

GROWTH

The most remarkable demographic feature of the region is a rapid growth of its population. It was estimated that the population of the region in 1830 was only one million. It grew by four times to 4 million in 1891. During the twentieth century between 1901 and 2001 it grew by about 9.5 times to 38.3 million, as against 3.6 times in India as a whole. During the last decade the population of the north-east Indian region grew by 6.54 million. Such a high rate of growth is obviously not only due to natural variation alone but due also to a high rate of immigration from both within and outside the country. It is noticed that in all the census decades from 1901 to 1991, the state of north-east India experienced much higher growth rates than the nation as a whole. Even in the decade 1911-1921, when India experienced a decrease of population by 0.31%, Assam Experienced an increase of 20.48%, Manipur 10.92%, Meghalaya 7.21%, Mizoram 7.90%, Nagaland 6.55% and Tripura 7.59%. During the census decade 1951-1961, which followed partition, Assam and Tripura recorded the highest

growth rates of the century, being 34.98% and 78.71% respectively (when India as a whole recorded a growth of 21.51% only). During the censal decade 1991-2001, Nagaland recorded a very high growth of 64.53%, followed by Meghalaya 30.65%, Mizoram 28.82%, Arunachal 27.00%, Manipur 24.06%, Assam 18.92% and Tripura 16.03%, as against the national growth rate of 21.34%. But during the last censal decade (2001-2011) the growth trend has changed to some extent. The region as a whole experience a growth of 17.00% as against 17.64% of the country. Meghalaya recorded the highest growth rate within the region with 27.82 followed by Arunachal Pradesh (25.92%). Assam, growth rate during the decade was 16.93, while Nagaland recorded a decrease in population by 0.5% in 2011 as compared to 2001. As mentioned earlier, generally higher growth rates in the region mostly above the national norm. Firstly indicates the incoming of a large immigrant population. Secondly, it shows an improvement in the health and hygiene condition after the independence leading to check on the occurrence of epidemics like Kala Azar, Malaria, cholera, dysentery, etc. Thirdly there is a few large groups of people among whom social awareness and literacy are significantly less. The family planning measures have made little headway among them. This has led to a higher growth rate among them. Fourthly, there has been more exhaustive enumeration in the recent census operations. These and some such factor have contributed to the rapid growth of population in the region. Fifthly, Apart from immigration from outside north-east India, two other factor that have contributed to districtwise variation in the growth rate, are interdistrict innigration within respective states in search of economic opportunities and movement of some people to the large towns and cities like Guwahati, Dimapur, Imphal, Silchar, Aizwal, Agartala and Shillong to take advantage of the socio-cultural and civic opportunities available in them.

The growth trend of the tribal population is more significant especially after 1971. During the three decads between 1971 and 2001 (the 2011 census figure are not available) the tribal population of north-east India grew by two-and-a-half times, from 4.14 million to 10.35

million, while the growth of the total population during the corresponding period was only 100%. Several reasons may be attributed to the higher growth rate of the tribals. Firstly, there has been a more extensive and effective canvassing of census schedules after independence. Secondly, there has been a fall of infant mortality due to extension of improved maternity and general health service. Thirdly, there has been a fall of general mortality and increase in longevity due to mitigation of drudgery of life, improvement of health and hygiene and transport condition. Fourthly, voluntary return of some tribal people of the plains as 'tribe' in the recent censuses who had earlier returned themselves as 'Hindus'.