

Hostility to Co-existence: Cross-cutting Ties & Hybrid Identity among the 'Immigrant Bangladeshi' and Indigenous Groups in the foothill border of Assam-Nagaland

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Abstract

The present study is an attempt to study a foothill border of Assam-Nagaland where a surge of migration happened in post-colonial India. One of the migrant groups is the 'Immigrant Bangladeshi' which is locally known as 'Miyas'. In spite of fierce resistance for the Miyas in the entire Northeast India, in the foothill border, it is witnessed that hybrid identity like Semiya are formed out of the wedlock between Sema Nagas and 'Immigrant Bangladeshi'. As such, in the present study, the behaviour and socio-economic interactions between indigenous groups and migrant groups will be analysed and which will further question the existing dichotomies such as hill-valley, indigene-immigrant, and insider-outsider.

Keywords: Migration, Hybrid Identity, foothill border, Indigenous-Immigrant dichotomy, Cultural Assimilation

Introduction

The to and fro of people from the erstwhile East Bengal/East Pakistan and the present-day Bangladesh to the present day eastern and north-eastern states was a very common phenomenon before the partition of the country as both region were the parts of British India. However, after the partition of Indian subcontinent in 1947, in which new states were formed with new boundaries, this age old practice of movement of people in the region had become 'illegal'. Aftermath of the partition, communal violence which erupted in the either side of the border led to inflow of Hindu refugees to India from East Pakistan and vice-versa. This also happened in the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 (Updhyay 2005: 3002).

Before the partition of the country, Bengali peasants were brought to the