

## **Tracing Kaibarta Migration in Barak Valley of Southern Assam**

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The Kaibarta community of Barak Valley in Southern Assam, as one presently finds them, is essentially a migrant community. They came and settled in parts of Barak Valley across different points in time mostly after the Partition. One striking feature with regard to their post-migration settlement is the choice of place – the locations where the community has settled in. It can be seen that the Kaibartas are almost inevitably settled in places that are far off from ‘centre’ – wetlands, chars, etc. These areas don’t always sustain the needs of the people owing to the ecologically fragile nature of the places. Also, even though their settlement in these areas was facilitated through government procedures, most of the settlers do not have any claim on the land they live in. This makes the living condition of the Kaibartas, who are essentially a community of the ‘fringe’, rather precarious as they are on a continuous move in order to secure their life and livelihood. Their internal migration across the valley that spans around different wetlands and char areas as they move from one wetland area to another makes the community pivot around a loop as they continue to fight for survival. However, it can be seen that in recent years, a cross-section of the community, settled in the ecologically fragile areas, has been making a steady move towards the urbanised areas and also switching the traditional professions of farming and fishing with different sorts of works that range from being engaged as daily wage labourers to being professionals in various sectors like academics, banking, etc. So, essentially, the Kaibarta community of Barak Valley is continuously moving inside the Valley owing to the lack of proper rehabilitation and settlement arrangements. This aspect of continuous movement of the Kaibartas in Barak valley makes for a cogent study of how migration and post-migration

settlement in ecologically fragile areas are long term issues that inflict the community till today.

This paper would try to look into the migration patterns of the Kaibarta community in Barak Valley. In so doing, the paper would also seek to understand the historical origins of their migration and their subsequent settlement in the Valley. The paper would also look into select literary texts from Barak valley in order to attempt a representational study of precarity of the Kaibartas who constantly face the threat of displacement.

Keywords: Kaibarta, migration, socio-politics, ecology, fragile