

Examining Livelihood Status of Migrants: A Case Study of Barpeta Road Town, Assam



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ABSTRACT: The objective of this article is to examine the life realities of the rural urban migrants of Barpeta Road town, who came from the different adjoining villages of the Barpeta town. In the present study, we have randomly taken 100 respondents and age of the most of the respondent is around 22 to 65. The approach of the present study is explanatory. The research was designed to discover and to describe the hopes of the rural urban migrants at the village level and the experience of the migrants at destination, Barpeta Road Town. The characteristics of primary data collection are qualitative and quantitative and based on empirical study as well as ground survey. The study focuses on the phenomenon of rural to urban migration into Barpeta Road Town that had taken place and which continues till date, despite the existence of massive unemployment in the city. The result of the study shows the migrants happens for push and pull factors for their movement to the urban environment. The study identifies the factor affecting rural to urban migrants and problems in settlements. The study demonstrates that the pull factor among many include income, education and better health facilities and the push elements were conflicts, quarrels, absence of farmland to manage the need of the household and other multitudes of crime though they do not want to disclose the details. The present study reveals that the realities and the qualities of the life for the migrants of their destination was extremely different and sometimes challenging for independent survival and they had unofficial network to cope up with most challenging problems. Only few of migrants have an opportunity to enjoy quality life and others remain in trouble.

KEYWORDS: Migrants, Push-pull factors, Rural-urban migration, Qualitative and quantitative study.

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no denying fact that since time is immemorial; man is restlessly migrating from one place to another place as part of a process of adaption to their social, economic, cultural and ecological environment. In the most primitive society migration is the first mode of existence of man. They used to migrate from one place to another place in search of food, fodder and livelihood. Since then they have been aimed to have a stable and stationary life which is more secured and developed when compared to the life in primitive society. With the growth of population along with the division of labour and complex system of distribution, a group of unproductive people came into existence to create the condition for the transition of human society into feudal and capitalist societies.

The feudal society is characterized by agriculture as its basic economic activity, barter trade, localized production and consumption. The migration of people is very much limited due to social relations of production existed in the feudal society. This does not mean that, there is no migration in the feudal society. It is very limited and invisible contrary to the primitive society, which is characterized by large scale of production, industrialization and concentration of economic activities. It provides more employment opportunities when compared to feudal society. It is being concentrated in the urban areas and its increased demand for labour is not met by the natural increase in the urban population. As a rule, where the capital is concentrated the economic activities are also concentrated. This concentration leads to disequilibrium in different sectors of the economy and in the various communities and in the geographical divisions in a country. So Migration of people is an equilibrating mechanism to achieve in different stages of development, in a region or country. Therefore human migration can be described as a universal phenomenon. As far as our study of migration is concerned, we have been aware of my study areas since my understanding and awareness is concerned with migration. We have close connections with several migrants because of being an inhabitant of this town. The choice of the town has been made purposively to understand the condition and the milieu of the migrants, who have come from

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surrounding villages for many issues. And even we have a terse interest to meet the different peoples from different areas to understand the life lessons of them. That's why we have chosen this area to give an authentic and proper data about the migration of this town.

The objectives of the present study is to examine the reasons for migration in Barpeta Road Town and to investigate the livelihood status of migrants living in Barpeta Road Town

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bora and Basistha (2019) on their study aimed at examining if there is any relation between rural-urban migration and economic growth along with the determinants of rural-urban migration in Assam. The study is generally secondary data based collected from the two major sources including Census of India and NSSO. The investigators suggest the importance of equipping them the better infrastructural facilities, job opportunities in encouraging urbanization for higher and sustainable economic growth (Bora & Basistha, 2019).

Kalita (2015) on his study focuses on studying the decadal growth of population and population density in Assam and India during 1901-2011, evaluating the growth of population by religion in Assam and India during 1951-2011 and also to assess the spatial distribution of migrants from other Indian states and other countries into Assam during 2001. The secondary data based study which is generally both descriptive and analytical in nature has collected data from Economic Survey Assam, Census of India and reports from the various websites of state govt. (Assam) and central govt. The study finds that the decadal population growth and density of population in Assam increases at a faster rate in comparison to Indian rate. Migration from the states like Bihar, U.P., West Bengal and neighbour countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan are observed resulting in the population growth in Assam. The migrants are seen to settle in the border districts of Assam (Kalita, 2015).

Sharma (2019), The study attempts to estimate the magnitude of migration from rural Assam to Guwahati, the absorption pattern of the rural migrants in various informal sectors in Guwahati and also to assess the quality of migrant's employment in the informal sector. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. 2 wards from each of the zones of Guwahati have been considered in the study. The investigator has taken a sample of 373 following the formula of Krejcie and Morgan. A schedule has been used for collection of data. Simultaneously, the secondary sources are published govt. reports, govt. departments, journals etc. The study finds that the informal sector plays the most important role in providing job opportunities to the migrants. The conditions of workers are insubstantial too. Also, the migrants fail to receive any benefits of various government schemes due to lack of awareness (Sharma S. P., 2019).

Deori and Mohapatra (2020) they tried to measure the factors of rural out-migration and also the impact of rural out-migration on agriculture mainly on labour availability and farm income of the ST and non ST communities in Dibrugarh district of Assam. The primary data based study uses the method of multi-stage random sampling to select a sample of 150 from the Barbaruah block of the district. It also uses Census of India as a secondary data source for the study. The study finds that soil erosion and poor housing conditions are the major factors behind rural out-migration. The ST people are seen to migrate far off places while the non ST people migrate within the state. The rural out-migration has a negative impact on labour supply and a positive impact on land area, food crop and vegetable production, and flow of income of the household (Deori & Mohapatra, 2020).

Dr. Borah (2011) on her study focuses on delimiting the zone of migration as well as to analyse the immigration pattern in Guwahati's environment. It will also put a major focus on the problems of both the areas (rural and urban) (Borah, 2011).

Basumatari (2014) on her study focuses on studying the nature and dimensions of migration in Assam with respect to magnitude, spatial distribution and causes of migration. The study is based on secondary data and has been collected from Census of India 1991 and 2001. The data have been analysed using statistical techniques. The study finds that migration from the neighbouring countries is generally seen to settle in the border districts of Assam. The process of migration not only changes the demography of the state but also creates several problems including man-land ratio, shortage of food, settlement pattern etc. Modification of religious, linguistic and cultural composition is also observed resulting in disturbance in the historic scenario of Assam (Basumatari, 2014).

Shaw (1974) examines rural-urban migration and its relationship to the structure of land tenure in certain countries. His research reveals that in regions where a significant portion of the rural-urban population consists of small landowners and landless workers, and where a substantial proportion of agricultural land is owned by large landlords, a high population growth rate is a key factor contributing to and intensifying rural out-migration (Shaw, 1974).

Majumdar and Majumdar (1978) conduct a study focusing on the factors influencing rural-urban migration. Their research identifies several key motivations for individuals to migrate from rural to urban areas. These include the availability of increasing employment opportunities in the growing city, encouragement from close relatives already residing in the city, employment offers extended by labour contractors operating in the city, experiences of social injustice faced by marginalized groups in the rural area,

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and the anticipation of a better quality of life in the urban environment. These factors are found to be the primary driving forces behind rural-urban migration (Majumdar P.S, 1978).

Banerjee (1986) points out that the reasons given by migrants for their migration do not align with the prevailing belief that push factors are the main drivers of rural-urban migration. He affirms that two notable reasons were obtaining money or paying debts, aversion to agricultural work or the desire for different jobs. There is some evidence that the motive for the cash was largely for life cycle ceremony spending. As prevailing social values and attitudes are to a greater extent responsible for rural residents being profligate in ceremonial spending, migration for this reason can be reduced through a social education programme. Furthermore, he argues that the aversion to agricultural work was reported mainly by immigrants who had studied beyond the middle school level. He concludes that unless the curriculum is changed, the expansion of education is likely to increase migration (Banerjee, 1986).

Bhende&Kanitkar (2019) ,Migration refers to the process of individuals relocating from one location to another, either within the same country or to a different country altogether. The United Nations Multilingual Demographic Dictionary defines migration as a type of geographical or spatial mobility involving a change in residence, wherein individuals move from their original or departing place to a new destination or arrival place (Bhende, 2019).

According to Kundu (2007), migration has been the single most influential factor that has significantly impacted the demographic changes in urban areas since the pre-1947 period. "The lack of employment opportunities" in rural areas acted as a push factor, compelling people to migrate, while the availability of employment in urban areas acted as a pull factor, attracting rural-to-urban migration. The annual urban growth rate in India was 2.34% in 1951 and increased to a peak of 3.83% in 1981. This rapid urbanization was driven by the ongoing agricultural crises that affected rural areas, particularly the rural poor. As a result, large-scale migration occurred towards cities such as Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Andhra Pradesh, and Delhi. These cities became major centers for attracting cheap labour from across the country. Rural individuals often migrate not only to escape poverty but also in search of better income opportunities in urban areas. The allure of better livelihood prospects and the hope for improved living conditions contribute to the rural-urban migration phenomenon (Kundu, 2007).

Mukherjee (1993) held the view that rural-urban migration is a spatial manifestation of underdevelopment and economic disorganization. He described it as a complex phenomenon, particularly concerning large cities, which he referred to as "the phenomenon of poverty-induced migration." According to Mukherjee, in highly populous countries, the rural sector experiences factors such as rapid population growth, increasing land inequality, ongoing fragmentation of landholdings, and a severe lack of rural industries and non-agricultural employment opportunities. As a result, small farmers, landless agricultural labourers, and other workers are compelled to leave their struggling villages and flock to cities. They are drawn to larger metropolises in search of better employment prospects. However, their aspirations often remain unfulfilled, and they end up living in squalid slums and on the streets (Mukherjee, 2006).

According to Hossain (2001), migration is influenced by various "push" and "pull" factors. Poverty is identified as a significant push factor for individuals with fall in education level, while the pursuit of livelihood opportunities acts as the main push factor for migrants with higher educational attainment. However, the impact of push factors such as unemployment and population growth, as well as pull factors like employment opportunities in urban areas, are subjects of debate in the context of urbanization studies in India. "The National Commission on Urbanization" (1988) has categorized these factors as demographic and economic momentum, respectively. They play a crucial role in establishing linkages between rural and urban areas. The literature on development highlights the interdependence and correlations between rural and urban regions, indicating the complex relationship and interactions between these two settings (Hossain, August,2001).

According to Sengupta and Ghosal (2011), their study focuses on examining the factors associated with the migration of rural workers from various districts within West Bengal to the Bardhaman district. The research specifically takes into account the post "economic reform era" in which the government implemented significant policy changes related to trade, foreign investment, exchange rates, industry, fiscal affairs, and other related areas. Using a dynamic panel data model, the study estimates a neo-classical gross migration function. The dependent variable is migration, and the independent variables include distances from the source districts, wage rate differentials, the percentage share of agricultural workers in the rural workforce, and Gini coefficients that measure inequality in operational land-holdings. The findings of the study indicate that the dynamic panel model employed explains a substantial portion of rural-rural migration. The most significant explanatory factors identified are distances from the source districts, differentials in the percentage share of agricultural workers in the rural workforce, and wage rate differentials. These variables play a critical role in influencing migration patterns in the context of rural areas in West Bengal during the post-economic reform era (Ghosal, 2011).

According to Kochar (2004), understanding the process of decision-making of potential migrants is crucial when studying migration. Research indicates that potential migrants often invest in education prior to migrating. They anticipate that acquiring

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human capital through education will increase their chances of being in demand and receiving better rewards in urban areas. This perspective suggests that individuals perceive education as a means to enhance their skills and qualifications, which they believe will be valued and sought after in urban environments. By investing in education, potential migrants aim to improve their prospects for employment and economic opportunities in cities (Kochar, 2004).

3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

At the outset, it should be noted that the study has been conducted in a Municipal town, BARPETA ROAD TOWN, situated in the state of Assam. This town has been selected purposively.

This is an empirical study. The primary data has been used, simply because it had been practically difficult to collect secondary data after the study region and the problem. We are given to understand that Barpeta Road Town has been witnessing the entry of many migrants from the relatively backward areas surrounding the town. People used to leave their original home and rented to move to the town. In fact, in spite of serious efforts we could not collect the secondary data as well as the list of migrants who had been migrating to the town. Because the secondary data are not available at the state level and district level. So, we had to personally visit those households arbitrarily and identify their status, whether they are migrants or not, on a a-priority basis. We have been able to select one hundred (100) respondents. It should be used that there were many migrants who referred to cooperate in furnishing information. All the respondents we chosen irrespective of class, caste etc. The well-structured questionnaire was administered to collect information. The questionnaire was prepared by keeping in view the objectives of the study. The information obtained through questionnaire was then tabulated.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The large number of migrations is migrating for better income, better education, better health facilities, etc. An investigation has been done on the migrated people from surrounding areas to Barpeta Road town of Assam to ascertain the causes and consequences of migration. The present investigation shows that a large number of people has migrated to Barpeta road for various reasons. It was found from investigation that a major portion of migrants came to Barpeta road for better employment, better education facilities, better health facilities, and business purposes etc. During the survey 100 migrated people were interrogated. Also recognised that a large number of people are forced migrants at Barpeta Road Town

Migration affects the size of population and its demographic character very significantly and hence in recent years it has come to occupy an important place in demographic analysis. Although traditionally international migration has always been in the limelight, of late, the focus has been on the causes and consequences of internal migration, especially on rural to urban flows.

A large number of people basically rural people are migrating from surrounding village areas to Barpeta Road almost every day. The labourers come to this town for finding the jobs for carrying their better life, the government workers mainly migrate to sustain their better life and oppressed/supressed people migrate for their security.

In this article we tried to analyse the reasons of migrations and also tried to cope up the reasons of varied migrations on the basis of the different reasons in the below table:

Table 1: Reasons for migration of Barpeta Road Town (in Percentage)

Main causes of migration	Rank	Number of respondents (according to rank)	In percentage (%)
Better Employment(Income)	1	70	70%
Education	2	59	59%
Better medical facilities	3	55	55%
Natural calamities	4	48	48%
Communal riot	5	30	30%
Security	6	5	5%
Avoiding family/social problem	7	1	1%

Source: Field survey, 2022, Respondent's opinion on main causes of migrants.

During survey the information received from 100 different respondents irrespective of any caste, creed, religion and ethnicity. I found some interesting observations were about to ask their reasons for migration they expressed many reasons among them I am highlighting some major factors such as, better employment (Income), education that as much as 70 respondents out of 100 reported to have migrated due to lack of employment, opportunities in their original places and most of these migrated people were between the age of 20-40. Some of these migrated people (around 30%) were illiterate and were found engaged in various

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manual activities- Thelawala, Rickshaw Puller and Wage earners etc. These people were found to reside in some slum like rented houses in the town and they are basically designated as slum dwellers.

It also appeared from the investigation that Better medical facilities, Natural calamities, Communal riot, Avoiding family/social problem, Security related matters etc.

An investigation on 100 migrants of Barpeta Road Town showed that the most migrants problem of unemployment where 70% of the correspondents were sustaining their life very badly in their previous places. There were the huge scarcities of their basic needs. we found some plight conditions which were happened with them, labourers did not get their proper wages, many farmers left their farming for not getting the proper value of the products, the businessman cheated them.

The present study reveals that thesecond dominant factor of migration is Education. The collected data reveals that 59% of the migrants among 100 respondents express their aspiration to make the future of their children bright. In their previous villages there was lack of better educational facilities and for the reason, they migrated to this town for better education.

The investigation also reveals the trend of migration which the study graded in third number that is Medical facility. Migrants mostly suffered in their previous places in poor health facilities, 55% of the migrants repents for this poor condition in their previous places. For assuring better and emergence health facilities of their valuable life, they migrated to this town.

After coming to the Barpeta Road area the migrants face different kind of problems which are shown in the below table:

Table 2: The Problems of the migrants after settlement in the Barpeta Road Town (in percentage)

Problems of Respondent	Rank	Number of Respondents (according to rank)	In Percentage
Accommodation problem	1	55	55%
High cost of living	2	53	53%
Unsatisfactory social environment	3	48	48%
Lack of sufficient income	4	17	17%
Inadequate education facility	5	5	5%
Health/medical facility unsatisfactory	6	3	3%

Source: Field survey, 2022, Respondent's opinion on their problem.

In the above table we tried to show some area of problems associated with the settlement of surrounding village's migrants in Barpeta Road Town. An attempt will be made to deal with the major areas of difficulty as seen from the migrants point of view and this inevitably is bound of with practical issues of Accommodation problems, High cost of living, Unsatisfactory social environment, Lack of sufficient income, Inadequate education facility , Health/medical facility unsatisfactory.

When we approached to the respondent for the survey we asked whether they are happy or not in their new settlement in this town, they mostly replied yes we are happy. The hidden truth were still behind the curtail and when we sets some parameters to know the truth then we found some problems in their settlement as mentioned in the above table. 55% of the migrants of 100 respondents are suffering from accommodation problem, where they are unable to adjust in the slum and 53% of the migrants are suffering from high cost of living where every ingredient are being bought with high cost. And 48% of the migrants are suffering from noisy environment of traffic and gatherings of the people.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the present study, an attempt has been made to critically scrutinize some major findings of this study. The analysis has been based on the objectives/made earlier and methodology.

The broad objectives of the study are to identify, the factors responsible for migration from one rural region to a relatively developed zone of urban-rural area and then, to examine the problems the migrants face after their settlement in the new area. There is no denying the fact that the migrants generally move to a place where there is a scope of better and secure livelihood. The economically disadvantaged people generally are in search of these areas.

As to why people migrate to Barpeta Road Town from backward surrounding areas, an enquiry has been made. It has been seen that there are different reasons for the decision to migrate. The factors responsible to migrate will vary from individual to individual. The information received from 100 respondents received have some interesting observations.

The factors are not of same order of importance to all the respondents; Order/priority of importance varies from respondents to respondents. In the study, we have considered certain broad factors responsible for migration to Barpeta Road town. They are

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the facilities of better income opportunities (livelihood), education for children, healthcare facilities, security of life, less incidence of natural calamities, and communal riots and better social environment.

In the first place it was found that about 70 per cent of the respondents have prioritized "Income security" as the most dominant factor for decision making for migration from their original homeland to Barpeta Road municipal town. The rationality of the choice is clear; because most of the migrants we have interviewed did not have high dependable resources for their livelihood. Some of them were poor farmers; some of them were unemployed or engaged in agriculture or some other off-farm jobs as casual labour. There was no systematic source of income. Agriculture, as we know, is underdeveloped. There are quite 'large number' of disguised unemployed. So, at some point of time they left villages with the expectation of getting some Seasonable employment. To them, Barpeta Road municipal town appeared ineffective. Migration is a product of personal decision taken precisely on the considerations of PULL and PUSH factors.

Secondly, the study reveals that the migrants had in mind the possibility of providing better education facilities to their children. Through Participatory and Focusgroup discussion, we gathered the information that about 59% of the respondent thinks that education is important to make better future of their children's life. Village where they used to live did not have any facilities for education. Even they believed that some kind of informal education and skill formation may generate some opportunities for employment. It is interesting to note that most of the women i.e. the mothers of the children have emphasized this aspect. (They suggest that female literacy or education is a better driver for social upliftment!). It is learnt that Barpeta Road municipal town has reasonable opportunity for education.

Third important factor that played an important role for migration is that villagers even today have been suffering from lack of satisfactory health care facilities. The study finds that 55% of the migrants have regarded absence of health care facilities in their localities as the third most important reason for movement out of their own land. It is painful to note that even today, villagers are desirous of the facilities of good road connectivity so that they can avail themselves of the medical facilities. Infant mortality is very high in these regions. This may be reduced.

Migrants face different kinds of natural calamities, of which flood / rains etc. are important. These calamities have serious effect on their life. These calamities made life of the people serious helplessness, apart from loss of life and property miserable. This constrain has motivated people to leave their villages. This '**incidence of natural calamities**' has been considered by 48 per cent of respondents as factor 'priority four' in order of importance. Sometime, for some reasons, communal tensions erupt leading to disharmony. This sometime happens in rural parts of Assam. People are apprehensive of its occurrence. So, peaceful life is desirable to them. This consideration had in mind of many people in the villagers, so, they want to take shelter in a secured place. 30 percent of the respondent took decision for migration for this reason.

But all is not well with this migration. Barpeta Road could not always fulfil their expectations. To some, it is a better movement; to many; it is a case of movement from "**frying pan to fire**". They encounter many problems.

The attempt was also made in this survey to elicit information from 100 respondents apart the problems they used to face after their settlement in new places in Barpeta Road Town. Problems were ranked according to importance they mentioned 10 different problems. It has been found that about 55 per cent of the migrants did not get good accommodation. They had to live in slum areas which are unhygienic and unfit for living. This accommodation status has brought about different health hazards. Even availability of safe drinking water was a problem.

Another important problem the migrants used to face is the non-availability of satisfactory job. Barpeta Road municipal town is a small town with less opportunities for jobs. There is no big industry. It is a small business centre. So, joblessness or low-paid job is a great problem. These migrants face problems for their living. At the same time, the increase in the cost of living has affected badly their life. Fall in income and increase in cost of living together has made their life miserable.

It is also maintained by the migrants that the difference between the ways of life they used to live in their original places and the kind of challenges they face now for their living in Barpeta Road is a problem to them. They used to live a simple life-plain living in their original places. But in towns, they face many problems of modern life. About large proportion of migrants reported this kind of issue. In fact, migration is very often irreversible. They are living very painfully. Migration may not solve all the problems for all always.

6. CONCLUSION

In most developing countries, development activities are focused in the big towns and cities. The rapid expansion of trade & commerce along with industrial development has resulted in the concentration of employment opportunities and socio-economic infrastructures in these urban centres. Given the relative underdevelopment of the rural areas in India which manifests into low wages and under employment, the existing disparity serves as an inducement for rural-urban migration. Rural-urban migration into Barpeta Road is due to a number of push factors operating in rural areas and pull factors emanating from Barpeta Road. A

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comprehensive policy to regulate this form of migration must address relevant factors both at the place of origin and at the place of destination. One of the most visible impacts of rampant migration into Barpeta Road is the increasing congestion in accessing almost all basic amenities. Such a phenomenon is reflected in rising cost of accommodation, drinking water scarcity, frequent power cuts, traffic jams, proliferation of slums and squalor, increasing crime rates etc. A perfect law and order should be maintained so that people feel safe and happy in their homeland. The government of Assam should take appropriate measures to generate employment opportunities, provide education and health facility in rural areas of Barpeta Road town.

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