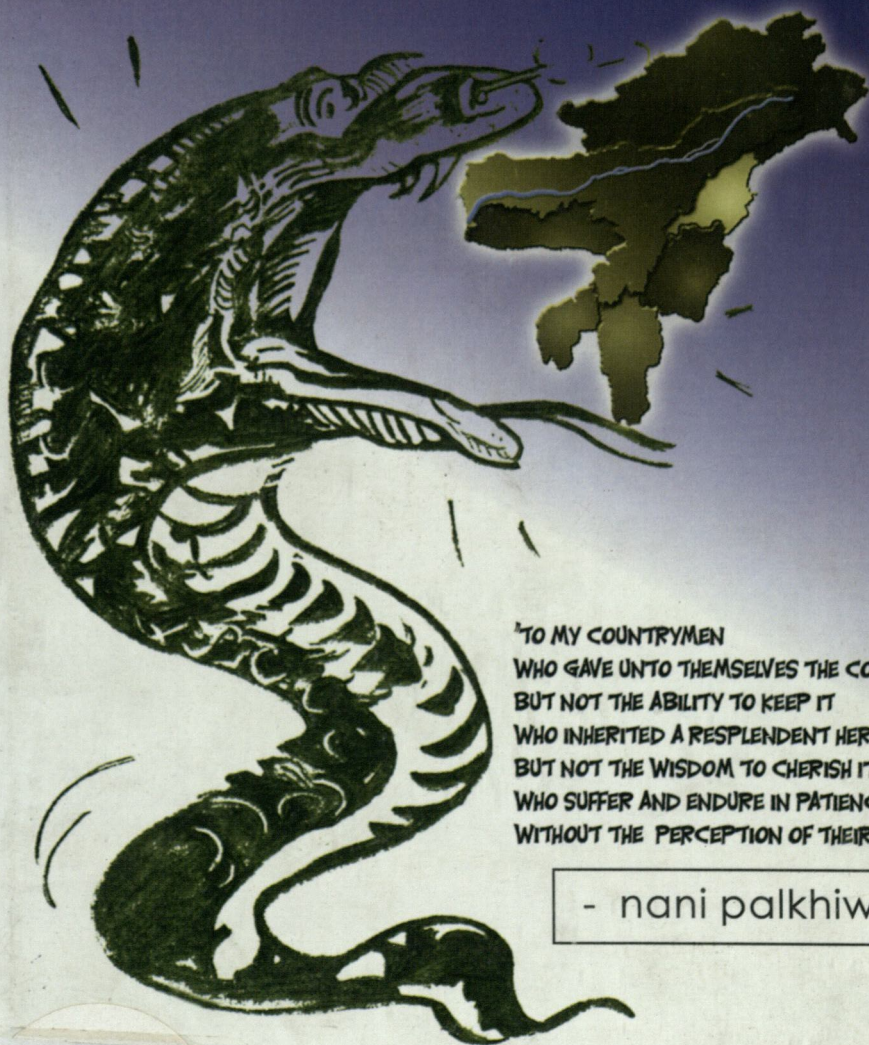


THE SILENT INVASION

(Assam *Versus* Infiltration)



TO MY COUNTRYMEN
WHO GAVE UNTO THEMSELVES THE CONSTITUTION
BUT NOT THE ABILITY TO KEEP IT
WHO INHERITED A RESPLENDENT HERITAGE
BUT NOT THE WISDOM TO CHERISH IT
WHO SUFFER AND ENDURE IN PATIENCE
WITHOUT THE PERCEPTION OF THEIR POTENTIAL'

- nani palkhiwala

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Foreword By Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi

HIRANYA KUMAR BHATTACHARYYA

Assam and her indigenous people are today confronted by an unprecedented crisis inasmuch as the demographic avalanche from Bangladesh continues to overwhelm the entire State. The unabated infiltration from erstwhile East Bengal/East Pakistan and *now* Bangladesh, is not a new phenomenon. It has a long history, first engineered by colonial rulers and subsequently promoted by fundamentalist forces, aided by political brokers. Neither successive Central or State Governments can claim to have been alive to the emerging threat to national security and Assam's existence as an integral part of India. Still worse, the Election Commission of India has so far simply been an onlooker of the process of Assam's electoral rolls being flooded with the names of lakhs of Bangladeshi infiltrators. Even the legendary "Assam Movement", spread over six long years, failed to come to grips with the ever-worsening situation, thanks to the self-seeking leadership of the Movement. Nor has the appearance of the ISI on the scene, helped matters. Obviously, the recent mass killings of Bihari people and other non-Assamese, and the resultant exodus is aimed at creating more opportunities for illegal migrants to step in and fill the gap. The conspirators, well-aided by the ISI are trying to create a civil war-like situation in Assam. Vote-bank politics have dominated the political scene in Assam, ever since Independence and the future depends on how far this unholy development and other factors detailed in this book, can be neutralised.



An ex-IPS officer (1958) known for his dare-devil drive against organised crime and planned trans-border infiltration H.K. Bhattacharyya, is even better known for his thought-provoking writings in Assamese. A first class M.A. in Political Science from the Allahabad University and the topmost trainee from the Australian Police Academy (1972), he evinced keen interest in Assam's socio-economic problems from his student days.

His *Prison Diaries* written during two terms of detention under the NSA, and other Assamese books have proved his mettle of being a forceful advocate of Assam's causes and an uncompromising political activist. His close familiarity with the economy of Assam and deep insight into its problems have found full expression in the fresh strategy he has put forward in this book. His stand is further vindicated by certain ominous developments recently whereby an open proposal was made by certain interested quarters for a Confederation of Bangladesh which proposed to include Assam as well.

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THE SILENT INVASION
(Assam versus Infiltration)



HIRANYA KUMAR BHATTACHARYYA

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INTRODUCTION

SOME RELEVANT OBSERVATIONS AND LEGAL PROVISIONS:

“...The rest of India does not see us. If seen, we are not recognised. If recognised, we are not remembered. And we are not heard. This has been the charge of the citizens of the North-east against the Indian majority”. (*The Wounds of Indifference* by Rajmohan Gandhi)

“... The Assamese often think of themselves as a ‘forgotten’ and ‘neglected’ state within the Indian Union and as a neglected people in danger of being overwhelmed by migrant peoples and absorbed by neighbouring States.” (*Sons of the Soil* by Myron Weiner)

“...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. Unnecessary complications have been introduced about the cut-off year. What does it matter when a person comes to Assam if he is not a national but a foreigner. The year of entry does not change his legal status. Foreigners cannot remain on the electoral rolls of a state. They have no right to vote. If they are on the rolls, their names should be removed and precautions should be taken that they are not enrolled again.” [Justice M.C. Chagla as quoted from *Assam's Agony* by Amiya Kumar Das)

“... It has come to the notice of the Election Commission from time to time that large-scale inclusion of foreign nationals in the electoral rolls, especially in the northeastern region, has been taking place.

In August, 1975, the Ministry of Home Affairs instructed all the state governments that the state criminal department may be instructed to take immediate steps to check the electoral rolls, and if they discover the names of foreigners in the rolls, the fact may be brought to the notice of the concerned Electoral Registration Officers for getting such names deleted from the electoral rolls.

The Election Commission has also issued instructions to the electoral officers of the States and Union Territories concerned that if it is found that a large number of foreigners have managed to get their names registered in the electoral rolls, recourse should be had to provisions of section 22 of the *Representation of People Act, 1950* for getting the names of such persons deleted from the electoral rolls on the ground that they are not Indian citizens". (Statement made by Sri Atal Behari Vajpayee, the then External Affairs Minister on the floor of Parliament on 2/11/1978.)

"... The influx has become a regular feature. I think that it may not be a wrong assessment to make on the basis of this increase of 34.95% between the two censuses, the increase that is likely to be recorded in the 1991 census would be more than 100% over the 1961 census. In other words a stage would be reached when the state may have to reckon with the foreign national who may in all probability constitute a sizable percentage if not majority population in the state." (Statement made by Shri S.L.Sakhder, the then Chief Election Commissioner of India, during the conference of Electoral Officers held at Ootacamund from 24th to 26th September, 1978)

"... However, the Assamese are sore with the Union Government, some national leaders in particular, and their fellow countrymen in general over the indifference and the lack of understanding displayed in the matter of their trials and tribulations. Presence of a large number of foreigners in this sensitive region, they rightly believe, not only upsets the demographic balance and sets in socio-economic tensions but also jeopardises the security and integrity of this strategic limb of the country.

The illegal presence of aliens is indeed a national problem. But sadly, the untold hardships and sufferings undergone, and the sacrifices made by the Assamese during the prolonged agitation on the issue have neither moved the national leadership nor the general public in the rest of the country.”(*India’s North-East in Flames* by V.I.K. Sarin.)

“...We have got in our record the statement made by Sri Hiranya Kumar Bhattacharyya, who has served the Government of Assam as Deputy Inspector General of Police. It transpires from his statement that according to the official claims three lakhs of foreigners are already deported. However, even the names of those deported foreigners who have been enrolled as voters are not deleted from the electoral rolls.” (Extract from the report of the *Mehta Commission* appointed by the *Assam State Freedom Fighters Association* for enquiring into the circumstances leading to the holocaust before, during and after the forcefully imposed General Elections of 1983)

“...There is no reason why under-populated regions in the developed world cannot make room for planned colonies to relieve build-up of demographic disasters in countries like Bangladesh...”

“... A natural overflow of population pressure is therefore very much on the cards and will not be restrainable by barbed wire or border patrol measures. The natural trend of population overflow from Bangladesh is towards the sparsely populated lands of the South East in the Arakan side and of the North East in the Seven Sisters side of the Indian subcontinent. (*The Question of Lebensraum* by Sadique Khan as published in *The Holiday Weekend* of Bangladesh dt. 18/01/1991.)

“... Not only that Bangladesh has by far the highest density but also that others have several times more space to expand comfortably...” (Abdul Momin, Ex-Secretary, External Affairs Ministry of Bangladesh and ex-ambassador of Bangladesh to China’s observation as published in *Dhaka Courier* dt. 22/11/91.)

“A person shall be disqualified for registration in an electoral roll if he is not a citizen of India.” (Section 16(1) of the *Representation of the People Act, 1950*)

“No person shall vote at an election in any constituency if he is subject to any of the disqualifications referred to in Section 16 of the *Representation of the People Act, 1950* (Section 62(2) of the *Representation of the People Act, 1951*.)

“... If Hindu kills one Muslim, the Muslims should retaliate by killing three Hindus and the Government would support you. ...” (Quoted from an electioneering campaign speech delivered on 10/2/1983 by Abdul Ghani Khan Choudhury at Mairabari while campaigning for the Congress (I) candidate during the infamous and bloody election of 1983.)

The afore mentioned observations/writings/speeches/legal provisions point unmistakably to only one direction—that an unprecedented problem of serious proportion has befallen Assam in respect of maintaining her and her indigenous people’s identity notwithstanding the Law of the Land, let alone the relevant constitutional provisions. The cross current of communal politics bred in a particular fundamentalist tradition, has further complicated the situation, thereby confusing Assam’s problem of foreign infiltration, a life and death question for her, with the problem of the religious minority community as if every member of the said minority community has been accused of being an alien infiltrator! This is where the ultimate design and strategy of those fundamentalist politicians, promoting and supporting the cause of the infiltrators, militate against the genuine interests and grievances of the ‘Sons of the Soil’

Needless to mention that the history of human migration is as old as the emergence of *homo sapiens* on this planet. Right from the dawn of history, people have been migrating from inconvenient abodes, say, like caves and jungles to more convenient places, say, like the river-side, fertile valleys etc. in search of better avenues for better

survival and in the process people have moved from continent to continent, if not from pole to pole. And nothing objectionable and unusual about this had happened in the natural course of history without, however, any vested interests chipping in. However, the timeless 'time' did chip in and caused not only the emergence of numerous ethnic groups but also the 'Nation States', thereby, in the ultimate analysis, engendering and materialising the concept of land-ownership. Even after the conceptualisation of land-ownership and materialisation thereof, migration did take place entirely for economic reasons and not with any political motive or expansionist design. But human migration prompted by political motives emanating from fundamentalist expansionism, has emerged as a new phenomenon in the twentieth century, particularly in the case of Assam. In the past, human migration had not only enriched history but had also facilitated the emergence of unifying, integrating and consolidating factors destined to play a vital role in the nation-building process, which had consequently witnessed the emergence of many civilisations, some still alive and prospering while at the same time developing as synthetic civilisations. This has been so far a natural process, although the schools of fundamentalists are working hard to frustrate such natural and historical development.

Assam has been subjected, for about a century now, to this fundamentalist *Pan-Islamism* which has, for quite a few years, raised its ugly head through more than a dozen underground militant outfits. Unfortunately the Congress (I) and Assam Gana Parishad, the party in power in Assam, have so far betrayed total indifference to this ominous development, obviously for fear of forfeiting their immigrant Muslim votes. Trans-border infiltration engineered from within the country and without as well and inspired by the myopic perspective of the so-called *Greater (Brihattar) Islamistan*, is about to overwhelm a whole people of indigenous origin in Assam not only numerically but also politically, economically and culturally. It can hardly be overemphasised that both political and economic factors have combined to accelerate the process. More about this later on.

Once 'Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai' slogans had rent the air. Likewise, 'Banglabandhu Mujibur Rahman', the liberator of Bangladesh, had become very chummy with Indira Gandhi but had never agreed to take back the pre-1971 infiltrators from Bangladesh. Which is why, during the Assam movement, she was insisting that *All Assam Students Union (AASU)* and *All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad [AAGSP]* should accept 1971 as the cut-off year for the purpose of detection, deportation and deletion of the names of the infiltrators from the Electoral Rolls (ER). (Incidentally, the dominant leadership of the Movement, mostly drawn from the AASU, had no proportionate idea about the intricacies of the infiltration problem, nor were they were intent upon amicably working out a formula of solution. As it transpired subsequently, they were interested in lingering the Movement so that they might attain the qualifying age of 25 for contesting in the next Assembly election). Anyway, let us revert back to the context of Mujibur Rahman, a key figure in the present context as in respect of exposing/realising the real intent of the 'Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai' brand of Bangladeshi leaders. Way back in the fifties of the last century, Indira's favourite, if not blue-eyed boy, had without any reservation voiced his design in respect of the North East of India in his '*Eastern Pakistan: Its Population Determination And Economics*', which, briefly speaking, may be surmised as follows:

"The huge population of Bangladesh is an asset. Assam is full of forest resources. Also Assam has abundant resources in the coal and petroleum sector. Which is why, Assam must be a part of East Pakistan. (Bangladesh was then yet to be born). Then only, the economy of East Pakistan would prosper,..."

Maulana Abdul Hamid Bhasani, a peasant leader from East Bengal, had come, most probably being inspired by Sadulla's ascendancy and domination in Assam politics with a view to organise the immigrant Muslims and settled down in a 'char' (riverine island) under South Salmara Police Station in the undivided Goalpara district. The 'char'

subsequently came to be known as 'Bhasanir Char'. Bhasani possessed astounding organising skills but all in the name of Islam. Himself an uneducated demagogue, he was cunning enough to cultivate religious fanaticism amongst the illiterate immigrant Muslims, already a force to be reckoned with in the game of numbers, with a view to fulfil his dream of integrating Assam with East Bengal and subsequently with East Pakistan. True, he failed to realise his dream; but he left behind a bitter legacy of communal politics, still casting its ominously unhealthy shadow! 'The Grouping Scheme' was a shot in the arm for Bhasani; but the late Gopinath Bordoloi proved himself to be made of harder stuff while frustrating the said scheme. However, land-grabbing continued to be the main strategy for the immigrant Muslims to gain a strong foothold in the districts of Goalpara, Darrang, Barpeta subdivision of Kamrup, and Nagaon etc. In a largely attended meeting of the immigrant Muslims held at Barpeta in 1943, Abdul Rouf, a Muslim League leader from Dacca, had openly announced that "We must achieve with the help of the plough what the Mughal General Mir Jhumla failed to do with the sword". This was the mood prevailing then among the promoters of the immigrant Muslims just before Independence, resulting in the germination of serious clashes in the future. In fact, history is replete with instances of such frequent clashes both before and after Independence.

However, Pakistan and ISI were yet to enter the scene to operate with the same objective of not only grabbing land but also entire Assam, if not the entire North-East. Besides, international fundamentalist schools/organisations were yet to surface for boosting up the campaign for *Islamisation*. Since then tons of waters have flown down the Brahmaputra, the Ganges and the Indus, weaving a pattern fraught with the danger of wiping out the *Brahmaputra Civilisation*. No doubt, a serious clash of civilisations is on the cards, as is evident elsewhere outside India, with 'Petro Dollars' commissioned to play a very vital role in the said clash. Symptoms of such enterprise are already in evidence. It will not be out of place to quote a letter written by an NRI and published in *The Assam Tribune* of October 28, 1992:

"Some Alarming Aspects"

Sir,

Recently, I have come from London and will return soon. I would like to put forward some of the alarming aspects, which are taking shape in London.

The *Islamic Cultural Centre*, based in London, has been taking active role against the interest of India and Assam in particular. The Director of the centre, has taken some specific programmes for inclusion of a major portion of Assam, specially covering oil fields to Bangladesh with aids and help from a specific country and from the organisations of London. I may quote here few lines from newspapers, which may give little idea about the programme.

Arab Times (January 1990) says: "Kuwait will assist in a programme to provide aid for Muslims in Indian sub-continent, it was reported on Sunday. The programme sponsored by the *Islamic Cultural Centre* in London is to assist millions of Muslims of India with special reference to Assam."

Arab Times also says: "Bedawi suggested a plan to attract Bangladeshi Muslims, which then could take the number of Indian Muslims to 200 millions so as to give them more protection. He expressed his fear that such an opportunity might not come again and proposed that the plan be urgently carried out through the European Islamic Council and to delegate one or two persons to carry out a field survey secretly and discreetly so as not to create doubts among the Hindu circles which work to maintain its creed among its members. Bedawi also suggested that such preachers

should be Urdu knowing Arabs and co-ordination of their work should be through the Centre in London." (*emphasis mine*)

"Bedawi also said that there is an opportunity to attract more than 800 million Harijan Hindus who are facing attempts to force them to leave this creed and choose their religion."

It may be mentioned here that the number of Muslim tourists including tourists from Bangladesh has increased in India, vis-à-vis Assam and several confidential conferences were also held.

There are other significant aspects, which are difficult to be included in this column. It is more important that while transporting people from Bangladesh, large number of physically handicapped people and a number of people who were marked for several crimes were also deported to Assam.

I would like to ask all the people of Assam to look into this aspect very seriously, as it is already late to take any measure to prevent it.

"Yours etc"

"One Observer from London."

Incidentally, there was no reaction whatsoever either from the government or from the Assamese people to this international conspiracy of a tell-tale character. I wonder if ever the above-quoted letter attracted the attention of the State Intelligence Agencies and so many other Central Intelligence Agencies! On the contrary, the Union Government had been until recently appeasing the Arabian countries no end; but the possibilities of any of these

countries extending support to India over the Kashmir issue, ignoring the claims of Pakistan, did not seem even to be remote. In fact, Indian appeasement had so far delivered nothing in the face of the intense fundamentalist activities in most of these countries possibly with the solitary exception of Egypt.

The much-vaunted *Assam Accord* had promised much but delivered nothing. Even after fourteen and a half years of signing the *Assam Accord* the problem of illegal trans-border infiltration could not be solved. Rather the possibility of detecting and deporting the infiltrators, has been becoming remote with the passage of each day whereas various data and the latest *Census Reports* of India and Bangladesh clearly indicate that the rate of such illegal infiltration has assumed serious and ever expanding proportions as envisaged by Sadique Khan and Abdul Momin of Bangladesh. As a result, the indigenous people of Assam irrespective of their language, caste, creed and religion, are heading towards becoming a minority in many Legislative Assembly constituencies. In other words, the history of Tripura is being repeated here. In the case of Tripura, Bengali Hindu migrants reduced the indigenous people to a minority status and in the case of Assam, the role is being executed very efficiently in a planned manner by Bengali Muslims from Bangladesh. The Assamese people, by and large, would today welcome the integration of the pre-partition migrants from East Bengal and even the pre-1971 infiltrators in terms of the *Assam Accord*; but for them, that is not enough. For them, Assam must be a Muslim majority state, for what reasons and as a result of whose inspiration hardly needing any elaboration in the light of what has just been mentioned. The trend maybe discerned in a statement made recently by A. M. Majumdar, an ex-Congressman and presently a cabinet minister of Assam, who was inducted into the Mahanta Cabinet in 1996. Majumdar has been shouting from the top of the roof that there should be no harm if Assam became a Muslim majority state. Further, some other Muslim political functionaries of the same political/communal hues, have usurped the role of the Executive and have been issuing citizenship certificates

in the most illegal manner to persons of doubtful origin! More about this later . It may not be out of place to mention here that the aforesaid A. M. Majumdar, a lawyer-politician had nothing to do with Assam's community life, while administering the life saving drip to the communal virus, was, with the blessings of Indira Gandhi, the main architect of the most controversial and anti-indigenous people IMDT Act, 1983 (*Illegal Migrants Determination by Tribunal Act, 1983*). One is free to make one's own inferences and size up the situation in the context of Prafulla Mahanta's politics of remaining in power by 'hook or crook'. 'A turncoat' indeed!

Ground realities, today point unmistakably to one direction: That the possibility of forming the State Government by genuine Indian voters has already vanished. Which is why, immediately after the late Hiteswar Saikia, the then Chief Minister of Assam, announced on 10/4/1992 on the floor of the State Assembly that there were 30 lakhs of Bangladeshi infiltrators in Assam, there was one who could boldly and publicly threaten that the Saikia Government would be pulled down within five minutes unless Saikia withdrew his aforesaid announcement. Needless to mention that Saikia did withdraw the announcement in a hurry!

Obviously, the thinking section of the indigenous population, particularly the younger generation, is extremely disturbed over this development with the result that the atmosphere has remained agitational for years on end. In fact, the United Liberation Front Of Assam (ULFA) was also born a little over two decades ago in the context of the now well known 'Assam Movement' demanding detection and deportation of the alien citizens and deletion of their names from the Electoral Rolls, although subsequently ULFA too was tempted into the trap laid by the ISI of Pakistan and an ungrateful Government of Bangladesh. To be more precise, Assam's problem of militant secessionism, having originated from the vexed infiltration problem, is inseparably inter-linked with the problem of infiltration. In other words, this has continued to be the core problem of Assam on the political, the economic and the cultural fronts.

The infiltrator has imported in his trail many other problems for the entire country. The services of the infiltrators have proved very handy for Pakistan in spreading economic terrorism and narco-terrorism in different regions of India including Assam. To quote from *The Indian Express*, "Economic terrorism is a new and disturbing dimension that has been added to narco-terrorism which has been perpetrated by Pakistan for the past decade." [Bhavna Ji, *The Indian Express* dt. February 4, 2000]. Besides the presence of lakhs of infiltrators throughout the length and breadth of Assam, has facilitated the operation of ISI in respect of spreading anti-India feelings, raising other secessionist militant outfits, as well as nourishing the virus of naked and aggressive communalism. Preventive and prosecutive measures adopted so far by both the Union and the State Governments have proved inadequate, given the vast dimension of the problem. The strategy adopted by the so-called *minoritists* against any legal steps taken to contain the hydra-headed menace of the ISI coupled with incessant infiltration from Bangladesh has been to raise invariably the bogey of harassment to the people belonging to the minority community. Recently (in the latter part of 1999), four top ISI agents hailing from Pakistan were arrested by the Police in Guwahati and another of Indian origin at Krishnai in Assam's Goalpara district. In the wake of these arrests, several vital and useful clues about the operation of the ISI were recovered, resulting in unearthing of very many ISI links; but the Police were not allowed to operate freely without political interference due to the usual 'hue and cry' in the name of harassment to the minority community! It may be relevant to refer to a news item published on 6/2/2000 in *Amar Asom* and *Dainik Agradoot*, two leading Assamese dailies: According to this news item, *All Assam Minority Students Union (AAMSU)* has charged the Government with subjecting the minority community to indiscriminate arrests and harassment in the name of taking steps against ISI agents and activists of militant outfits like the *Muslim Union Of Liberation Forces (MULFA)*, *Muslim United Liberation Tigers Of Assam (MULTA)* etc. It has further condemned the arrests of its five activists,

including one Rafiqul Islam, the General Secretary of the Kamrup District Unit of the AAMSU. That there are Courts of Law to deal with such cases is totally ignored. Besides, the Police are the investigating agency and certainly not AAMSU. On what basis AAMSU has condemned these arrests, has not however been spelled out and throughout, this has been the pattern while raising the issue of harassment to the minority community. Should the Police have refrained from arresting them and many others only because they, belonged to the minority community?

As if *MULTA*, *MULFA* etc. have not sufficed to destabilise the law and order situation in the State, another underground militant outfit, namely, *Bengali Tiger Force*, has been formed apparently with the avowed objective of safeguarding the interests of 50 lakhs of Bengali speaking people in Assam, alleged to have been consistently subjected to absolute deprivation and sufferings! As such, a double-edged weapon is being used to beat the Police and the Executive. It has become the usual practice to brand any Police/Executive action taken in the context of what has been focussed above, as either anti-Bengali or anti-Muslim! There are instances galore of such mala fide and politically motivated accusations. As elections to the Lok Sabha or to the State Assembly draw nigh, the volume and the velocity of such accusations multiply very fast- for obvious reasons. No doubt, ISI has succeeded in fostering the mushroom growth of these underground militant formations and logically, the next step for ISI has been to arm and train them. The results are there for everyone (of course, excepting New Delhi and Dispur) to see. The latest news however is more alarming: According to a press report, quoting a Home Ministry source, as published in the bi-weekly *Agradoot*, ISI is working overtime to set up a joint platform for all the secessionist militant outfits of the North-East under the leadership of the *National Socialist Council Of Nagaland (I- M)*. This new outfit is proposed to be named as "The United Liberation Front of Seven Sisters". Needless to mention that all the disruptionist and secessionist forces have not only been receiving ready shelters in the infiltration-prone areas of the state but some

of the *char* (riverine islands) areas are also reported to have witnessed setting up of training camps for the ultras.

During the Chinese aggression of 1962, the Pakistani infiltrators and their sympathisers had hoisted the Pakistani flag at quite a few places in Central Assam, which generated a shock wave and alerted Delhi. The issue received serious attention and at the instance of the late B.N. Mullick, the then Chief of the Intelligence Bureau, the *PIP (Pak Infiltration Prevention)* Scheme was drawn up and implemented vigorously from 1964 until 1969 when Indira Gandhi rather abruptly stopped further implementation of the scheme under pressure from a very strong Muslim lobby. Thus the *PIP* Scheme was put in the cold storage. Meanwhile the Bangladesh Liberation War intervened and the floodgates for Bangladeshi refugees of all hues were forced open. Millions of refugees from Bangladesh entered Assam. On conclusion of the war, some of them went back and some did not. Their enormous presence was subsequently reflected in the Electoral Rolls (*ER*) of Assam, which instance hardly needs any elaboration! The case of the Mangaldoi elections which woke up the people of Assam will long be remembered in the history books as the Movement began in right earnest soon after. (Sanyayya : *Assam - A Crisis of Identity*)

This particular development has since perpetuated a curious and anti-constitutional practice and procedure: In all other democratic countries, the possession of citizenship is a prerequisite for acquiring the right to vote; but here in Assam, lakhs of alien nationals are claiming Indian citizenship on the plea that they have been exercising the right of franchise in the elections held in the past! This has in turn, motivated some unscrupulous MLAs and Ministers to issue citizenship certificates to persons of doubtful nationality, although an MLA does not really have the power to issue such certificates. A news item published on 11/11/1992 in *The Sentinel*, an English Daily published from Guwahati had the following caption as well as a reproduction of the document. The headline read:

“AFZALUR RAHMAN

ISSUING CITIZENSHIP CERTIFICATES. GOVT.'s SILENCE
RAISES GRAVE DOUBTS”

Ashoka
Logo

SHRI AFZALUR RAHMAN
MINISTER, PANCHAYAT & RURAL DEVELOPMENT, ASSAM
DISPUR, GUWAHATI-781006

Name : Atawar Rahman.
Father's/Husband's name: Mega Moulavi.
Village: Boro-Udmari, PS: Lakhipur, District: Goalpara (Assam).

Certified that the above mentioned person is known to me. He/She is known to me. He/She is a permanent resident of the said village and is an INDIAN (*emphasis mine*).

To my best knowledge he/she bears good moral character. I wish him success in life.

By a Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, NOV. 10: Unless the Assam Chief Minister, Mr. Hiteswar Saikia uses his authority to bar ministers of the ilk of Mr. Afzalur Rahman, the Panchayat & Rural Development Minister, from criminally and illegally issuing citizenship and permanent residence certificates to people, the obvious inference one could draw is that this Government is least concerned about the serious threat to the demographic composition of Assam posed by the influx of Bangladeshis.

The Sentinel had published a report in its issue dated October 14, under the caption "Criminal issuance of citizenship papers" wherein it was stated that Mr. Afzalur Rahman had been issuing citizenship and permanent residence certificates on specially printed stationery complete with government insignia to people. The report had also stated that a large number of such people armed with these certificates, had obtained government jobs in various places.

The fact to note here is that citizenship and permanent residence certificates can be issued only by the District Magistrates who are required to crosscheck the antecedents of the applicant before issuing these certificates. These are expressly laid down in the rules framed by the government of which Mr. Afzalur Rahman also happens to be a permanent functionary.

Secondly, under the rules, no minister is authorised to sign any government document like citizenship or permanent residence certificates. These can be done only by the officials authorized to do so on behalf of the government. Thus, Mr. Afzalur Rahman, being a minister, has violated the express provisions of the law and the rules.

However, what concerns the citizens of Assam is not so much the illegal aspect of Mr. Rahman's issuing the citizenship certificates, but rather the criminal aspect of it. For one, the people of Assam had to undergo severe trials and tribulations for six long years only because they wanted to draw the attention of the government to the fact that large-scale influx of Bangladeshis had threatened not just the demographic composition of Assam, but also the unity and integrity of India. As a matter of fact, the problem of influx has only assumed a menacing proportion today thanks to the activities of some politicians like Mr. Afzalur Rahman.

Any activity, which could add to the problem in the state, is viewed as criminal by the people. And since nobody knows if the persons who have been certified as citizens and permanent residents of Assam by Mr. Rahman are really citizens, his usurping the authority to issue such certificates is being viewed as a blatantly criminal act. More so when the *IM(DT)* Act restrains a genuine citizen from complaining before the authorities about the presence of foreign nationals.

The Chief Minister has repeatedly asserted in public that his government will not do anything, which could hamper the interest of Assam and its people. Here is then an opportunity for him to prove assertions to the people who are eagerly waiting for an announcement by him about the steps he had taken against his erring ministerial colleague.

The least he can do is to issue an advertisement in the newspapers restraining all officers not to entertain the citizenship and permanent residence certificates issued by Mr. Rahman or, for that matter, by any minister and declaring that he had seized all the stationary specially printed by Mr. Rahman.

The Chief Minister has to take the people of Assam into confidence on this issue of vital concern to them." (*The Sentinel, DT.11/11/92*).

Unfortunately, though not surprisingly, the Chief Minister preferred to remain silent! The form specially printed by Mr. Rahman proves beyond doubt that he has been issuing such certificates in the past also and only one such certificate has come to light, thereby exposing the deep conspiracy against the interests of the indigenous people of the state. This particular news item had appeared in several other newspapers also and a complaint was submitted even before

the Governor; but neither Mr. Rahman cared to offer any clarification nor did the government bother to take any corrective measures.

The press report published in *The Assam Tribune* of October 18, 1992, in the same context read as follows:

“From Our Correspondent-

DIBRUGARH, Oct 17-Detection of a permanent Resident Certificate here apparently issued under the seal and signature of a Cabinet Minister of Assam has caused many an eyebrow to raise. The certificate in a printed format in the letter-pad of Sri Afzalur Rahman, Minister for Panchayat and Rural Development, was reportedly detected here from the possession of one Sri Atowar Rahman said to be a permanent resident of Boro Udmari village under Lakhipur P.S. in Goalpara district. He is at present a licensed ricksaw-puller here residing at Naliapool area of the town.

Sri Bhudev Phukan, President of the Dibrugarh District unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party in a memorandum addressed to the Governor of Assam and submitted to the Deputy Commissioner here for onward transmission, sought to draw the attention of the Governor to the matter. The memorandum referred to the printed format of the certificate issued under the seal and signature of the Minister, and expressed apprehension that the Minister must have issued such certificates in large numbers. The memorandum demands a CBI enquiry into the matter and dismissal of Mr. Rahman from the Cabinet.”

It may be safely concluded that such certificates issued by no less a person than a Cabinet Minister, besides facilitating the receipt of various licenses as in the present case, are most likely to influence the enumerators while revising the ERs. Quite likely that the issuance of such certificates was resorted to after the Central Government had announced its intention of issuing Identity Cards with photograph to the citizens of the districts bordering

Bangladesh. Unfortunately, this proposal for issuing Identity Cards has not yet materialised. In any case, such measures will not yield the desired results if the system is confined to only the bordering districts, because the infiltrators do not stayput at the bordering district concerned and instead, have been reaching the nook and corner of the entire North East. How can one ignore the fact that a few years back, Bangladeshi infiltrators were detected in most interior areas of Arunachal Pradesh, never known for easy accessibility? Realistically speaking, it will be a great folly to issue Identity Cards before devising foolproof methods for determining citizenship and strict application thereof. At the same time, before embarking upon the campaign for issuing Identity Cards, the best way to go about it will be to pinpoint the infiltration-prone Assembly constituencies.

It was reported sometime back that the Election Commission of India had asked the State Government to furnish a list of Assembly constituencies where largescale infiltration had taken place. This was a preposterous proposition, because how could the Commission expect a government, whose very survival was dependent on these infiltrators, to co-operate in demolishing its own vote bank? One finds it very difficult to understand the Commission's stand and intention. After all, the Commission's own records pinpoint the constituencies, which had recorded unprecedented increase in their ERs. During 13 years between 1957 and 1970, the number of electorates in Assam had increased by 12 lakhs whereas during the following 8 years between 1971 and 1979, Assam's ERs had recorded an increase of 28 lakhs! The Commission cannot but agree that such unprecedented increase could not have been in the natural course. Besides, the Commission itself could have found out the constituencies, which had witnessed such unnatural increase in the ERs, if it had the intention to cleanse the ERs of foreign names. This apart, between 1966 and 1990, in some of these constituencies the increase in the number of voters, ranged between 75% and 200%. The Commission cannot be blind to this phenomenon as well. That is to say, there should be no difficulty at all while

finding out the infiltration-prone constituencies. Can the Commission afford to remain a silent spectator only like the State Government? Rather on the other hand, because of the government's inertia, the Commission should have been more enterprising if it was really committed to protect Assam from this demographic avalanche. After all, the Commission is armed with *Section 22 of The Representation of People Act*, which has equipped the Commission with adequate power to deal with such an abnormal situation, jeopardizing the very integrity of the Country, provided, of course, it does not yield to the pressure of politically and communally motivated vested interests. In fact, this has been the long-standing demand of the indigenous people of the state, to which the Commission has not paid the attention it deserves. The point must be driven home that even after the power conferred by section 22 of the ROP Act is invoked, the aggrieved has the option to go to the Court of Law.

There are other legal provisions also to contain the ever-growing problem. As for instance, some of the Public Sector Units and Tea Companies in the private sector are engaging cheap Bangladeshi labour and they can be prosecuted under Section 14 of *The Foreigners Act, 1946*, for harbouring foreigners illegally staying in the country. In fact, in the sixties of the last century, this proved to be a very effective deterrent and some of the enterprising and patriotic District Police Chiefs made liberal use of this legal provision.

An extreme situation deserves extreme measures. True, the moment some strict measures are stipulated, the issue is invariably communalised and a hue and cry is raised. But by whom and where? This is very significant and relevant for understanding the core of the hydra-headed problem:

Is it not the same set of communal leaders, their followers and progeny who had, during the Freedom Movement, rent the sky of Assam with the slogan '*Larke lenge Pakistan*'? Does not the ghost of communalism surface in those places where the Pakistani flag was hoisted during the distressing days of the Chinese aggression? With its back pushed to the

wall, the days of remaining silent for fear of being branded as communal, are over for the people of Assam, nay, of whole India. If the Bangladeshi lobby can make it bold to threaten to pull down the State Government, can't we even raise loud protest and that too, in our own home?

The *Sahitya Academy* Award winner, Sri Homen Borgohain, the most leading intellectual, journalist, essayist and novelist, renowned for his humane, secular outlook as well as his vociferous opposition to the legendary *Assam Movement* (while, of course, never denying the centrality of the issue exposed by the said Movement for Assam's survival), was also constrained to write on 1/11/92 in his editorial column in *Sutradhar*, an Assamese Fortnightly, then edited by him, about this ominous development. Translated, the said Editorial will read as follows:

“Since number plays the most vital role in a democracy, some Muslim leaders are trying to increase, by hook or crook, the number of Muslims in Assam. That may not be disparaging as such, provided the process takes shape in a natural and legal manner. But it is not possible to convert the Muslims in Assam into the majority ethnic group overnight in the natural course. Which is why, some power-hungry leaders are trying their utmost to increase the number of Muslims in Assam by crooked strategy. They never utter a word against the unabated, illegal influx of alien citizens into Assam; but they flare up in one voice if anybody claims that there are foreigners in Assam. Without scrutinising the ERs in details, they have already satisfied themselves by passing a judgement that there is not a single name of foreigners in the ERs. Now, there is not the least doubt that these Muslim leaders, irrespective of what they profess openly, silently want that the number of Muslim infiltrators to increase in Assam. Their words and conduct have betrayed this beyond doubt. After the Foreigners Deportation Movement led by some unwise persons, bereft of farsight, had totally failed, the audacious recalcitrance

of some communal Muslim leaders, championing the cause of the foreigners, had assumed an intolerably upward trend. These days, they do not react like in the past, in a humble manner with the help of reason and data. In their each utterance, they now bully everybody. They threaten that they can pull down the government within five minutes, if their demands are not conceded. Speaking briefly, having taken the advantage of certain intra-party weaknesses of the ruling cum Congress party, these communal leaders have commenced a new brand of blackmailing politics. But these leaders, blinded by their selfishness, have not considered even for once, how dangerous, the far-reaching consequences of such politics may become for the common Muslim people of Assam. Ninety-nine percent of those who had, during the Foreigners Deportation Movement of the last decade, had come forward to defend their interest, the life and the honour of the minority community, belonged to the Assamese Hindu society. Most of the Muslim leaders had then either remained silent or in consideration of their self-interest, had taken an opportunistic neutral stance. All should realise this that only the united stand of all progressive and secular people can safeguard the interest and existence of the minority community in Assam, nay, India. If, instead, the people belonging to the minority community, being misled up the garden path, by these communal leaders choose to come to clashes with the people of the majority community, then, of all people, the people belonging to the minority, will only confront grave danger. Unfortunately today, some Muslim leaders of Assam, having secretly taken help and the cue from foreign fundamentalist powers, have started spreading the poisonous virus of communal politics and thereby chosen the path of confrontation. If their foul efforts succeed, then another Foreigners Deportation Movement much more intense than the one of the eighties, will surface in Assam in no time and as a

result, those of the minority community who are weak on all fronts and backward, will stand to loose the most. The strategy and polarisation in respect of the Foreigners Deportation Movement, likely to surface in near future, will be totally different from those of the previous ones, because this time, the battle or the Movement will not only be against the foreigners but also against the expansionist, fundamentalist foreign powers and their brokers within the country.

Assam's social and economic crisis has assumed such serious proportion that there is no place even for one foreigner in Assam. Those who are holding the brief of the foreigners for sheer love of power and at the instance of the foreign fundamentalist powers and have chosen the path of political blackmailing, should have no place in Assam." (*Sutradhar*, 1-15, November, 1992)

Sri Borgohain who has been playing very effectively over the years the role of a watchdog against any violation of human rights and harassment to the minority community in the name of weeding out illegal infiltration, particularly during the Assam Movement, had to come out with these strong cautionary words and not a single leader of the minority community dared to join issue with him. All these controversies originate from the fact that these selfish communal leaders, yet to recover from the shock of failing to include Assam within Pakistan, have been very shrewdly confusing the issue of illegal infiltration with the problems of the minority community of Assam, obviously with their concealed motive of integrating Assam into Bangladesh in the future on the basis of sheer numerical strength. Meanwhile, demands for '*Independent Muslim Bangabhumi*' and '*Brihattar Islamistan*' are also being whispered about, while, of late, there has been mushroom growth of Muslim fundamentalist militant outfits as already referred to. But not a single Muslim leader of Assam has denounced these developments, thereby indirectly substantiating Sri Borgohain's contention. In other words, they are all conniving

and their silence has become vividly eloquent for the Assamese. The expansionist urge of some Muslim intellectuals like Sri M. J. Akbar, the then Editor of '*The Telegraph*' and subsequently a Congress activist, was thoroughly exposed on 27/10/92 in the editorial column of '*The Sentinel*', a leading English daily published from Guwahati in the following words:

The Sentinel

{Vol.X No.192 Tuesday 27 October 1992}

Sanctifying Immigration.

"New Delhi has no dearth of Indians seeking to persuade the Union Government not to take any drastic measures against the large-scale illegal infiltration by Bangladeshis into India and their enfranchisement as Indian voters. This is the powerful pro-Bangladesh lobby, which includes a few very influential editors and journalists, who have persistently employed their sophistry to sabotage any legitimate and purposeful move by the Union Government to contain this immigration. The latest piece of sophistry comes from the pen of Mr. M.J. Akbar, editor-turned-politician, in his article "Footloose and Border Free" in *The Telegraph* of October 25. The principal objective of the article seems twofold: (a) to justify the large-scale infiltration of Bangladeshis into India with the piece of sophistry that it is no more than a rejection by the immigrants "with their feet"... of Partition and a conscious and voluntary wish to settle down in a Hindu majority but secular state; and (b) to claim that a leader like Mr. L.K.Advani of the BJP who had opposed Partition have really no moral right to demand the expulsion of Bangladeshis, since that right remains only with those who accepted Partition.

The sophistry is self-evident in three of the points put forth. First, that people like Mr.L.K.Advani and the RSS theorists, who regarded the Partition as a "tragic episode" and "an abiding humiliation" and declared August 15 as a "day of mourning", have no right to oppose immigration from

Bangladesh now. This is like saying that when one grieves over anything...the death of a close relative, for instance...or calls something a tragic episode or a humiliation, one has *ipso facto* refused to accept the reality. There are innumerable instances of people saying "I find it impossible to accept that so-and-so is dead". Does one ever interpret this as the speaker's attempt at repudiating reality? It is merely a bit of rhetoric to underscore how grievous the loss is. Secondly, Mr. Akbar reminds us that Mr. L.K.Advani himself was a refugee from Sindh in Pakistan and therefore, should be more sympathetic to other 'refugees'. There are many prominent leaders in our polity today even apart from Mr. Advani who were refugees from Pakistan. They were not infiltrators. Their status and citizenship were clearly stipulated by the law of the land relating to refugees. It is futile to argue that 45 years after Partition, we can still have refugees from that part of the sub-continent, which (as Mr. Akbar himself asserts) was strongly in favour of Partition. It has been never our line to distinguish between the Hindu and Muslim infiltrator from Bangladesh. But even if one chooses to do so for the sake of argument, is Mr. Akbar talking about Rip Van Winkles who have woken up after four decades to find themselves in a land where they do not want to be? And how can the Muslims in Bangladesh who wanted Partition and the creation of a Bangladesh later on, now claim refugee status from a land they had carved out of India? Thirdly, Mr. Akbar would have us believe that Bangladesh has no expansionist designs. And this, after several Bangladeshi intellectuals like Mr. Sadeq Khan have made the Bangladeshi intentions clear on the plea of a "lebensraum" for Bangladeshis. This, after the Bangladeshi infiltrators in eastern and northeastern India have made a demand for a *Swadhin Muslim Bangabhumi* to be carved out of Indian territory. Would Mr. Akbar have us believe he is unaware of this? A Bangladeshi family, which has come to a slum of Delhi, is hardly thinking of a Bangla empire, he argues. And then... perhaps unwittingly- he reveals his mind. "Delhi is not Assam," he adds. The inference is quite clear: the expansionist urge is there, but it does not extend right up

to Delhi, it ends with Assam, and to people like Mr. Akbar, Assam is expendable when it comes to putting the anti-Partition blocks in their places.”

Now, if a man of Mr. Akbar’s status holds the brief for his co-religionists from a foreign country out to grab Assam, then what of lesser mortals totally blinded by religious bigotry and absolutely ignorant of the consequences to follow? And the result? The climate of prejudice, hatred and suspicion is further intensified with the common man being the worst sufferer.

A right answer is possible only in case of a right question. If the question itself is wrong, no amount of efforts will lead to a right answer. Likewise, if the politicians in general and the ruling party in particular, direct all their energies backed up by their strategies of dubious merit, for protecting the illegal infiltrators, then a solution to this vexed problem is bound to remain illusive. That is to say, without firm political will, the problem has been defying any solution with the *Assam Gana Parishad* Government (which came to power as a fallout of the Foreigners Deportation Movement, popularly known as Assam Movement), providing the latest example of lacking in the said political will. The enactment of the IMDT Act by Indira Gandhi and non-insistence on repealing this suicidal black law while negotiating the *Assam Accord*, further prove the point. Ultimately the matter had to be taken up in the Supreme Court by a few patriotic lawyers for invalidating this discriminatory, anti-constitutional Act.

Another movement on this issue is out of question, particularly after the naked betrayal perpetrated by the sponsors of the last. India must get precedence over Islamisation. The permanent and at the same time, peaceful solution of the problem would lie in educating and motivating the indigenous people of Assam, nay, the entire North-East and then it should be possible to organise the strongest possible public opinion against the danger looming large on the horizon. Needless to emphasise that there is no stronger weapon in today’s world than organised public opinion. No doubt, the creation of Bangladesh was the zenith of Indira

The Silent Invasion

Gandhi's power politics; but it was perhaps, at the same time, the nadir of the fate of the future generations of Assam!