), ISSN 2347-534xPp.80-82

Whom you may blame for poverty? Should Taxpayers pay more to feed the poor? Yes. Richer section must share their hard-earned income to poor. How long? Should it be a theory that, “You go on Producing more Children; We are Ready to Pay more”. Is enjoying the sex, and producing more children a democratic right? Researchers, policy makers and Public may try to answer what may be the reason of increase in population in floating Char villages?

CONCLUSION

The study finds out that Chars in Assam are floating sand areas on the banks of the river Brahmaputra. These are temporary deposit of sands. Immigrants, failing to occupy suitable agricultural land in the state, have concentrated in such Chars with high density. With higher rate of fertility, population size in Chars has been tremendously inflating putting much pressure on the economy, agriculture and environment. The excessive growth of immigrants constraints the development of Chars.

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²² Cox Bazar has population density of 9600 persons per square kilometre in 2011. Here 7,00,000 (seven lakh) Rohingyas are also living. [https:// www.aidforum.org](https://www.aidforum.org) retrieved on 31st august, 2021.

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