CHAPTER I
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One of the most significant issues of the present century facing almost every country of the world is immigration. It is a natural phenomena and a historical process. People go from one place to another to fulfill their various necessities (i.e. for permanent settlement, better living condition, higher education etc.). Before the formation of human societies men moved and fought with each other for food. Since the formation of human societies, the migratory tendency goaded men to leave their place and arrive in a new place seeking better opportunities. Affects of such movement of people between the two places are being felt directly or indirectly in both the mother and host countries. In course of time, the immigrants (who arrive in a new place) become a part of cosmopolitan society in the host country if they assimilate with the local people. But sometimes on account of their racial, linguistic, religious dissimilarities the immigrants become a source of multiple problems for the indigenous people of the host country.

Since the time immemorial different racial groups moved to Assam from different parts and even outside of Bharatavarsha. The Assamese society, evolved through ages, has been the outcome of the admixture of the immigrants with the indigenous people. The notable figures of the Assamese society and literature like Sri Sankardev, Jyoti Prasad Agarwala had their ancestral home outside Assam. Assam virtually remained isolated geographically and politically, from the mainland of India till 1826. After the Yandaboo treaty Assam was amalgamated into the British territory and thus age-old isolation was ended which made the people's movement easier from other parts of India towards this part. The British introduced a new monetized economy in Assam and gave maximum importance on land revenue. Although cultivation was in a crude state, however, land abundant Assam offered them the opportunities of raising land revenue by bringing more lands under cultivation. The colonial administrators encouraged immigration into the province as it was the only means to make use of maximum waste lands. Thus, during the colonial period, the local people of this province came into contact with three principal types of resident immigrants i.e. tea garden coolies, Nepali graziers and settlers from East Bengal. Discovery of tea and
subsequent plantation industry necessitated hiring of tea labourers from the tribal areas of Chhotanagpur region. This was the first stream of immigration into Assam under the British started during 1858-59. The indentured labourers with their families settled down permanently in Assam after the termination of their contracts with the planters. The tea industry began to flourish in Assam, but scarcity of food became acute among the tea workers. Eventually, the colonial Government in Assam decided upon the plan of bringing pure agriculturists from Bengal. This was the most important stream of immigration into Assam. Besides relieving the overcrowded districts of East Bengal, encouragement given to the immigration of the East Bengali farmers served twin purposes of the colonial Government. It not only doubled the revenue accumulation but also ended the food scarcity of the labourers engaged in tea industry. They were mostly Muslims and settled down in the char-chapari areas of Assam. With the inauguration of a new Anglo-Nepal relationship and the recruitment of Gorkha soldiers into the colonial force, a new type of immigration started into Assam. The Nepali immigrants were mainly graziers and cattle rearers however; some of them latter took up lower category jobs under the colonial Government. Other types of immigrants in Assam were the traders, professional and occupational groups who came to the province from different parts of India during the colonial period. The partition of India in 1947 brought about a new twist to the immigration process. A large number of Hindu refugees from Pakistan immigrated into Assam and other parts of India.

Statement of the problem

History of migration between Bengal and Assam is quite old. However, from the thirteenth century onwards, immigration from Bengal to Assam took a definite shape. During the first decade of the thirteenth century Bengal came under the Muslim occupation. The rulers of Bengal tried to occupy Assam and launched several expeditions. Bakhtiyar’s invasion of 1205-1206 A.D. is said to be the beginning of such expeditions. Some of the soldiers who were captured as war prisoners settled in Assam. From 1205-06 to 1681, the number of such settlers had increased. The Ahom rulers also brought some skilled persons from Bengal into their kingdom. Most of

*Char* is the sandy and fertile land in the mid of river often of temporary nature. *Chapari* is the land on either side of the river. It is also submerged by the river water during the summer season.
them were Muslims and formed one of the early groups of settlers in Assam. Soon they got assimilated by way of marriage with the indigenous population; fusion of culture took place and they came to be known as the Asamiya Musalmans. The introduction of colonial rule in Assam in 1826 brought about a great change in the process of movement of people. As stated earlier, the colonial Government relied upon the land revenue as the main source of income. However, realization of revenue was not up to their expectation as compared to the abundance of waste and char-chapari lands. The scanty population of Assam offered no definite solution of their problem. Moreover, the outbreak of malarial fever, Kala-azar (a kind of fever) in different parts of the state brought devastation to the population. So, it had become clear for the British that realization of more revenue from the existing land was not possible to be increased in near future. They believed that the millions of areas of cultivable land lying waste meant millions of rupees waiting for them which needed to be dug out from the soil. Obviously, they decided to bring these areas under cultivation, but problem arose with regards to the cultivators. The local people were not expected to open up new areas. So, the government carried out some experiments to open up new areas in Assam, first with the aboriginal people, then with farmers from Bihar and also with the tea garden coolies. But all such experiments proved utterly failed and that obviously led the government to encourage immigration from the congested parts of Bengal.

During the colonial period, Bengal was divided into four natural divisions namely North, East, West and Central. East Bengal comprised of Dacca and Chittagong divisions was the most congested area in entire Bengal. Here, majority of the population were poor farmers who were Muslims by community. The Zamindary Settlement, introduced during the colonial period, had abolished the farmers’ right over lands resulting in their complete pauperization. The abnormal growth of population had made the condition worse. They sought out-migration in neighbouring place. Assam being a contiguous province witnessed the migration of poor East Bengali farmers. Goalpara in Assam came under the Zamindary settlement; the Zamindars here invited the hardy East Bengali farmers to bring new area under cultivation. Most of the farmers belonged to Mymensingh district of East Bengal. These hardy, laborious peasants brought vast areas under cultivation in that district.
They settled down there with their families. Gradually, they began to move to other districts of the Brahmaputra Valley.

Nowgong, a Brahmaputra Valley district situated on the south bank of the mighty river, possessed vast areas of waste and char-chapari land. During the colonial period the district was constituted into 50 mauzas. Map in Figure I shows the mauzas of Nowgong during the colonial period. For the assessment purpose, it was again constituted into eight groups, viz., South-Western, South-Eastern, Central, Chapari, North-Western, North-Eastern, Immigrant, and Namati Groups. The district was infested with Kala-azar and the population could not be more than 2,41,300 in 1853. When the first regular Census was held in 1872, its population rose to 2,60,238. The Census of 1901 shows the population of the district at 2,61,634 which increased to 3,03,596 in 1911. During 1921-1931, population increased from 3,97,921 to 5,62,581. Again, in the decade of 1941-1951, it rose from 6,49,072 to 8,86,955. The spurt of population from the late nineteenth century was mainly attributed to the large scale immigration of peasants from East Bengal districts of Dacca, Mymensingh as well as from the Surma Valley district of Sylhet. However, immigration of the peasants from East Bengal was looked upon with contempt by the local people as much to the Surma Valley immigrants. This demographic transformation of the district had generated tension among the Assamese who clamoured for the prevention of further immigration. For this, the district authorities introduced the Line System in 1920. Later on, the colonial Government introduced the Colonization Scheme 1929. The elected Government of Assam also introduced the Development Scheme in 1940 and Grow More Food Campaign in 1943 with a view to resettle the immigrants. The immigrant question dominated the political scenery of Assam up to the time of independence. Even after independence, Nowgong as well as other districts of Brahmaputra Valley had to face the problem resettlement of displaced persons and refugees from eastern part of newly created Pakistan.
Figure - I. Map showing Mauza of Nowgong (Colonial Period)

Mauza of Nowgong (Colonial Period)

Scale: 1cm = 6.5 kms

Group boundary
Mauza boundary
Railway line
Grazing reserve

REFERENCES

A) IMMIGRANT:
1) Bokoni  2) Leharighat  3) Dihing  4) Juria  5) Lakhowa  6) Moirabari  7) Silipukhuri
8) Kharwal  9) Allangani  10) Baradines

B) CHAPARI:
11) Mayang  12) Ghagia

C) NAMATI:

D) SOUTH WESTERN:

E) SOUTH EASTERN:

F) NORTH EASTERN:
35) Daru Solwa  36) Daru Bamati

G) NORTH WESTERN:

H) CENTRAL:
43) Singhapatri  44) Niz-Sahar  45) Jagat
46) Paholmaria  47) Kandali  48) Darabari
49) Raja  50) Saida

District boundary
Group boundary
Mauza boundary
Railway line
Grazing reserve

Scale: 1cm = 6.5 kms
Here we need to know the use of the term ‘immigration’ during colonial period. Prior to the British rule, the term ‘immigration’ was used in Assam in a very limited way. Even in the colonial period, it was used without any perception of its future implication. But in due course of time when the conflict of interest between the local people of Assam and the peasants from East Bengal had arisen, the term earned some special significance. It is a known fact that Bengal and Assam were provinces under the same colonial Government till independence (1947). So, it is a questionable matter how far the term immigration was applicable to this inter-provincial movement of the people. The Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong, A.F. Thomas in an order of August 1924 adopted the term ‘immigrants’ for all persons from all the districts of Bengal as well as those from the Surma Valley districts of Sylhet and Cachar except the tea garden coolies or ex-coolies. But in the same order, it was clarified that the term would not include Nepalis, Marwaris, Nunias, Meches and other stray settlers from provinces other than Bengal. But by a resolution on 5th-March 1929, the Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong, E. B. Shaw clarified that the word ‘immigrant’ will include persons from all districts of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and the United Provinces and the Surma Valley, but will not include tea-garden coolies or ex-coolies. The Nunias were declared as immigrants. But the Assamese did not consider them as immigrants rather allowed them to settle as a buffer between them and Mymensinghias. K. Cantlie, Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar, used the term ‘immigrant’ to denote “a person whose residence for time being is in Assam for the purpose of cultivation but whose ‘ancestral home’ is in Bengal.” Although colonial administrators had variously defined immigrants, however, there is no doubt that the main wave of immigration was generally inter-provincial migration between Assam and other provinces of India more especially from Bengal. The East Bengali farmers who had left their home permanently for ‘taking up land’ in Assam were accepted as immigrants in spite of protest from Bengal on account of its inter provincial character.

The tea garden coolies came only for work on tea garden and the Nepalis arrived for

2 Ibid.
4 Assam Secretariat Proceedings, Public on the draft Assam Land and Revenue (Amendment) Bill, 1926, relating to the Settlement and Transfer of land to Immigrants, Revenue Department, Rev. A, June 1928, No.39-52 (Guwahati: Assam State Archives), 4.
grazing purpose. So, they were not treated as immigrants like the Bengali farmers. At the same time there was international migration or immigration from Nepal into Assam. Later on, people coming from Sylhet were accepted as indigenous as it was a part of Assam administration. From the above discussion it is clear that the colonial administrators had used the word immigration to mean the inter-provincial movement of people. We will use the term in the same manner in our work.

**Scope of the study**

Immigration is a never ending process. This human intercourse affects most of the countries of the world. Hence, it easily draws the attention of a host of scholars. Research in immigration means the study of a vast area where its whole aspects cannot be encompassed within a single entity. Almost all work on immigration so far have done reflected a small fraction of the whole subject. The present work is an attempt to find out the historical background (roots and resettlement) of immigration from East Bengal into Assam and its effects on the socio-economic life of the people of the province. Considering the vastness of the subject, the study have been restricted to the district of Nowgong (Presently Nagaon and Marigaon) only from 1901 to 1951. It is well established that immigration from East Bengal to the Brahmaputra Valley districts had started from the beginning of the 20th century as the Census Report of 1911 for the first time mentions about their presence. However, it should be noted that prior to 1911 there were East Bengali farmers in the Brahmaputra Valley districts, however, their presence were not felt as their numerical strength was too small to be counted during the time of census operations. So, in our study it is tried to concentrate for the period from 1901, the year of first census of twentieth century. Although India got its independence from the colonial rule in 1947, but population statistics was published only in 1951 Census. As Census data was mostly useful for study of the topic, the study period also ended up in 1951.

**Objectives**

An investigation into the roots and resettlement of the immigrants from East Bengal into Nowgong district have been undertaken with the following objectives:

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➢ To analyze critically the factors responsible for immigration of East Bengali peasants into Assam including Nowgong district.

➢ To know about the measures taken for the resettlement of the immigrants in Nowgong and how it created the trouble between the indigenous people and immigrants.

➢ To examine the contribution made by the immigrants towards the economic development of Nowgong in particular and Assam in general.

Hypothesis
It was a political and economic propaganda to encourage the East Bengalis to move towards Assam. The situation in East Bengal was equally not conducive for their survival which necessitated them to move from their home land to a more secure area. Result was the heavy influx of immigrants from East Bengal to Nowgong in particular and Assam in general which shaped future course of Assam. These immigrant people’s association with agriculture seems to be prospective for the state but detrimental for the local people.

Methodology
The entire work has been completed using the historical method by subjecting the sources to both internal and external scrutiny. The qualitative approach has been adopted. During surveys, interviews were taken with the immigrant family members through unstructured questionnaire on the basis of random sampling.

The work is based on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources such as Mauza Notes and Reports of the Land Revenue of the relevant period for Nowgong District have been collected from the Nagaon Record Room. Report of Line System Committee, Report on Assessment, Resettlement, Re-assessment, Agriculture and so forth of Nowgong have been collected from Assam State Archives. All these source materials are being discussed and used after proper scrutiny. To study the demographical pattern of Nowgong, the Census Reports of relevant years as well as District Census Handbooks preserved in the Census Office, Guwahati have been utilized. Besides these, information from published books, journals, newspapers, e-journals are also being taken in completing the work.
Immigration is a subject of great importance for the entire range of scholars including sociologists, historians, economists and political scientists. The issues of immigration into Assam have also attracted various scholars. Attempts have been made by some scholars and researchers to find out different aspects of immigration into Assam. P. C. Goswami’s book *Economic Development of Assam* (New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1963) made reference about the immigration of Bengali farmers and tea garden coolies. Myron Weiner highlights the factors of immigration from East Bengal into Assam besides throwing light on the reaction of the local people in his book *Sons of the Soil, Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978). M. Kar in his books *Muslims in Assam Politics* (Delhi: Om Sons Publications, 1989, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1997) makes a chronological analysis of the coming of the Muslims and politicization of their immigration. He traces the origin and development of the forces of contradiction and conflict between the Assamese people and the Bengali Muslims. The book also assesses the role played by the Muslim League in the whole resettlement issue. Bimal J. Dev and Dilip K. Lahiri in their book *Assam Muslims: Politics and Cohesion* (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1985) make reference about the conflict between the immigrants and indigenous people of Assam resulting out of the Line system. Monirul Hussain’s work *The Assam Movement, Class Ideology and Identity* (Delhi: Manak Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1993) is also an important work about the genesis of immigration into Assam. Giving references to different types of immigrants during colonial period in Assam, Hussain focuses his attention on Assam’s movement against the foreigners. Sanjoy Hazarika in *Strangers of the Mist, Tales of War and Peace from India’s Northeast* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1994), *The Rites of Passage, Border Crossings, Imagined Homelands, India’s East and Bangladesh* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2000) and in *Writing on the Wall, Reflections on the North-East* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2008), tries to find out the genesis of opposition against illegal migration into Assam in post-Independent period besides making references to the land settlement policy adopted during the colonial period towards the immigrants coming from East Bengal (later East Pakistan and Bangladesh). He has highlighted the environmental issue in terms of migration from Bangladesh to India (Assam). *India against itself, Assam and the Politics of Nationality* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999) is an important work of Sanjib Baruah which tries to highlight
the colonial administration’s motive of removing backwardness of Assam by encouraging immigration. A.C. Bhuyan and Sibopada De’s (ed.) work *Political History of Assam*, Vol. II & III (Guwahati: Publication Board Assam 1999) makes reference about the role of the Muslim League in settling the immigrants in Assam. Amalendu Guha’s book *Planters Raj to Swaraj* (1826-1947), *Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics* Reprint. (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2006) is an attempt to focus the attention on colonial politics and immigration. Gorky-Chakravarty in *Assam’s Hinterland: Society and Economy in the Char Areas* (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2009) attempts at the process of the transferring of people from Bengal to the char areas of Assam by the colonial administrations. *Quiet Invasion from the Invisible Front, Crisis of Identity of Assam and her Pristine People* (Guwahati: Bani Mandir, 2011) an edited book of *Asom Suraksha Oikya Manch* has many articles relating to immigration both pre-independent and post-independent periods from Bangladesh.


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2000) by Anindita Dasgupta, Economic Impact of Migration in Assam during Post Independence Period (G.U., 2004) by Minakshi Bhattacharyya, are some of the important works on immigration, specially on immigration from East Bengal.

Most of the works mentioned above look at the immigration problem of Assam as a whole and is not area specific. Scholars like A. Guha, P. C. Goswami, N. K. Dhar and many others study the immigration problem of Assam in pre-Independence and post-Independence period where they cover issues like migration from East Bengal as well as labourers to the tea gardens of Assam. It is mentionable here that although the tea garden labourers and Nepali graziers were also regarded as immigrants, the Assamese more concerned about the migration of peasants from the districts of East Bengal of undivided India or East Pakistan (later Bangladesh). Some scholars like M. Kar, Bimal J. Dev and Dilip K. Lahiri, Anindita Dasgupta, Ismail Hossain also attempted to study the immigration of peasants from East Bengal to Assam; however, their works do not show the factors responsible for the same. Above all, the recent emphasis on micro-study of the phenomenon is missing in these works. Our study will try to cover a detailed picture on the immigration issue in Assam with special reference to the district of Nowgong from 1901 to 1951. Before proceeding to examine the different aspects of immigration from East Bengal into Assam with special reference to Nowgong during the colonial period, it is necessary to throw light on theoretical aspects of immigration.

**Conceptual framework**

History of human migration is quite old. It has helped in the formation of cosmopolitan human societies associating different races from different parts of the world. Some societies like the Assamese, the American are quintessentially immigrant. With the passing of time, every subject relating to growth and development of human society came under consideration of men. As a subject of social science, migration has also been studied by different scholars. But as a subject of research, it emerged only in the 20th century with the subsequent rise of social science in America. Now it has become an inter-disciplinary subject attracting sociologists, economists, historians, political scientists and others. Sociologists, who are mainly concerned with the study of composition of family and society stress on migration as it affects the social organization of the host society as well as society at
origin. Historians show interest in migration as it helps in shaping the culture of a society to a great extent. Moreover, immigrants' involvement in the political life of the host country also gives a new orientation to the history of that country. Economists also begin to pay great attention to the migration as the immigrants considerably contribute to the economic development of the receiving country through the supply of labour force whether skilled or unskilled in industry or agriculture.

Movement of people from one area to another is termed as migration in sociology. The two terms associated with migration are immigration and emigration. Immigration refers to the process of arriving or settling down in a new place. It is an almost imperceptible process of population movement across national boundaries. It means in-migration into a country. Immigration is one of the four classifications of migration. On the other hand, emigration is the process of leaving one's place or country to settle down anywhere permanently or temporarily. It means out-migration. The two terms 'immigration' and 'migration' are often synonymously used as the issue of migration is generally being studied from the perspective of host countries. Generally scholars have studied immigration in three different perspective; quantity or number and type of migrants, integration of migrants in the host society and policies favoring integration and the organizations determining and influencing them. There are other aspects like the roots and impacts of immigration on the host country have to be studied.

Migration as a social phenomenon has been governed by certain laws. The same is acceptable for immigration also. Discovering all these facts relating to immigration may be termed as immigration law or theory. But unlike any scientific phenomenon, we do not expect rigid law or theory in social phenomenon. In spite of it, attempts have been made by scholars to frame out a certain law regarding immigration. Ravenstein was the first scholar who tried to find out general laws regarding migration. He studied the migration issue of United Kingdom in his first paper presented before the Royal Statistical Society on March 17, 1885. This paper was

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based upon the British Census of 1881. In 1889 he returned to the subject with data from more than twenty countries of continental Europe and America. His object was to formulate some rules or laws by which migration is governed. In his first paper, he made a classification of migrants, viz., local, short journey, long journey and temporary migrants. He used the terms 'Counties of Absorption' and 'Counties of Dispersion' to refer to the original place and destination of migrants. He pointed out that some of the commercial as well as agricultural counties in the United Kingdom were the Counties of Absorption. In the context of Europe, Ravenstein indicated that as European land had been cultivated and occupied, the great migratory currents were produced either by the development of commerce and industry in certain localities, or by an outflow of emigrants, whose places were filled up by local currents of migration. But in case of America, the powerful attraction was exercised by vast areas of cultivable land not yet taken possession of by cultivators. Thus he proceeded to find out some principal causes of migration. According to him, besides overpopulation in one part and existence of uncultivated resources elsewhere, bad or oppressive laws, heavy taxation, an unattractive climate, uncongenial social surroundings and even compulsion (slave trade, transportation) produce currents of migration. He again believes that increase in the means of locomotion and a development of manufactures and commerce led to an increase of migration.

After Ravenstein many works on migration like age and migration, sex and migration, race and migration, distance and migration, education and migration and so forth have been undertaken. However, no important theoretical studies covering vast areas of migration have been undertaken. In 1960s Everett S. Lee framed out a theory of migration. He defines migration as permanent or semi-permanent change of residence. He also divides the factors working in migration into four groups that is some associated with the area of origin; area of destination; intervening obstacles and personal factors. According to him, migration occurs due to existence of

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10 Ibid., 288.
11 Ibid.
13 Ibid., 50.
differentials between the place of origin and place of destination. Roots of immigration lie in all the factors in both the place of origin and destination that encourage people to move. For better understanding the factors that actually encourage a person to move can be categorized as demand pull, supply push and network forces or intervening obstacles as have been mentioned be Lee. The pull factors are related to the place of destination where as the push factors refer to the motive for emigration from the country of origin. The push factors comprise a heterogeneous array, ranging from an agricultural crisis to the spirit of adventure, from the development of shipping to overpopulation. Lack of employment opportunity, population explosion, and excessive pressure on agricultural land, hostile climate and so forth are counted as push factors. Sanjoy Hazarika states that problems of landlessness, diminishing soil fertility as well as failure of the state to provide economic security push the people to migrate.

However, some scholars prefer to use the terms voluntary and involuntary as the cause of immigration in place of push and pull factors. All immigration is voluntary. Men have natural tendency to move. They move to a new place in search of better opportunities. But sometimes, population movements causes by ethnic conflict, political anarchy and so forth. Immigration from Liberia during the 1980s and 90s to Ghana, Nigeria, Guiana the Ivory Coast and so forth are examples of this type of involuntary immigration. Likewise, the slave trade from Africa across Atlantic to New World and North Africa and Middle East was also a part of involuntary immigration. Economy also works as a powerful involuntary agent. In recent time, job scarcity has compelled a section of skilled persons to migrate from the developing countries to the developed countries. The economic factors behind immigration always draw attention of the Marxists and orthodox economists. They have the tendency to see immigration into a predetermined mould to be compatible with their general theories. According to the Marxists, the interest and plans of the perspective employers drives the process of immigration, not the dreams and needs of the

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14 William Petersen, op. cit., 259.
16 Peter C. Meilaender, Toward a Policy of Immigration (New York: Pargrave Macmilan, 2001) 32.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 34.
people.19 Studying the American immigration history, Portes in 1994 remarked that employer association played a decisive role in recruiting European and Asian labour during nineteenth century.20 But it must be noted here that a generalization in immigration always may not be valid at every time and every place. Labour immigration and market forces are more important in an industrial than a pre-industrial society.

The intervening factors are also no less important in this respect. Intervening factors such as ease of transportation, family or social networks, and government policies; economic ties such as trade and investment linkages or social and cultural exchanges also speed up the process of immigration. The intervening obstacle, according to Lee is distance. Ravenstein hypothesizes that migration occur fast for a short distance. Lee also states that with the diminution of intervening obstacles, the volume of migration be increased. This diminution may be due to improved means of transport.21 Lesser restriction implies more migration. According to him, removal of immigration restrictions within the Common Market countries has been accompanied by large migrations of workers from one of these countries to another.22 Unless severe checks are imposed, both volume and rate of migration tend to increase with time. Lee’s hypothesis regarding relation between transportation and immigration will be tested in our study. Colonial period of Assam witnessed the development in the means of transport like railways, waterways; hence an attempt will be made in Chapter III to see whether developed transportation helped in migration of people from East Bengal to Assam during that period.

Moreover, inherent desire of man conditioned by personal sensitivities, intelligence, and awareness of conditions at both place of origin and destination is also very important for migration to occur.23 Lee hypothesizes that the volume of migration within a given territory varies with the degree of diversity of areas included in that

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20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Everett S Lee, op. cit., 51.
23 Ibid., 54.
territory.\textsuperscript{24} According to him, where there is a great similarity among people—whether in terms of race or ethnic origin, of education, of income, or tradition there occurs a lesser rate of migration than where there is great diversity.\textsuperscript{25} But it is also true that immigrant groups specialized in particular occupations are found gathered more in a particular place if they found sameness in respect of race, religion in their destination. Migrants are likely to operate within information and support network of family or neighbors. In our study, an attempt will be made in Chapter III to see how far religious sameness work as agent in driving the process of immigration from East Bengal to Assam during the colonial period.

It is a known fact that the issue of immigration has often been discussed in terms of political, personal and economic factors with hardly any reference to the climatic role. But recently, scholars have tried to focus on the role of climate in the entire process of immigration. Environmental degradation in the country of origin pushes away thousands of people. In turn, these immigrants may create many environmental problems in the host country. Environment degradation in fact comes about due to the nature itself and the activities of man. Climate induced migrants are termed as ‘environmental refugees’ or ‘environmental migrants’, the concept of which was first introduced by Lester Brown of the World Watch Institute in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{26} According to Myers, environmental change and the natural and man-made disasters associated with them are forcing millions of people to flee their homes and they may seek refuge in the neighbouring countries.\textsuperscript{27} Natural disasters including fires, floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruption, and hurricane speed up involuntary migration. Human related environmental problems also contribute to involuntary movement of people. Generally, higher population density increases the vulnerability to climate change because more people are exposed to risk if opportunities for migration within the country are very limited.\textsuperscript{28} Under such conditions people would involve in land intensification, i.e. use of fertilizer and irrigation of the available land. But if population growth is faster than food production resulting in fragmentation of

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{} \textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 52.
\bibitem{} \textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
\bibitem{} \textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\bibitem{} \textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 3.
\end{thebibliography}
holdings, make people seek shelter in the neighbouring comfortable area less vulnerable than theirs. Moreover, unless the country is egalitarian in outlook to all the inhabitants, then problem may arise relating to distribution and use of land. So, lack of flexibility and openness of unequal systems may lead farmers to migrate to frontier and peri-urban areas in search of new economic opportunities and land to clear.\textsuperscript{29} This land extensification for agricultural purpose can not show any discernible change in environment in the host country although environmental change in the country of origin compels them to seek new settlement. But in the long run, immigrants in the host country would create many environmental problems. When the immigrants arrive in a new place, they need wood for fuel, buildings, and for other purposes. As population increases over time, the consequences of land extensification are many environmental problems like deforestation, desertification and soil degradation.\textsuperscript{30}

Scholars have been silent on the affect of environment on the people of East Bengal and impact of immigration of East Bengali people into Assam during the colonial period. Hence, in our work, we want to see the relationship between environment and immigration in the context of East Bengal and Assam in Chapter III and Chapter V.

It is believed that immigration affects every country that witnesses it. Its impact can be seen on the demography, culture, economy and politics of a state. From the economic perspective, the workforce supplied by immigration is essential to the functioning of most economies; from the social standpoint, immigrants are the driving force behind social change; from the cultural, religious and linguistic perspectives, the different practices of the immigrants call into question the accepted views of citizenship, national identity and cultural homogeneity.\textsuperscript{31} On account of much impact of immigration, every country or state adopts policy to regulate it. Here comes the issue of resettlement of immigrants. The immigrants, before leaving to their destination are already the settlers of some areas. When they leave for another territory permanently, they require resettlement in the destination place.

\textsuperscript{31} Eva Cod, \textit{Immigration and Bureaucratic Control} (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), 3.
Every country has its own immigration policy consisting of two parts; first the immigration control policy or immigration regulation policy namely, the rules and procedures governing the selection and admission of immigrants as well as restriction of illegal immigration and second the immigrant policy namely, the conditions provided to immigrants (e.g. work and housing conditions, welfare provisions, etc.).32 As a natural process, immigration must take place in every country. State has the right to control the flow of immigration although at present globalization permits it to a great extent, so as not to infringe its sovereign right. The state, however, never allows all immigrants to have an unrestricted entry. Socio-cultural affinities of the immigrants with the local people are sometimes considered before their entrance. Sometimes race, religion and language spoken by the immigrants must have conformity with the local people because the later do not want to mix up their culture with the immigrants belonging to different culture. The local people predicted that different cultures are incompatible with the mainstream society. So, often when policy formulating regarding immigration is determined, such concept of cultural factors, besides political and economic agents are also discussed.33 But economic benefit of immigration is given priority over others. Sometimes the state to protect the interest of the indigenous people may restrict the settlement of immigrants to certain areas.

We want to examine the measures adopted by the colonial administrators to resettle the immigrants from East Bengal into Assam. Hence, an attempt will be made in this regard in Chapter IV.

It is generally believed that there exists a close relationship between economy and demography. As immigration has a significant role in the demographic change of a country, the terms, ‘immigration’ and ‘economic development’ can be studied in the same way as the former two. These two terms have attracted scholars from various disciplines like economics, history, sociology or anthropology. The unprecedented economic and demographic changes in the twentieth century compelled the thinkers to arrive at the conclusion that there is an inter-relationship between these phenomenons. In the developed industrialized countries, the economic activities act as


pull factor for immigration. After their arrival, the immigrants make both positive and negative impact on the economy of the host country. It supplies labour force to the rising industries; gives stimulus to the marketing activities and extraction of natural resources to its utmost utilization. Hence, an unprecedented change of the economy of the host country is noticeable. But in an underdeveloped country, the immigrants primarily associate themselves with agriculture and its related activities. The immigrants encourage the local people to utilize the natural resources in a forceful, efficient manner. Skilled immigrants in some cases become the model of local people in the proper utilization of natural resources. When jobs or means of livelihood are available in abundance, the influx of such persons may not be a problem in the host country. But when such jobs are not available, cultivable lands are scare and when there is likelihood that local people would not be able to compete with the resourceful new entrants, the influx affects the economic well being of the local people adversely. Moreover, in terms of cost, immigration leads to a distortion of the labour markets and social tension such as crime, unemployment, public welfare burden and other security concerns. Availability of cheap labour means absence of bargaining capacity of local ones in the labour market which may be a cause of constant conflict between the immigrants and the local people. It is a common phenomenon to be tackled cautiously by almost all the countries facing immigration. Assam during the colonial period also faced immigration problem. Immigrants particularly from East Bengal had been resettled down in Lower Assam districts. Hence, their involvement in the economic life of Assam and to what extent they influenced the economy of Assam will be examined in Chapter V.

The immigrants who settled down in their destination place often join the democratic policies, acquire political influence and oppose efforts prevalent to restrict further immigration. This move on the part of the immigrants is not acceptable to any sovereign country. Moreover, the country of origin of the migrants frequently

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35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
attempts to retain close ties with them.\textsuperscript{38} This bonhomie between the immigrants and mother country is often a cause of concern to the host country as it poses threat to its sovereignty. Moreover, immigration brings about a great change in the demography. It is generally accepted that when there are great shifts of population, crime is also likely to increase.\textsuperscript{39} Hence, “nativism” occurred as a strong response to immigration. It is a collective attempt by self-identified local people to secure or retain prior or exclusive rights to valued resources against the challenges posed by resident or prospective population on the basis of their perceived foreigners.\textsuperscript{40} But “nativism” is absent in areas where there is out-migration or emigration. Emigration siphons off the most discontented elements in the host country.\textsuperscript{41} But absence of such movement leads to the outbreak of conflict between the local people and the immigrants. The only way of avoiding such conflict is the assimilation. The already settled immigrants have to be integrated to the national life of the host country. It is necessary both for the immigrants and the natives of the host country to embrace each other to have fruitful peaceful environment. Assimilation and absorption are often used to denote integration in immigration study. In the view of scholars like H. Bunle, G. Manco, J. Issac assimilation is actually complete conformity, meaning breaking down the barriers of behavioural identification between the immigrants and natives.\textsuperscript{42} Absorption is the personal adjustment and acculturation. However, assimilation of the immigrants is not to easily take place because the immigrants’ cultural affinity relating to race, religion, and the political and emotional attitudes propagated by the media and others in the host country retarded this process. The integration of the immigrants in the national life of host country would take place easily only if the level of culture and economic condition of the immigrants are higher. The immigrants must be prepared to accept the fundamental values of the host country and at the same time, the natives must facilitate for the preservation of the immigrants’ culture if it not obstruct the socio-cultural balance of the new environment. Thus the cultural and

\textsuperscript{38} Peter C. Meilaender, \textit{Toward a Theory of Immigration} (New York: Pargrave Macmilan, 2001)
\textsuperscript{40} Brian N. Fry, \textit{Nativism and Immigration: Regidating the American Dream} (New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC, 2006), 5.
\textsuperscript{42} Guido Baglioni, op. cit., 126.
structural assimilation\textsuperscript{*} are very important for the total integration of the immigrants into the national life of the host country. An attempt has been made to see how far assimilation became possible between the immigrants and the natives of Assam during the period of our study in Chapter V.

\textbf{Organization of the chapters}

The study has been organized as follows

\begin{itemize}
\item Chapter I Introduction
\item Chapter II Demographic Composition in Nowgong District
\item Chapter III Immigration from East Bengal to Assam: Push and Pull factors
\item Chapter IV Resettlement Schemes in Nowgong District
\item Chapter V Immigration to Integration
\item Chapter VI Conclusion
\end{itemize}

In Chapter I the theoretical aspect of the problem have been discussed, apart from outlying the statement of the problem, scope of the study, objective of the research, methodology and survey of literature.

Chapter II discusses the history of immigration from Bengal into Assam since ancient time. Here, an attempt has been made to show how closeness of territories between the two regions helped easy movement of population. During the colonial period, migration from overcrowded East Bengal districts of Mymensingh and Dacca started in large scale. Moreover, this Chapter also discusses the demographic composition of Nowgong.

In Chapter III attempts have been made to find out various malevolent practices that pushed the East Bengali farmers into Assam. In case of Assam, the pull factors for the East Bengali immigrants have been analyzed. In this respect, the role of local gentry, colonial administrators, political and non-political organizations have been assessed.

\textsuperscript{*} Cultural assimilation is a process of acculturation on the parts of the immigrants of becoming like in cultural pattern such as language, behaviors and values, while structural assimilation is a process where immigrants have been taken up and incorporated as mentioned by Guido Baglioni, op. cit., 126.
Chapter IV discusses the ways through which the East Bengali immigrants occupied land in the district of Nowgong. Emphasis has been laid on various schemes like Line System, Colonization Scheme, Development Scheme, and Grow More Food.

Chapter V raises several questions on the impact of immigration from East Bengal on the rural economy of Nowgong. How did they transform the agriculture scenario of Nowgong? Was their arrival detrimental to the local people’s interest? Was there any initiative taken by the local people for the assimilation of immigrants with the Assamese society? Attempts have been made to find answers to these questions.

Chapter VI contains summary and concluding remarks of the thesis.