CONCLUSION
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The problem of immigration in Assam is not a new problem. The problem persisted much before independence. Major leftist circles, in Assam have been claiming that the people of Assam have been opposing immigration only recently, that is at the beginning of the movement on the foreign nationals issue. But our analysis of the relevant data points to a completely different direction. As we have shown in the first and the second chapters the Congress leaders like Gopinath Bordoloi, Bishnuram Medhi highlighted the problem of immigration much before independence. We have also shown in Chapter VII that some tribal organisations have drawn the attention of people to this problem as early as 1940s. There were of course the vociferous protagonists of the Assamese identity like Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury who did try to organise Assamese opinion on the issue in the pre-independence period. As a result immigration always remained a live issue in Assam politics.

The British administration in Assam did contribute to the process of immigration. The Moamoriya Peasant rebellion in the last quarter of the 18th century and the Burmese invasion in the first quarter of the 19th century had left Assam at almost half of her population. Diseases like Kala Azar also affected the natural growth of population. But the
British Government did not want to be deprived of the land revenue from these lands, so they seem to have encouraged large scale immigration into Assam. To suit their colonial designs they made territorial adjustments and re-adjustments in the west and south west directions. They introduced the system of Inner-line Regulations in 1873 restricting the entrance of any person beyond the line so demarcated. These provisions prevented migration into the hill areas, but the British, as we have shown in Chapter II, encouraged immigration into the plains areas of Assam. To suit their colonial interest they opened the doors of Assam to immigrants.

With the growth of Tea plantation in Assam, the British planters in league with the government brought cheap labourers to Assam. While the plantation went on increasing, Assam's pace of development remained very slow not only economically, but also in areas like education. Initially the British Government as we have seen in Chapter II, did not strive in right earnest for the development of English education in Assam. The Jonaki-Age a glorious chapter in the history of Assamese literature had its origin in Calcutta. As there was limited scope for higher education in Assam, naturally majority of the Assamese youth could not avail of government jobs. But the British administration did require educated people to work in government departments and the planters required Babus in their garden. The few schools
that the early British administration opened in Assam required teachers. Educated migrants from rest of India, particularly the Bengalees, began to pour in. The British appeared to have made it a policy of recruiting educated Bengalee people for service in Assam. As we have shown in Chapter II even some of the Assamese like Boli Narayan Borah implored the government to bring educated Bengali people from West Bengal. This plea was in fact generated by the fear that caste Hindus would be swamped by the plains tribals. We have argued in Chapter VII that this fear was baseless because the tribal people in Assam are a part of Assamese life, they can never be a threat to Assamese identity.

Our analysis of immigration to Assam in Chapter II shows that the stream of immigration in Assam continued and it gained momentum during the first half of the 1941-51 decades and specially during the Muslim league ministry under the leadership of Saadullah. He pursued a policy of patronising Muslims. Saadullah appeared to maintain that immigrants were mostly landless and the only solution was to provide them with available lands. During his time, the problem of immigration in Assam became quite serious. When the immigrants after occupying all vacant available lands threatened to swamp land even in and around Assamese villages the problem reached a most critical point. Apprehending the danger, the Congress Government in Assam introduced the line system in
1920. But when Saadullah came back to power, he even opened the grazing forest reserves for the settlement of immigrants. But later on, when circumstances compelled Saadullah to enunciate an official policy on the immigration issue, he formulated the 'land development scheme' which apparently sought to protect the indigenous interest by reserving 30% (thirty percent) of the waste land for them. As we have shown in Chapter II, this scheme was not implemented. The immigrants persisted with their unauthorised encroachment of the Assam Valley, which in turn generated a lot of resentment, among the local population.

We have shown in Chapter III that the problem of immigration and the possible threat to Assamese identity persisted even after independence specially in the face of the partition of the country. The 1951 Census report described the settlers as land hungry, because their hunger for land was so great that in their eagerness to grasp more land, they started encroaching on Government reserves and the lands belonging to the local people. During the communal disturbances in Assam in 1950, the Nehru-Liaquat Pact was drawn up. The free movement between the then Pakistan and Assam as provided by the pact, subsequently resulted in fresh influx of Muslim immigrants to Assam. In the absence of any efficient machinery to keep track of the Pakistani Muslim immigrants many of them eventually settled in the state posing themselves as Indian...
nationals with the help and support of their relations. But it is not merely Muslims, as a result of partition there was a mass exodus of Hindus from the then East Pakistan to Assam.

The Bangladesh war of liberation in 1971, has once again opened the gate of Assam for the immigrants. There was a heavy flow of both Hindu and Muslim immigrants into Assam. It is only natural that continuous inflow of outsiders in such magnitude should become an important issue. In fact since the mid 19th, immigration has remained a very sensitive issue in Assamese politics.

The agitation over the foreigners issue once again brought the problem of immigration into sharp focus. The agitation as we show in Chapter IV is a mass movement directed towards the preservation of the socio-cultural and political identity of Assam within the state of India. The agitation was sparked off by a sense of cultural insecurity which the middle class has been suffering for quite sometime. As we have shown in Chapter IV this insecurity has been reflected in certain political actions of the middle class. Ever since 1937 when in a memorandum to Pt. Nehru representatives of this class suggested that if Cachar and Sylhet were separated from Assam the people of Assam would be the strongest supporters of Congress. In the post independence period, the people of Assam have launched a series of struggles over the
issue of official language and medium of instructions. It must be admitted here that chauvinist elements did take advantage of the situation and tried to convert the issue into Assamese versus Bengalis or Assamese versus non-Assamese. However, the genuine fears of the Assamese which enabled the agitators to sustain the movement, cannot be overlooked.

The foreigners issue, to some extent, is the result of a conflict over jobs, land and cultural insecurity. As we have mentioned in Chapter IV the grievances against the immigrants are mostly articulated by the middle class which is consisted primarily of educated sections. The Assamese middle class continued to retain and nourish their relations with the peasantry. The strong ties between the Assamese middle class and the Peasantry has been manifested in the responses of the Peasantry towards the foreigners agitation. The participation of the Assamese peasantry in the agitation over foreign nationals issue cannot be understood without taking into account the tremendous pressure on cultivable land. We show in Chapter IV that Assam was subjected to the greatest population pressure between 1961 and 1971 with the density of population rising from 138 sq.km. to 186 sq.km. during the decade a rise of almost 35 percent. In no other state one-third increase in population density has been recorded.
While analysing the role of the left parties, in Chapter V we argued that the claim of a section of the left in Assam, led mainly by the CPI(M) that this movement was directed against them and that the movement is controlled by the ruling party to hinder the progress of the left in Assam, was untenable. An analysis of the election results show that in 1971, the CPI(M) did not secure any seat, but in 1978 they secured eleven (11) seats. According to them, the ruling classes were shaken at their success. As we argue in Chapter V the success of the CPI(M) in that spectacular election should be seen in the context of the Janata wave too. We have also argued that the statements made by some CPI(M) leaders - no matter how reasonable they seem if cited without reference to the particular group psychology that exists in Assam today managed to alienate the party completely from the Assamese people. It is also clear from our analysis that the CPI(M) was greatly concerned about the sentiments of the Bengali middle class in Bengal. We have shown that the CPI(M) contentions that the Assam agitation was directed against the religious and linguistic minorities and that it posed a serious threat to the unity and integrity of the country, had not been supported by facts or reasonable arguments. Their charges against the AASU and AAGSP were polemical in nature. They seemed to have turned a blind eye to the fact that these organisations wanted a solution within the Constitution of India and that hence the agitation can't be characterised as secessionist.
We have shown in Chapter IV that AASU and AAGSP's stand on the religious and communal issues became clear from the fact that they had been maintaining that the solution to the problem was elusive only because of the government's unwillingness to recognize the Hindus who had infiltrated into Assam in the 1961-71 as foreigners. This disproves the CPI(M) allegation that the movement was against minorities. We have argued that as a result of CPI(M)'s unreasonable position in the early phase of the movement, the majority people turned against them. If we compare the views expressed by CPI(M) and the Bengali middle class in Bengal, we found that the CPI(M) in Assam was influenced by the sentiments of the Bengali middle class in Bengal. But it must be admitted that the anti-communist and reactionary forces in Assam did take advantage of the situation to launch an attack on the CPI(M) and other left parties.

The CPI, on the other hand, stated that the leadership of the AASU and AAGSP raised the false cry among the people that the identity of the Assamese nationality was in great danger and that they were being swamped by the non-Assamese. The foreign national issue was sought to be dismissed as an Assamese versus non-Assamese issue and the threat to the identity of the Assamese people posed by unchecked immigration from across the border was claimed to be non-existent one fanned by Assamese chauvinists. But if we analyse the
views expressed by the CPI it is noticeable that there is a gradual change. Pramode Gogoi, General Secretary of the CPI, himself admitted that the problem of immigration in Assam was in a grave situation, and unless adequate steps were taken by the government, the unity and integrity of the country will be jeopardized.

The CPI(M)'s stand on the question of detection is a bit close to that of all Assam Minority Students Union and the citizens right Preservation Committee. Both these organisations made clear their intention of opposing any detection whatsoever. The citizens right Preservation Committee declared that anyone who had stayed in India for a period of 180 days was eligible for citizenship. We show in Chapter V that the citizens rights Preservation Committee came into being after the language riots of 1960 and is primarily a Bengali Hindu dominated body whose organisation is limited to Urban Pockets in Cachar and Brahmaputra Valley. The All Assam Minority Students Union on the other hand is a more recent creation which contested the 1985 election and secured 17 seats out of 126 seats.

Other left parties like the SUCI, RSP are not particularly influential in Assam and they have called for detection on the basis of 1971 as the cut off year. The CPI(M-L) fractions are sharply divided in their assessment of the
Assam Problem - with the Bhaskar Nandy group being totally opposed to the movement and the Vinod Misra fraction expressing its qualified support to it. These are the two major CPI(M-L) groups functioning in the state and organisationally both are pretty weak. We show in Chapter V that CPI(M-L) has generally taken the stand that the Assamese crisis has its roots in the nationality question that has occupied the central place in all the disturbances in Assam. This analysis seems to have struck a sympathetic chord in the minds of the Assamese.

It must be stated here that the left in Assam has a strong tradition of struggle but the left's silence and some time its muted approval of state repression particularly on the eve of 1983 has done irreparable damage to its image in the north eastern region. Fighting the election under police protection has completely alienated the CPI(M) from the Assamese people.

When the agitation on the foreign nationals issue started, it was the Janata rule in Assam and the Congress (I) at the Centre. The opposition parties mainly Janata, Bharatiya Janata Party and the Lok Dal has come out with their suggestions on the problem during the movement, but nothing was acceptable to the Central Government. If we go back to the history of the Congress Party, we find that in the
beginning the Congress Party was not against raising the issue of immigration. As we have shown in Chapter II, Congress leaders like Bishunram Medhi, Gopinath Bordoloi realised the danger which lay in immigration. They placed before Parliament petitions regarding the danger of immigration. But soon after 1947, when the congress leaders of Assam, instead of devoting attention to the immediate developmental programmes of the state, began to accept whatever policies the Centre dictated regarding Assam, the Assamese middle class got alienated from the Congress. We argued in Chapter II that an articulate section of this class felt that Congress has failed to fulfill the promises which they declared in the election manifesto. The result was that Congress had to depend on minority for their votes. This trend compelled Congress to adopt a new electoral policy in which they tried to form and mobilise small linguistic and cultural groups distinct from the Assamese. Their dependence on the 'Alis', 'Coolies', the OBC and the MOBC etc. is a manifestation of this approach.

The Janata Party was in power in 1979 when the movement started. But before they could take any concrete steps the congress party came back to power in 1980. So it was the Congress Party which faced the entire agitation. Because of the political interest mentioned above the Congress had no choice but to try and suppress the movement. In the process it got itself alienated from the Assamese people to the
extent that even after the signing of the accord, the party was badly defeated in the elections that followed.

The Regional Political Parties did play a role in the anti-foreigners agitation in Assam. But if we analyse the role of each regional party in Assam prior to the formation of Asom Gana Parishad we find that these parties were quite weak in Assam. The Purbanchaliya Loka Parishad which first realised the danger of immigration in Assam, decided to launch the anti-foreigner agitation in Assam. Later on they merged with AAGSP. The PLP declared that immigrants have succeeded in establishing some pockets in Assam and thus influenced the political aspect of some major political parties. The PLP is the first party, which declared in 1978 that for the detection of foreigners there should be a special branch and the detected foreigners should be deported and their name should be deleted from the electoral rolls. They demanded that municipality and panchayats should be duly empowered for the detection of foreigners. As we show in Chapter VII the PLP was concerned not only with the problem of immigration into Assam. It tried to focus the backward position of Assam and of the entire north east India. However it did use the issue of immigration to mobilise to large section of Assamese masses behind it.
The Plains Tribal Council of Assam (P.T.C.A.) did realise that there is a threat to the existence of the tribals in Assam. Without the participation of these tribal people in the foreigners agitation, the agitation itself would not have reached such a massive scale. The problem of immigration badly hit the tribal population in Assam. All the 37 blocks and belts reserved for the tribal people are on the verge of extinction. There was tremendous pressure on land including tribal belts. This is due to unchecked immigration of landless people from across the border. They realised that the identity of the tribal people is in danger. The history of Tripura provides a good example to substantiate their belief.

Though there is a difference of opinion regarding the support of the tribal people in the foreigners agitation, it must be admitted that besides a few, the majority of the tribal people came forward to participate in the agitation. Mr. Charan Narzmy, one of the P.T.C.A's M.L.S. pointed out that their people wholeheartedly supported the foreigners agitation. He himself expressed that the identity crisis in Assam also effects the tribal population.

The United Minority Front was established on November 1985. It was primarily a Bengali Muslim dominated body. This party completely opposed the accord which was signed by the
Government and the leaders of the movement. According to them the agitation was directed against them. But what they failed to see, is the difference between the Bengali speaking Bangladeshis and the Bengali speaking Indians. But the movement leaders pointed out that the agitation was only against the foreign nationals and not against any nationals.

The Asom Gana Parishad (A.G.P.) was formed only after the accord was signed. The important part that the issues of migration plays in Assam politics is proved by the fact that it gave birth to a party like the A.G.P which seems to have established its hegemony. The Party's support structure is mainly the Assamese middle class. The articulate section of the class provides the leadership of the A.G.P. It is clear that the leadership of the movement never went out of the hands of the Assamese middle class, and the A.G.P. which was born out of the movement remained very much in their hands. Because of this hegemonic positions in the Assamiya society, the interest of this section is given importance and by and large it came to be accepted as the interest of the entire Assamiya society.

The Assam Jatiyatabadi Dal led by Mr. Nagen Hazarika came into existence during the 1978 Assembly election. This party supported the anti-foreigner agitation launched in Assam, and later on merged with the AAGSP. This party
announced that unless this immigration is stopped, the unity and integrity of the country will be jeopardized.

Our analysis thus shows that immigration has remained an important issue in Assamese politics and it appears to have sustained a communal tension which has been throwing the Assamese society into crisis almost on a periodic basis. Despite the fact that a section of politicians have always tried to give it a religious colour, this tension is primarily linguistic, may be because the Assamese speaking community under the hegemony of its educated elite and middle class views itself as a nationality identified by a common language based culture. Their fear of being swamped by outsiders generates aggressive political action which in turn forces the outsiders to counteract.