

Annexure 9

How BANGLADESHI MUSLIMS wiped the Assamese out in their OWN land

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In the absence of any definite policy of the Government, the infiltration gradually assumed an alarming proportion and the aliens became politically so strong that no political party in this state is in a position to form the government without their support.

British annexed Assam in 1826 and placed it under the administrative unit of Bengal Province . They brought educated and English knowing Bengalese to assist them in its administration. After partition of Bengal in 1905 the geo-political reconstitution of the region increased the flow of Bengali speaking population particularly the Muslim peasantry from the over populated East Bengal to sparsely populated fertile lands of Brahmaputra and Surma valleys of this isolated northeast corner of India. The formation of All India Muslim League (AIML) in 1906 at Dhaka also hatched a political conspiracy to expand its numerical strength in Assam and initiated organised migration of Muslims from East Bengal . Nawab Salim Ullah Khan, a prominent Muslim leader and one of the founder members of AIML in his public meeting after the concluding session of the League, "exhorted the Muslims to migrate to Assam and settle there".

The alarming forecast of Census Superintendent C. S. Mullan in his Census report of 1931 validated the political conspiracy of AIML in Assam :

"Probably the most important event in the province during the last 25 years - an event, moreover, which seems likely to alter permanently the whole feature of Assam and to destroy the whole structure of Assamese culture and civilisation has been the invasion of a vast horde of land-hungry immigrants mostly Muslims, from the districts of East Bengal. ... wheresoever the carcass, there the vultures will be gathered together " (Politics of Migration by Dr. Manju Singh, Anita Publications, Jaipur, 1990, Page 59).

By late nineteen thirties the AIML turned its expansionist design into a confrontationist Muslim politics in Assam . It encouraged the Muslim migrants to settle in Assam and since then the immigrants have become a chronic problem in the provincial politics of the state. Influx of Muslim peasantry in Assam converted its wastelands into cultivable fields and helped in development of its economy. But exposure of this otherwise closed society to new socio-political environment adversely affected its socio-cultural scenario.

After 1937 election, Gopi Nath Bordoloi headed a Congress led coalition Government in Assam and tried to stop the unhindered flow of immigrant Muslims. But his Government had to resign in November 1939 to respond to the Congress High Command's call for resignation of all its Provincial Governments in protest against the War policy of the British. This decision of the party however facilitated the formation of an alternative Coalition Government in Assam headed by Sir Saadullah of AIML. "During the period between 1939-1941, Saadullah Government allotted one Lakh bighas (Little less than an acre) of land in Assam valley for the settlement of East Bengal immigrants" (Political History of Assam - Edited by A. C. Bhuyan and Shibopada De, Vol. III, Publication Board of Assam, 1999, Page 262). He ignored the protest of Assam Congress leaders like Bishnuram Medhi and others on the plea that the Muslim exodus from Bengal to Assam was necessary for the success of 'Grow more food' scheme in the state.

Lord Wavel, Viceroy of India in the Viceroy's Journal, London Publication, December 22, 1943 said: " ...The chief political problem is the desire of Muslim Ministers of Assam to increase the immigrations into uncultivated Government lands in Assam under the slogan of 'Grow more food' but what really is to 'Grow more Muslims' (Politics of Migration by Dr. Manju Singh, Anita Publications, Jaipur, 1990, Page 70). Mahatma Gandhi too expressed his concern over the problem of such unrestricted immigration but he could not do anything to check the exodus for the

reason best known to him. The resignation of Congress led Government in Assam was the first blunder committed by the party in respect of its policy on Muslim immigration. Even Subash Chandra Bose and the Congress leaders of Assam had argued for exemption of Assam from the decision of the party on the plea that it would help the AIML in settling the Muslim immigrants in the state. The Congress High Command was however, not convinced.

With large-scale settlement of alien immigrants following the installation of Saadullah Government, AIML established a tremendous influence on the Muslim population of Assam, who later aggressively supported the demand for Pakistan. After 1946 general election Bordoloi again headed the Congress Government and took a firm and tough stand for eviction of immigrants. Alarmed with the eviction plan of Bordoloi, AIML Legislators' Convention held at Delhi in April 1946, demanded inclusion of Assam in Pakistan and strongly opposed the eviction plan of immigrant Muslims. Abdul Hamid Khan, popularly known as Maulana Bhasani, a volatile League leader, who had dominated Muslim politics in Assam till partition was deputed to execute the "AIML plan to turn the non-Muslim majority state of Assam into Muslim majority state". Meanwhile Jinnah came up with the demand of the League for inclusion of Assam in proposed Pakistan. The central leadership of the Congress party had virtually made up its mind to give up its claim over Assam and Bordoloi had to run from pillar to post and convince Mahatma Gandhi whose intervention could only save Assam from going to Pakistan. Since whole energy of Bordoloi was to save Assam from the geo-political design of AIML, he failed to give proper attention to implement his plan to cleanse Assam from Muslim immigrants. Assamese people for their centuries old closeness with cultural current of India had fought shoulder to shoulder with the freedom fighters of the country against the British power, but the attitude of the Congress High Command created an emotional distance from the centre.

After partition, the Assamese people expected that there would not be any further trans-migration of Muslims from East Pakistan to their new political territory. Muslim populations in Assam considerably decreased in 1947 partly due to inclusion of Sylhet in Pakistan and also return of sizeable number of earlier immigrants to their original land due to fear of backlash. But the situation changed, when Mainul Haq Chaudhary, the Private Secretary of Jinnah and also a prominent leader of the youth wing of AIML till partition joined Congress party along with the supporters of Pakistan en-mass. On the eve of partition, he was shaky whether to opt for Pakistan or stay back in India. He was however told by Jinnah, "wait for ten years, I shall present Assam on a silver plate to you" (Politics of Alienation in Assam by Bhawani Singh, 1984, Page 72). Jinnah died in 1948 but the Congress Party fulfilled his promise by inducting Chaudhary in the Cabinet of Congress Government led by Gopi Nath Bordoloi. It is often alleged that Chaudhary stayed back in Assam on the advice of Jinnah and other Pakistani leaders to help the immigrants from Pakistan for their settlement in Assam.

After Independence the flow of illegal migration from East Pakistan again increased aggressively as in absence of any population planning by its government or any social movement for creating awareness to control population, its people remained facing the problem of living space for survival. To carry forward the political legacy of AIML that East Pakistan / Bangladesh needed more lebensraum or living space, its leaders continued their plan for Islamic expansionism in Assam through infiltration of Muslims as the country was unable to shoulder the burden of its multiplying population. The successive governments in Pakistan pursued the twin policy of squeezing out the Hindus and infiltrating the Muslims to settle down in Assam and other bordering states in India.

Against the evil geo-political design of Pakistan, which scared the Assamese middle class of the threat to their marginalisation in their own land, Government of India never had any organised plan or definite policy. Nehru-Liaquat Pact (April 1950) with "special provisions for restoration of rights of immigrants over their properties if they would choose to return not later than the 31st December 1950" (Assam Issue -The Beginning - The End -The Beginning by Vijay Kumar Dewan, United Publishers Guwahati, 1985, Page 34-35) rather facilitated the Pakistan Government to accelerate infiltration. The Pact, which validated the entry of immigrants up to 31.12.50, was against the spirit of Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act 1950 enacted by Parliament on 13.2.1950. It is said that the Congress leadership applauded the increase of Muslim immigrants as a God sent opportunity to consolidate the 'Muslim vote banks' and accordingly ruled Assam without any break for thirty years.

In early sixties, the Government of Assam under the leadership of Congress Chief Minister Bimala Prasad Chaliha launched an aggressive campaign to flush out the immigrants, who settled in Assam since January 1951. He even disregarded Prime Minister Nehru's plea to go slow on the issue. "Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru wanted the Assam Chief Minister, Bimala Prasad Chaliha to go easy on deportations and even stop them. Chaliha refused, saying that the problem was so critical that Assam 's demography and culture would be permanently changed" (Rites of Passage by Sanjoy Hazarika, Penguin Books, 2000, Page 60).

Chaliha Government armed itself with Prevention of Infiltration from Pakistan (PIP) Act 1964 and pursued the campaign. Even though, the Muslim leaders encouraged the Bengali speaking Muslim immigrants to declare Assamese as their mother tongue to dodge the police of their detection, Chaliha's campaign against the infiltrators pressed a panic button among them. However, twenty Muslim MLAs in the Government threatened him to topple his ministry if he does not stop deportations. Chaliha had to succumb to this pressure and the PIP Act was put in cold storage (Ibid.). Those who, were deported earlier gradually returned and again settled in Assam .

As per conservative assessment about a million of Muslim infiltrators settled down in the vacant areas contiguous to the areas where Muslim migrants in British India were already settled. Moinul Huq Choudhury, who later became a Minister in the Union Cabinet of Indira Gandhi Government and former President of India Fakhruddin Ali Ahmad were widely known for being instrumental in the settlement of illegal Muslim immigrants. Gradually, the Muslim population in Assam , which was about 19 Lakhs in 1947, increased to about 36 Lakhs within 25 years of Independence by 1972. "Late B.K.Nehru, the Governor of Assam between 1968 and 1973, condemned the infiltration as vote bank politics by the Congress" (Prafulla Goradia in Pioneer dated September 15, 2005). "Over the years, the Congress with its activist pro-minority plank was seen as a party which supported the interest of the settlers. It was thus labeled pro-'Bangladeshi' by its opponents" (Rites of Passage by Sanjoy Hazarika, Penguin Books, 2000, Page 69).

In 1971 Bangladesh emerged as a sovereign nation after liberation war against Pakistan with the help of Indian Army. In stead of being grateful, the new nation maintained the same policy of Pakistan on Muslim infiltration in Assam . People of India in general and Assam in particular failed to understand that when the changed geo-political reality of Indian sub-continent in 1947 sealed their political destiny with the respective country of India and Pakistan , how come the infiltration continue? The argument of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the first president of Bangladesh that, "without the inclusion of Assam the East Bengal economy could not be balanced" is ridiculous as a sovereign nation cannot throw its burden on another countries. If he was unable to bear the responsibility of his own people, he should not have gone for liberation of Bangladesh . Such an attitude of Sheikh Mujib proved that he also carried forward the AIML legacy of Muslim expansionism in Assam . He was an equal partner in implementation of the geo-political design of Pakistan to destabilise Assam and balkanise it on the basis of religion. Z.A Bhutto had spelt out this design as far back as in 1968. "The late Prime Minister of Pakistan, Z.A.Bhutto, wrote about the geo-political aims of Pakistan in 1968 in his book, The Myth of Independence where he elaborated that it would be wrong to think that Kashmir is the only dispute that divides India and Pakistan, though it is undoubtedly the most significant one, at least is nearly as important as the Kashmir dispute is that of ASSAM and some districts adjacent to East Pakistan" (Insurgency in North-East India-The Role of Bangladesh, Edited by Dipankar Sengupta and Sudhir Kumar Singh, Authors Press, 2004, Page 73-74).

Even after liberation, a huge number of Bangladeshi Muslims stayed back in Assam and helped their co-religionists in influencing the electoral politics of this state. They not only further increased the demographic imbalance in the state but also scared the Assamese middle class of the danger to their socio-cultural identity. One may like to recall that it was a shocking revelation of detection of thousands of Bangladeshi Muslims in the revision of electoral rolls in Mangaldoi Parliamentary constituency in 1979, which sparked the Assam agitation led by All Assam Students Union (AASU) against the Bangladeshi infiltrators.

When the Assam agitation reached to its climax and turned violent, two separate delegations one of legislators (16) led by Janata Party leader Golap Barbora and another of writers(4) led by Dr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya

emphatically narrated the alarming problem of illegal Muslim immigration in Assam in their respective memorandum to the Rajya Sabha Committee of Petitions. Seventy-third Report of the Committee of Petitions, Rajya Sabha dated March 22, 1982 while quoting the memorandum said:

"The official statistics showed that a total of 2,20,690 Pakistani infiltrators were detected in the state during the period 1950-1961 and another 1,92,339 were spotted in the following decade. During the Bangladesh War of Liberation (1971) a total of 1,00,000 immigrants stayed behind even after Independence of their country. ... The prime factor responsible for this abnormal growth (of Muslims) was the geo-political ambition of Pakistan over Assam" (Page 2 of the Report).

The Report quoting the memorandum of Legislators led by Golap Barboria maintained:

"No sovereign nation can permit the influx of foreign nationals into its territory. But the North Eastern region of the country in general and Assam in particular have been experiencing the area being utilised as the dumping ground for a large numbers of foreigners being vomited out by a neighbouring country since a long time. Besides, a large number of such foreigners were appeased with political rights by entering their names in the voters' list of the state for petty political games at the instance of the vested political forces that were at the helm of affairs since Independence" (Ibid.).

The Report quoting the memorandum signed by the writers of Assam said:

"That the problem of infiltration of foreigners in large scale has reached such a stage that unless immediate drastic steps were taken to solve it, the state of Assam, and for that matter, the entire North Eastern Region, faces the danger of being over run by foreigners in the next few years". The memorandum also quoted the written address of the Chief Election Commissioner to the Chief Election Officers Conference at Ootacamund on 24th September 1978. He said: "I would like to refer to the alarming situation in some states, specially in the North Eastern Region, wherefrom disturbing reports are coming regarding large scale inclusion of foreign nationals in the electoral rolls". Referring to Assam the Chief Election Commissioner further said: "The influx has become a very regular feature. I think that it may not be wrong assessment to make that on the basis of increase of 34.98 percent between the two Censuses (1961-1971), the increase that is likely to be recorded in the 1991 Census would be more than 100 percent over the 1961 Census. ..." Another disturbing factor in this regard is the demand made by the political parties for the inclusion in the electoral rolls of the name of such migrants who are not Indian citizens" (Ibid. Page 18-19).

Replying to the debate in Rajya Sabha, the Home Ministry maintained that "the Government is fully seized of the matter. Efforts towards finding a solution satisfactory to all concerned are continuing" (Ibid. Page 25).

During negotiation with the agitating AASU leaders, the Government wanted 1971 as cut-off year for treating the immigrants as foreigners, which meant that all the alien infiltrators, who settled in Assam between 1951 and 1971 were to be accorded Indian citizenship. However, the negotiation broke down as AASU insisted on January 1951 as cut-off year. One fails to understand that why Government of India did not take a tough stand on the cut-off year for the citizenship on the basis of the National Register of 1951? Since infiltrators were the foreigners they would not have been given the citizenship of the country. Justice M.C.Chagla, former Education Minister once said:

"We have our constitution, we have citizenship laws. There are decisions by the highest courts to indicate who is a national and who is a foreigner. What does it matter when a person came to Assam if he is not a national but a foreigner. The year of his entry does not change his legal status. Unnecessary complications have been introduced by talking of the cut-off year" ('Assam's Agony' by Amiya Kumar Das, Lancer's Publication Delhi, 1982, Page 132). Such logic of an eminent personality had no meaning in the vote bank politics of the Congress.

When the movement picked up momentum the Congress Government at centre led by Indira Gandhi pushed legislation in Parliament in 1983 called Illegal Migrants Determination by Tribunal (IMDT) Act. Tribunal was set up in each district of Assam to decide upon the presence of illegal migrants. Under IMDT Act onus lied on prosecution to

prove before the tribunal that the suspect was foreigner. This was against the provision of the Foreigner Act under which suspect was to prove his or her Indian citizenship. This lacuna in the new Act hardly brought desired result. Ironically, AASU leaders never raised this point assertively and after repeated negotiations signed Assam Accord in the early hour of August 15, 1985. Violating all the constitutional provisions, the Accord accepted the infiltrators between 1951 to 1971 as genuine citizens of the country. The Accord maintained 1971 as cut-off year for detection, deletion from voters' list and deportation.

Assamese people, who were tired of long agitation from 1979 to 1985 celebrated the Accord. The power hungry AASU leaders, while taking it as their first political victory formed a political organisation namely Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and contested subsequent Assembly election held by the end of 1985. As expected, they got a landslide victory and formed Government. Soon after forming the Government, they fell into the trap of vested interests and the problem of infiltration went to the back burner. Meanwhile, ULFA an off shoot of AASU/AGP raised armed rebellion against Government of India for cessation of Assam from India .

The people belonging to Bengali descent apprehended a danger to their deportation following the Assam Accord but thanks to Muslim lobby, the process of detection, deletion and deportation remained as slow as it was before the Accord. One may laugh to know that " between 1983 to 2000, the sixteen tribunals in various districts.... have located about 10,000 illegals (immigrants) of which a bare 1,400 have been deported" (Rites of Passage by Sanjoy Hazarika, Penguin Books, 2000, Page 70).

Ironically, even after the alarming report on the 'demographic invasion' by Bangladesh by the Governor of Assam in 1998 the problem of Muslim infiltrators remains as acute in Assam as ever. Report on 'Illegal Migration into Assam as submitted to the President of India by the Governor, Lt. Gen.(Retd.) S. K. Sinha in 1998 "warned that if the present trends are not arrested, the indigenous people of Assam would be reduced to a minority and there may, in course of time, be a demand for the merger of Muslim dominated bordering districts with Bangladesh" (Insurgency in North-East India: The Role of Bangladesh - Dipankar Sengupta -Sudhir Kumar Singh, Authorspress, Delhi 2004, Page 73). Governor's report, which called the infiltration a "national threat" and the report "worked out by Group of Ministers, headed by Union Home Minister in 2001 noted that more than 15 million illegal immigrants have entered India over the last five decades from Bangladesh, an intrusion that has completely changed the demography of large parts of Assam, Meghalaya, West Bengal, Tripura and Bihar" (Ibid.).

"The 1991 census shows that the Muslim population of the country increased by 4.02 million, or 65.47 per cent over that of 1971, in Assam the increase has been by 77.42 per cent. Muslims now form a majority in the district of Dhubri (70.42%), Goalpara (50.18%), Barpeta (56.07%) and Hailakandi (55.18%)" (Insurgency in North-East India-The Role of Bangladesh, Edited by Dipankar Sengupta and Sudhir Kumar Singh, Authors Press, 2004, Page 51). In addition to these four Muslim majority districts other five districts namely Bongaigaon (32.74 %), Morigaon (45.31 %), Nagaon (47.19 %), Karimganj (49.17 %) and Cachar (34.49 %) are having Muslim population varying between 32.74 percent to 49.17 percent. "Although the 2001 Religion census is yet to be declared, an independent analysis that was conducted seems to show that there has been a sizeable growth in population among Muslims in Assam . It records that as a community the Muslims had registered an increase of 16.17 percent growth in 2001 figures (Terror Sans Frontier:Islamic Militancy in North India by Jaideep Saikia, Ford Fellow, July 2003, page 17).

"According to a study conducted by a few scholars of Toronto University and the American Academy of Arts and Science, 15 Million Bangladesh nationals have infiltrated in India . According to another study done by another American organisation, namely, The Advancement of Science, 20 million Bangladesh nationals are presently staying in India" (The Silent Invasion by Hiranya Kumar Bhattacharyya, Spectrum Publications, Guwahat:Delhi, 2001, Page 83). Muslim infiltration from Bangladesh into India is somewhere between 10 millions to 20 millions (Pioneer dated 22.9. 2004 by S.Gurumurthy, a widely known economists). Despite these observations on infiltration, Bangladesh never accepted the illegal migration of its people and often blamed India for deliberately pushing out its principal religious minority to their territory. Infiltration being one of the reasons behind the troubled relation between the two countries but Bangladesh in assistance with Pakistan continues fighting against India for Islamic expansionism as a

result Assam has become its first victim. The political leadership as well as the officials, who govern the country are fully aware of this hard reality of infiltration but ironically they close their eyes due to the expediency of the vote bank politics. In absence of any accountability they overlooked the problem of undocumented illegal immigrants settled in Indian soil and threw the Assamese in the cesspool of Muslim vote bank politics.

"The Assam Police claimed to have arrested four hardcore ISI functionaries arrested by Assam Police on August 7, 1999. It was disclosed by them that "ISI had plans to train 10000 people in Assam for jehad to liberate Assam and establish an Islamic country comprising the territory of the state and some other parts of North-Eastern India" (Insurgency in North-East India-The Role of Bangladesh, Edited by Dipankar Sengupta and Sudhir Kumar Singh, Authors Press, 2004 Page 74).

One may wonder how the Muslim population of Assam from 19, 81,857 in 1951 increased to 63,73,204 in 1991. Census figure suggests over 30 percent growth in Muslim population of Assam after 1951. Taking into account the pace of growth rate between 1951 to 1991 the Muslim population in Assam might have increased to at least 33 percent by 2005. It means the present Muslim population in the State might have increased to another 3 percent. On the other hand Hindu population in the State decreased from 72.51 percent in 1971 to 67.13 percent in 1991. It means the decrease rate of about 5 percent in 20 years. If the trends are allowed to continue a day will come when indigenous people of State may come under Islamic subjugation and would ultimately be forced to face a serious threat to their identity as happened in the case of Kashmir (Terror Sans Frontier: Islamic Militancy in North India by Jaideep Saikia, Ford Fellow, July 2003).

After 22 years of the enactment of IMDT Act the Supreme Court repealed it in last July. The Muslim leaders, who are not happy with the verdict of the highest court in the country already started their arm twisting approach to ensure that the ruling party at centre could bring another legislation or ordinance for a substitute of IMDT Act. Baduddin Azmal, President Jaiat - Ulema -e- Hind , Assam expressed his anguish against the Congress for its failure to defend the IMDT Act. He is also exploring the possibility of mobilising the various Muslim organisations to bring them under a political party for contesting next year Assembly elections. Muslims now constitute over 30 percent of about 26 million population of Assam . They are now at the centre stage of Assam politics due to their commanding influence in about 40 of the total 126 Assembly constituencies. Sensing the mood of the Muslim leaders all the political parties except the Bhartiya Janata Party have already started hobnobbing with Muslim leaders for electoral alliance with them for next year Assembly elections in the state. It is an irony of fate that even AGP and its splinter group AGP (Progressive), whose leaders had led a high voltage agitation against the immigrants are also speaking the same language to appease the Muslim leaders for their support in election as Congress has been doing since Independence .

The higher growth of Muslim population in Assam due to unrestricted infiltration for consolidating the Muslim votes is a threat to its socio-cultural subjugation. It is one of the major sources of bitterness and tension in the region. Now the political clout of Muslim leaders is so strong that no political party is in a position to take a tough stand against the illegal immigrants in this state. But it is ridiculous that United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), an offshoot of ASSU, which fought for detection, deletion (from voters' list) and deportation of these foreigners - demands cessation of Assam from India with the support of same Bangladesh and Pakistan against whom they had launched agitation. Due to lack of vision they do not understand the design of the communal politics of the Muslims of Assam and neighbouring Bangladesh . They must know that once, Assam is ceded from India , the Muslim militants will throw away the Hindus in Assam as they did in Pakistan and Bangladesh . Their condition will be same as of the Kashmiri Pundits. They must take a lesson from the political vision of the former leaders of Assam like Gopi Nath Bordoloi, Bisnu Ram Medhi and B.P.Chaliha who even at the cost of humiliation by the Congress High Command never thought of secession and pursue their political fight against infiltration to the best of their capacity.

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POLITICS OF INFILTRATION - A Threat to Socio-cultural Identity of Assam ?

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<http://www.saag.org/%5Cpapers16%5Cpaper1557.html>

<http://www.assam.org/news/how-bangladeshi-muslims-wiped-assamese-out-their-own-land>