CHAPTER-2
HISTORY AND POLITICS OF IMMIGRATION
OF MUSLIMS IN ASSAM

In order to understand the problem of immigration in Assam we must go back to the period of late 19 century when Assam was constituted into a Chief Commissioner’s Province. During the Ahom period, Assam was a sparsely populated area. There was scarcity of labour. So much so that when the Ahom kings gave land to a person or to an institution, they had to give paiks\(^1\) with it. Sir Charles Elliot, Chief Commissioner, Assam (1881-1885), for the first time alluded to the existence in the Brahmaputra Valley of large areas of waste land-good flat alluvial land, awaiting the sickle and the plough to produce large crops. Thus a new interest was generated by Elliot and the Government of India began to give thoughts to the settlement of these vast tracts by agriculturists from Bengal and Bihar. During the next twenty years, they considered various plans. But sharp differences of opinion between the Chief Commissioner and the Government of India ultimately led to the abandonment of the idea of planned settlement by Sir Henry Cotton in 1899.\(^2\)

Farmer migrants from Bengal districts of Mymensingh, Pabna, Bogra and Rangpur continued to come in small numbers. But as the century advanced this migration took the form of large scale influx into the Brahmaputra Valley and ultimately became basically economic problem, a

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\(^1\) They were the servants for three months in a year and enjoyed rent free tenure in return of such services to the state. For details on Park system see N.C. Dutta, Land Problems and Land Reforms in Assam, New Delhi, 1968, p. 3.

matter of extremely complicated controversy with ramifications into social, political, cultural and linguistic aspects of Assam's life. It is relevant to observe that the Bengal immigrants and their descendant furnish about seventy seven percent of Assam Muslim population. As eighty five percent of them came from Mymensingh, it was not surprising that the term *Mymenshinghias* became synonymous with immigrant.³

The administrative reorganisation of Assam into a Chief Commissionerhip in 1874, added about twentyfour lakhs of people to the existing total of about fifteen lakhs. Of this, the Muslims numbered 11,04,601 or 28.8 percent. But in the Brahmaputra Valley, there were only 1,76,109 Muslims out of a total population of 19,15,988 and they constituted 9.2 per cent of that total.

Mymensingh was the most populous of all the Bengal districts nearest to Assam next to Goalpara. In 1874, the total population of the district was 23,51,700 which was 4,35,707 more than the total population of all the Brahmaputra Valley districts.⁴ There were four and a half million acres of land in the district of which about half was cultivated and the other half included waste and other categories of land whereas in Assam, the total cultivable waste land was 67,79,978 acres of which 12,58,277 acres were cultivated. However, according to the District Administration Report of 1873-74 in an ordinary year, the production was estimated to about 135 lakhs of

³ Ibid., p. 23.
⁴ Ibid., p. 24.
maunds of rice of which 27 1/2 lakhs were exported, the remainder being consumed in the district. Of the total population of 23,51,695, eighty percent were agriculturists, ten per cent professionals, three percent fishermen, three point eight percent labourers and one point two percent followed hereditary occupations. The Brahmaputra devastated thousands of acres of land; on the other, the population increased so that by 1900, the actual inhabitants of the district numbered 38,00,058 of whom ninetyfive percent were landless tenants and only two percent were talukdars. The per capita cultivable land was sixteen kathas. This short account of the district would clearly show that any further pressure on land which was inevitable with the increase of population, would create a situation to escape from which, the farmers would have to seek new outlets. Of the total population of 39,15,068 in 1900, 27,95,548 (i.e., about sixtyseven per cent) were Muslims and 10,88,857 were Hindus. It would thus appear that in case of any large scale migration, the bulk of the migrants would be Muslim farmers.

In the Census of 1901 no one from Mymensingh was recorded in Assam. The Census Commissioners of 1891 and 1901 were of the opinion that the people of Bengal would not come to Assam as cultivators as there was no inducement and recruitment as in the case of the tea gardens. "Curiously enough, despite Bengal's longstanding congestion of population and scarcity of land, the mass migration of Bengalese into the Valleys of

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6 Ibid., p. 39.
7 Idem.
Assam did not start until after 1900".  

The next decade witnessed the beginning of large scale immigration of Muslim farmers from Mymensingh. The economic cause was, however, obvious. A detailed diagnosis was made by the "Bengalee" on 22 July, 1924 publishing an article entitled 'Bengal Peasants - Stream of Emigration to Assam'. It wrote that the density of population in Eastern Bengal had reached a saturation point and emigration was solving the problem of acute congestion.

The western part of the district of Goalpara including South Salmara, Lakhipur and Bilashipara was the earliest and most affected. The number of immigrants till 1881 was 49,059. The population of the district increased by one point four percent during 1881-91 and two percent during the next decade. But between 1901 onward, the men of Mymensingh advanced to Goalpara in large numbers. The decade witnessed a natural population growth of fifteen point six percent. The number of immigrants rose from 49,059 to 1,18,233 forming nineteen point seven percent of the actual population of Goalpara. The Census Report of 1911 was the first document on the extraordinary influx of farmers to the *chars* (River Island) of Goalpara from the Bengal districts of Mymensingh, Pabna, Bogra and Rangpur. Soon, almost all the available lands of Goalpara found suitable by the immigrants were covered. It was during the next decade that these Muslims spread to other districts of lower Assam and the colonists formed an important element of the

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8 Ibid., pp. 40-41.
population in all the four Lower and Central districts. These Muslims, almost without exception farm labourers and cultivators, came at first as single adventurers. But by the next decade, the colonists began to settle by families and not singly. It was reported that the men generally came first to secure the land and build houses and then the families followed. About eightyfive per cent were Muslims and fifteen per cent Hindus.9

In 1911, the total Muslim immigrants numbered 2,58,000 in the Brahmaputra Valley and 6,000 in the Hills.10 In Goalpara, they formed nearly twenty per cent of the population. The next favorable district was Nowgong where they constituted about fourteen percent. In Kamrup, they rapidly took up lands especially in the Barpeta Sub-division. During this decade, the settlers had not explored much of Darrang district and did not penetrate far from the Brahmaputra banks. But as the inflow continued and their number increased, they expanded further up the valley and away from the river. They the next decade, the settlers numbered 3,48,000 in the Valley.11 By the time, the entire waste land in the Goalpara and Nowgong districts had been explored by the immigrants. Barpeta could actually hold no more and Darrang district had already started being taken up. Sibsagar had, till then, been practically untouched but could not expect to remain so as a number of them had already settled in North Lakhirmpur. Thus, this advent of thousands of farmer migrants was a slow but steady process covering the Brahmaputra Valley

9 Ibid., p. 41.
11 Ibid., p. 115.
where there was no end of waste lands awaiting the cultivator's plough.

The number of Muslims in Assam, except Sylhet, had risen from 5,03,670 in 1901 to 12,79,388 in 1931. Thus in thirty years, the increase was more than one hundred and fifty per cent which, of course, included natural growth of population. Of the total, about half were women and children. The total number of Muslims in the Brahmaputra Valley in 1941 was 16,96,978 against the total Hindu population of 32,22,377. The bulk of them constituted more than fifty percent of the number of Hindus and were clearly immigrant Muslims. The decennial increase of their number from 1941 to 1951 was 2,98,895 and their number on the eve of partition was 18,46,457. Including Sylhet, they numbered more than thirtyfive lakhs accounting for thirty-four percent of the total provincial population and were only four percent fewer than the Hindus. The so-called indigenous Muslims were also included in the total figure as they were never enumerated separately.12

Between the years 1911 to 1971 there was a conspicuous increase in the Muslim population in the Assam Valley. The following table 2.1 presents the decade wise proportion of Muslim population in the districts of Assam Valley and indicates well, when and how the Muslim immigrants changed the ethnic structure of the valley.

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12 Kar, M. Muslims in Assam Politics, Delhi, 1990, p. 12.
Table-2.1
Increase in the Proportion of Muslim Population in Assam of 1901-1931.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>27.76</td>
<td>35.19</td>
<td>41.48</td>
<td>43.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>9.66</td>
<td>14.61</td>
<td>24.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowgong</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>17.73</td>
<td>31.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>7.61</td>
<td>11.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siloagar</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cachar</td>
<td>33.06</td>
<td>37.60</td>
<td>37.61</td>
<td>40.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>13.57</td>
<td>16.23</td>
<td>17.07</td>
<td>22.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Census of India, Various reports.

It is observed from the above table 2.1 that between 1901 and 1931 the proportion of Muslim population in Goalpara rose from 28 to 44, in Kamrup 9 to 24, in Nowgong 5 to 31 and in Darrang 5 to 11. C.S. Mulian stated that "this change is likely to alter permanently the whole future of Assam and to destroy more surely than did the Burmese invaders of 1820, the whole structure of Assamese culture and civilization."\(^{13}\)

The transfer of population on such a large scale completely changed components of population growth in the two areas involved East Bengal and Assam. The first decade of the century witnessed the involvement of only two districts, Mymensingh and Goalpara. This is also visible from the fact that Mymensingh district's percentage decadal population growth rate came down from 12.8 p.c. in 1891-1901 to 6.9 in 1911-1921. The following table shows

\(^{13}\) Mullan, C.S., India Census 1931, Manager Publication, Assam, Delhi, p. 64.
that the decadal growth rates for all the Eastern Bengal districts went down sharply in each successive decade 1901-1911 and 1921-1931 while the population growth rates for Assam Valley districts rose sharply starting with 1911.

Table 2.2

Percentage Increase in Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Decade</th>
<th>Mymensingh</th>
<th>Rangpur</th>
<th>Bogra</th>
<th>Pabna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1891 – 1901</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901 – 1921</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921 – 1931</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Decade</th>
<th>Goalpara</th>
<th>Kamrup</th>
<th>Darrang</th>
<th>Nowgong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1891 – 1901</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901 – 1921</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921 – 1931</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>91.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India – Assam Census Reports and Districts Census Handbook.

From the above two tables it is clear that the population of Mymensingh, Rangpur, Bogra and Pabna keep on decreasing while the percentage of population of Goalpara increases to 2 per cent in 1901 while in 1931 it increased to 15.8. In Kamrup it rose from 7 percent to 28 percent. In Darrang from 9 percent to 22 percent and in Nowgong from 30 percent to 91 percent.

Prior to 1937, the Muslim League had no influence in the politics of Assam. But after the 1937 elections, the United Muslim Party under the leadership of Saadullah formed a government in Assam. This government
pursued a policy of patronising Muslims immigrants. During the period
between 1939-41, Saadullah government allotted one lac bighas of land in the
Assam Valley for the settlement of East Bengal immigrants. Saadullah
appeared to have maintained that the immigrants were mostly landless and the
only solution was to provide them with available lands.\textsuperscript{14}

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. This situation was reflected in the report of S.P.
Desai in 1939. The report stated, "They came in numbers, raised (sie) sheds
and latter began to cultivate. The few graziers in the neighborhood are inca-
"pable of doing anything apart from protesting and appealing to local officers.
The only alternative for the graziers is to shift himself bag and baggage."\textsuperscript{15}

In post-independence days Assam had provided shelter to a large
number of people from outside the state. With the resources available at the
time of independence the state was not in a position to welcome further
immigration. But the partition of the country compelled a large number of
Hindus to migrate to West Bengal, Tripura, Assam and various other
neighbouring states. Under legal process most of these refugees were reha-
bilitated and given Indian citizenship. But taking advantage of the presence of
their own relatives or acquaintances in Assam, a large number of Hindus
came to Assam after partition. Hindu refugees came as a result of religious

\textsuperscript{14} Bhuyan, A.C. and De, S. (Ed.), Political History of Assam, Vol. III, 1940-47, Govt. of Assam,
Dispur, 1980, p. 263.

\textsuperscript{15} Desai, S.P., The Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1939, p. 10.
persecution in East Bengal and they also had the inducement to get rehabilitation grants and government assistance to start some business or profession in India.

At the initial stage of the influx of immigrants, the Congress Government of Assam had introduced a ‘Line System’ early in 1920 as per suggestion of the Deputy Commissioner-of Nowgong. The aim of this system was to isolate the immigrants from the local people by compelling the former to live and toil in particular segregated localities beyond which they were not allowed to settle.\(^\text{16}\)

Under the Line System, a line was drawn in the districts under pressure in order to settle immigrants in segregated areas specified for their exclusive settlement. The number of settlers including children born after their arrival, increased from an estimated three lakhs in 1921 to over half a million in 1931.\(^\text{17}\) Colonists were settling on government waste lands by families and not singly. They were better cultivators and hence, could offer higher and lucrative land prices to induce Assamese peasants to sell out portions of their holdings. As has been pointed out by Banking Enquiry Committee Report "local Marwari and even Assame money lenders financed the immigrants so that the latter could reclaim land and expand the cultivation of jute, rice and vegetables."\(^\text{18}\)

\(^{17}\) Census of India, 1951, Vol. 12, Part II, A.P. 72-73.
The Line System was disliked by the immigrants, and "when pressure were put on the government, it appointed a line system enquiry committee in 1937 under the chairmanship of Hocken Hull to examine the issue."\(^{19}\) The findings of the committee revealed that the immigrants both Hindus and Muslims, wanted immediate abolition of the Line System. But the views of the Assamese Muslims, according to the report were divided on the issue, while Assamese Hindus strongly supported the Line System.\(^{20}\) The Congress coalition government (19 Sept. 1938-16 Nov. 1 -939) could not arrive at any concrete decision and before it relinquished office published a notification, in November 1939 where by it prohibited settlement of land to persons, who came from outside the province after 1 January, 1938. "The resolution was not executed when Saadullah came to power."\(^{21}\) The Communist Party of India also urged upon the Saadullah government to abolish the Line System and to give lands to Bengali immigrants. Their stand was that "Government communiques of 1939 restricting settlement of land from 1938 was unjust and oppressive."\(^{22}\) They also said, it should be extended up to December 1944, as the immigrants had already settled.

The Assam Provincial Muslim League also tried for the abolition of the Line System. The Muslim League member Mayeenuddin Ahmed Choudhury argues: "Line System in Assam has no legal sanction behind as much as it is

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\(^{20}\) Idem.

\(^{21}\) Idem.

\(^{22}\) Assamiya (Bi-weekly) 5 October, 1940, Dibrugarh, Assam.
neither an act of Legislature nor an enactment of His Excellency the Governor.²³

The Line System acquired a new dimension when the Muslim League began to champion the cause of the immigrants by launching an all out campaign in rural areas. They announced that they would espouse the cause of the landless immigrants settled in Assam.²⁴ Later Saadullah, convened a conference of the members of the legislature representing different interests in 1940 and formulated a policy known as the "Land Development Scheme." According to this scheme a ban was imposed on settlement of immigrants in wastelands who had entered Assam after 1 January 1938, "The main feature of this scheme was the division of wastelands into blocks for indigenous Assamese and tribal people, scheduled castes and immigrants after reserving thirty percent of the wastelands for the expansion of the existing population."²⁵ Under this scheme, a special officer was appointed by the government to examine whether the proposed areas could be opened for settlement without any detriment to the districts normal requirement of grazing and forest reserves. The settlement was to be confined only to indigenous landless people and the pre 1938 immigrants. Besides, the flood and erosion affected people then illegally squatting in some 'lined' villages and reserves were also to be accommodated, eligible applicants were to receive wastelands in specified development areas on payment of stipulated

²³ Assam Legislative Assembly Proceedings, Vol. 1, No. 4, 28 February, 1940, p. 251.
²⁴ Idem.
premium, in blocks segregated for different communities as before. The government promised to put the scheme into operation as early as possible. The declared intention of the scheme was to protect the interests of both the indigenous and immigrant population.

As recommended by the Line System Enquiry Committee, it was decided to enlarge the units of restrictions and abolish line in predominantly immigrant areas. Thus, cancellation of Saadullah's Development Schemes was not followed up by any basically new policy. The Colonisation Scheme had been initiated in the period of Dyarchy and had obviously failed to check or control immigration except to the extent of somewhat segregating them in certain areas. It may also be observed that no Government in Assam ever tried to convince the Central Government of the need to check, control or prevent immigration. Secondly, no public leader or political party also tried to rouse public sense in preventing transfer of land to "foreigners'. Sir Reid by his policy only hoped that the restrictions outlined above would act as a brake on infiltration and avoid dislocation of peaceful relations in the villages and competition between various classes of settlers attendant on the opening out of new areas on a large scale.26

The land development scheme of Saadullah’s government was subjected to severe public criticism. This forced Saadullah to resign on 12 December 1941. Robert Reid the Governor of Assam who took over the administration of the province after Saadullah's exit "brushed aside the

26 Governor’s Resolution no. RR/42/19 dated 6 March, 1942, pp. 13-14.
decision of the Saadullah ministry on the ground that there were not enough wastelands in the Assam Valley to accommodate further immigrants.”

Saadullah became Premier once again in 25 August 1942. A.G. Fatten, Revenue Secretary wrote in August 1943, that the policy laid down and followed hitherto by the Ministry was of extension of colonisation areas for immigrants and re-examination of the necessity of reserving such large areas for professional graziers. Since March 1942 till then, an area of seventyfive thousand bighas was settled with immigrants, while the Grazing Reserves were yet to be examined. But in the interest of the “Grow More Food” Campaign many pending evictions were stayed.28

The Government of India had desired the extension of cultivation in Assam from 52.8 lakhs of acres to 57 lakhs during the year 1943, but the Assam Government felt that as the year had advanced too far, the target was not realisable. The Assam Government adopted the policy that no pains should be spared to increase the acreage under rice crops by as much as possible either by inducing cultivators to substitute rice for jute crops, by more widespread utilisation of current fallow lands or by settlement of new lands primarily for cultivation of food crops and particularly all varieties of paddy. Government decided to accelerate land settlement in Kamrup, Nowgong and Darrang, to extend areas of immigrant colonies and to settle more lands with immigrants owing to the imperative need of growing more

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27 The Assam Tribune, Gauhati, 31 January, 1941.
28 Government of Assam Memorandum on Wasteland and Immigrant Policy, August 1943, p. 7.
food. They impressed officers to bring home to the villages the need of growing more food crops. For the purpose they also considered deforesting a part of the Lawkhowa forest reserves in Nowgong. Proposals for throwing open grazing reserves in excess of requirement were to be immediately submitted. The Line System was not to be abolished as suggested by the Commissioner. Settlement of immigrants in lands previously closed to them might be permitted in certain areas.²⁹

It is clear that the Saadullah Government deviated from Reid's principle of 1942 in respect of eviction, preference to immigrants, opening of grazing reserves and allowing immigrants to settle in previously closed areas. In view of the continued influx of immigrants and these deviations, it appeared to the Hindu minds that on the plea of Grow More Food Campaign, Saadullah Government was encouraging immigration and opening out large areas to Muslims to increase their number. But the role played by his Hindu Cabinet colleagues has never been questioned or assessed.

The question of eviction and general policy of land settlement engaged the Government's attention since assumption of office by Saadullah. The Commissioner, Asssam Valley, was opposed to the condonation of encroachment on the plea of Grow More Food Campaign and suggested the allotment of land to immigrants in new areas e.g. North Lakhimpur for that purpose. But the Revenue Minister, Munawar Ali, was of opinion that where

a number of persons were due to be evicted, it would be better and more in accordance with the Grow More Food Campaign to leave them where they were for the present pending the revision of the policy of the Government with reference to eviction. He, therefore, asked the D.C., Nowgong, to suspend all evictions due. The Revenue Secretary suggested stay of eviction from areas of standing crops of three hundred bighas but the Commissioner would like to make it one thousand bighas. The whole matter, however, was left to the Minister for formulation of a modified policy for submission to the Cabinet.  

The Revenue Secretary in his note dated 1 July 1943 regarded the whole question from a purely administrative view and not from political and communal considerations which are unfortunately inherent in this difficult problem which naturally a popular ministry cannot overlook. He was, however, firmly convinced that the problem was mainly administrative but often there were political and communal objections to eviction. As regards the Grow More Food Campaign, he observed that there was a danger of misconstruing the object, its purpose being purely temporary for the duration of the war and confusing it with the long term land settlement policy of the Government. He admitted that the easiest means of growing more food was abolition of all restrictions on immigrant settlement. But he pointed out that in view of the well-known difficulty of removing the immigrants from lands

\footnote{Ibid., pp. 12-13.}
once occupied by them, such a policy might be disastrous if it was decided after the war once more to limit immigrant settlement. The restoration of the status quo would be far too difficult and Government would be forced to agree to its continuance irrespective of their previous policy. He, therefore, suggested a clear differentiation between short term need of growing more food and long term policy of land settlement.

S.P. Desai, a senior ICS man was appointed special officer to ascertain what portion of professional grazing reserves could be declared as surplus available for settlement. Desai reported that the "forcible occupation of grazing lands by immigrants had already taken place to a large scale even in the predominantly Assamese or tribal areas. His conclusion was that there was no surplus land available for new settlements." Ignoring the report, Saadullah's Muslim League coalition government threw select professional grazing reserves open for settling immigrants. He then threw open even the grazing and forest reserves which were earlier held to be inviolable. This resulted in innumerable clashes between the immigrants and the graziers. Public agitation was soon ensued against dereservation and settlement of land to immigrants. The Assam Jatiya Mahasabha, Sibsagar or Ahom Sabha, the Assam Provincial Hindu Sabha, the Assam Kachari Association and Assam Mouzadar association criticised the action of Saadullah. "The Hindu Sahba criticised the scheme of Saadullah's Government as an insidious move

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31 Desai, S.P., My Thirty Five Years in Assam (Bombay), 1965, p. 66-69.
towards creating a Pakistan in Assam." Suggestion was given to Saadullah by the members of the opposition to convene a conference so that the whole question of land settlement could be reconsidered. This time Saadullah did not consult the Muslim League and held a conference from 16th to 19th December 1944. The conference was attended by the representatives from different parties and they made certain recommendations. On the basis of these, the government passed a resolution on 16 January 1945 by which it was decided to keep the professional reserves intact. Reservation of thirty percent of the available wastelands as provisions for the future expansion of the indigenous people, a planned settlement of the residual wastelands with the landless sons of the soil and the pre-1938 immigrants and a system of protection to tribal people in belts specially reserved for them. It was also agreed that the integrity of the grazing reserves should be strictly maintained and all trespassers evicted. "The decisions of course were not unanimous. Two Muslim League participants both of them immigrants dissented. Despite the fact that many parties were represented the Congress party claimed apparently the outcome of the conference was the victory of the Congress."

On 1 October, 1945, the Assam Legislature was dissolved and on 11 February, 1946, a Congress ministry was formed in Assam headed by Gopinath Bordoloi. But the Muslim League succeeded in establishing tremendous influence on the Muslim population of Assam by opposing the eviction

32 The Assam Tribune, Gauhati, 24 October, 1944.
33 Assam Pradesh Congress Committees leaflet issued by H.Nath Baruah and Hemkanta Baruah APCC Publicity Dept., APCC Office, Gauhati, 1945.
policy of the Congress Government headed by Gopinath Bordoloi. The problem of immigrants who came from Bengal and settled in certain districts of Assam becoming chronic issue in provincial politics. As soon as the Congress ministry was installed in Assam, it took up the eviction issue and decided to evict the immigrants from the professional grazing reserves. This prompted the "Provincial League Committee to form a committee of action headed by Bhasani on 19th February 1946 which directed the Muslims League workers and volunteers to agitate against the eviction policy of the Congress Government all over the province."\(^{34}\) Tension generated in the reserve areas on 21 March 1946. Under these circumstances it became difficult for the government to drive out the encroachers. The more so, when Jinnah after his arrival at Gauhati on 7 April, 1946 made a remark that "if the government does not immediately revise its policy and abandon this persecution, a situation will be created which will not be conducive to the well being of the people of Assam."\(^{35}\) At the same time the Assam Provincial Muslim League Council, in a resolution adopted on 30th April, 1946 also moved the Central Council of action for launching direct-action against the Congress Government. They also made an appeal to the Muslim population to contribute generously towards an ad-hoc eviction relief fund. In 1946, Liaquat Ali Khan in his press conference criticised the government stand and stated that "to call these villages professional grazing reserves is a misnomer and


was a mere excuse for eviction.”

He further pointed out in his statement that it was brutal and barbarous to evict the poor immigrants from their villages as they had spent time and labour to build their dwellings. He also remarked that "this way the Congress Government in Assam serves the poor, when they happened to be Muslims. Cruelty and inhumanity exceed all bounds in the Congress tyranny over the Muslim immigrants in Assam.”

This perspective was however, not appreciated by the Congress because Gopinath Bordoloi went round the Goalpara and some areas of Barpeta where immigrants had settled. But on his return he issued fresh instructions on 14 May 1946, to execute the earlier order of the government.

This was highly resented by the members of the Assam Muslim League and by organizing meetings and processions and hartals they registered their anger. Abdal Hamid Khan "gave a call to the evicted persons to return to the grazing reserves. He also resorted to a fast unto death in May 1946 in the evicted areas of Barpeta. His fast had the desired effect and by 6 June 1946 about one hundred and sixty persons encouraged by their leader's advice reoccupied their holdings and reconstructed their hovels overnight." This made the task of eviction difficult, more so when the Muslim League members wholeheartedly supported the cause of the immigrants. To counteract this opposition the Congress Government in Assam introduced

37 Ibid., p. 70.
38 Sarmah, Mahadev, Gopinath Bordoloi, Gauhati, 1956, p. 42.
39 Banerjee, D.N., East Pakistan, A Case Study in Muslim Politics Delhi, 1969, p. 69.
stringent measures by promulgating the Assam Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance on 18 November 1946.

The introduction of this ordinance was an indication of the firmness of the government to tackle the immigration problem. The reaction of the Muslim League leaders against the stand taken by the Congress Government was immediate. They decided to launch a civil disobedience programme in protest against the eviction policy pursued by the Congress Ministry in Assam. The civil disobedience movement was in fact a major programme which the Muslim League successfully carried out. The effect of the movement was felt in those areas inhabited by the immigrants. Later on when communal feelings were running high, Gopinath Bordoloi decided to go slow with his policy and was able to keep the province free form communal riots.

PARTITION AND CONSEQUENT POLITICS ON IMMIGRATION ISSUE:

In Assam, the politics of immigration persistently overshadowed many other issues. In evaluating the trend and extent of immigration one cannot ignore the geographical realities and historical facts and compulsions which had undoubtedly governed the flow of population in Assam. The effect of the partition of the country was strongly felt in the eastern sector. One of the most important sections of the pre-partition population, whose contributions and sacrifices for the freedom of the country were second to none, found themselves third grade citizens of a hostile country. Partition brought endless
misery for them and they eventually migrated to Assam.

People outside Assam believed that there was plenty of waste land available in Assam. But the actual pressure of population on agricultural land in Assam in 1951 was as high as 600 per sq.mile or 240 per sq.km.\textsuperscript{40} From humanitarian considerations, the Government of Assam agreed to rehabilitate 5 (five) lacs Bengale refugees.\textsuperscript{41} The actual number of migrants however, was much more. More than thirty three years have passed since then, but the unending human flow from across the border is yet to cease. Assam and Tripura received the largest number of refugees from East Pakistan. Their continuous influx has undoubtedly created demographic imbalance.

**THE RIOT OF 1950:**

The communal disturbances, before and after the partition (1947) had undoubtedly created tensions among the Muslims. In Assam the riot of 1950 was a dreadful blow for the security of Muslims. Hundreds of Muslims were killed and their houses burnt. Both movable and immovable properties were damaged. The main ambition of the miscreants was to drive out the Bengali Muslims from Assam. Compelled by the constant fear for their lives and property and further bloodshed, Muslims took refuge in East Pakistan. The number of Muslims migrated to East Pakistan was several lakhs.\textsuperscript{42} According to some it was eight lakhs. In the same way thousands of Hindus in minority

\textsuperscript{40} Census of India, 1951, Assam Manipur & Tripura, Part IA: General Report, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{41} Idem.

in East Pakistan also started to migrate to India under similar conditions.

**THE IMMIGRANTS (EXPULSION FROM ASSAM) ACT, 1950:**

The influx of people from East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) has continued unabated and the Assamese people began to view it as posing a serious threat to the economic, cultural and political identity of the people of the state. Government of India seemed to aware of this problem and in the year 1950 passed the Immigrant (expulsion from Assam) Act empowering the Central Government to detect and deport infiltrators from East Bengal which was then East Pakistan. In the statement of objects and reasons of the Bill presented to Parliament it was stated, (For detail see Annexure-4/ pp. V-VI).

"During the last few months, a serious situation has arisen in Assam due to immigration from East Bengal. Such large migration is disturbing the economy of the state, besides giving rise to a serious law and order problem. The Bill seeks to confer necessary powers on the Central Government to deal with the situation."43

**NEHRU LIYAQUAT AGREEMENT (1950):**

In order to reduce communal tension and to maintain peace between both the communities the Prime Minister of India, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru and the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Liyaquat. Ali Khan had signed an agreement on 8 April, 1950.25 This agreement was known as 'Nehru Liyaquat Agreement'. According to this agreement, the people who left their own

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country earlier with valuable property, due to the communal violence, may return into their own home on or before 31 December, 1950. If they return (from Pakistan to India and from India to Pakistan) within the appointed time, their citizenships along with the properties would be returned. The Indian Muslims who took shelter in East Pakistan started to come back to their own homes again. (For detail see Annexure-5/ pp. VII-X).

THE CENSUS OF 1951:

The time for their return was limited and the last date fixed was 31 December, 1950. But the tense situation was still continuing. The process of return was very slow, because of the doubt of security and recurrence of riots. Meanwhile, the process of census of 1951 had already been started. This was the first census after Independence. Hence its importance was great. According to Pakistan Census of 1951, the total migration from the territories of the Indian Union to Pakistan was 72,26,600 and specially from East Zone (Assam, West Bengal, Orissa and Bihar) 7,01,300 Indian Muslims migrated to different states of Pakistan during the period 1947-48. (Table – 2.3)

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Chapter 2

Table 2.3
Area-wise Migration of Indian Muslims to Pakistan 1947-48; origin in India and Settlement in Pakistan (Figures in 00’s). Here only East Zone in shown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From to</th>
<th>East Zone (Assam, W.Bengal, Orissa &amp; Bihar)</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>3!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Bengal</td>
<td>6707</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>95.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baluchistan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karachi</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWFP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sindh</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7013</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census report of Pakistan, 1951, vol. 1 (Govt. of Pakistan, Karachi).

*Column 1: Indicates the total population which migrated from the specific region of Indian territory to different parts of Pakistan including the Erstwhile East Pakistan.
+Column 2: Indicates the percentage of total migration from a particular region of India to different parts of Pakistan.
! Column 3: Indicates the percentage of migrated Muslims from each region of India to a particular region of Pakistan.

Table 2.4
Total Muslim population of Assam with decade variation and percentages of decade variation. (1901-1971)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Muslim population</th>
<th>Decade Decade Variation</th>
<th>Percentage of Variation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>5,03,670</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>6,34,101</td>
<td>+1,30,431</td>
<td>+25.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>8,80,426</td>
<td>2,46,325</td>
<td>38.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>12,79,388</td>
<td>3,98,962</td>
<td>45.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>16,96,978</td>
<td>4,17,590</td>
<td>32.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>19,95,936</td>
<td>2,98,958</td>
<td>17.62*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>27,42,287</td>
<td>7,69,573</td>
<td>38.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>35,92,124</td>
<td>8,26,015</td>
<td>29.82**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* [Lakhs of Indian Muslims took shelter in East Pakistan due to communal riot of 1950. Most of them did not return to their own places of Assam before the Census of 1951. So, lakhs of Indian Muslims had been dropped from the Census Report (1951). which was admitted by the Commissioner himself. The number of Muslims, therefore was smaller in 1951 than their number in other decades.

** Lakhs of Indian Muslims were forcibly deported from Assam to East Pakistan during the period 1962-68, under the scheme “Prevention of Infiltrations from Pakistan (RIP.)” Of Indian Government. Therefore, the number of Muslims was decreased during the said period. The census Report of 1971 was one of the evidences.]

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At the time when thousands of Indian Muslims decided to settle permanently in Pakistan, then the Muslims of Assam who took shelter in East Pakistan due to communal riot could not immediately decide to come back to their own places in India. Meanwhile the census of 1951, in India was completed. The last date of return also expired. Therefore, Muslims who returned late to their residents in Assam remained excluded from the Census report of 1951.\(^{46}\) (Table-2.4)

As already pointed out earlier, the road communications in Assam of that time were not good. Except narrow footpath, there was no roads in 'Char'(riverine) areas of Assam. Census Enumerators did not go to enumerate in the Char or interior places where good number of Muslims were residing. Accordingly the interior Char areas remained excluded from the enumeration. Thus lakhs of Muslims were not included in the Indian Census Report of 1951 (Table-2.4). In 1961, the Census Commissioner admitted the fact regarding this exclusion:

"Some Muslims of Goalpara and Kamrup district who might not have been able to come back to their homes in Assam during the 1951 census".\(^ {47}\) Therefore, those Muslims were excluded from this census of 1951. Again he pointed out that:

"Some Muslims living in the chars or Sandbanks of the river Brahmaputra might also have been left out of the count of the 1951 census".\(^ {48}\)

It was the responsibility of the Indian Government to count how many

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\(^ {46}\) Ahmad, S.U., Muslim in Assam (1200-2000), Nagaon, Assam, 1999, pp. 97-98.
\(^ {47}\) Rao & Hazarika, op. cit., p. 238.
\(^ {48}\) Idem.
Muslims migrated to East Pakistan to seek shelter? Out of the number who migrated, how many returned back to Assam? Why the number of Muslims not included in the 1951 census is not known, neither there is any information regarding the place or the area from where they have been left out nor can we ascertain the number of Muslims from char areas left out from the 1951 census. These were some of the important questions why did not the Government of India take initiative in this regard is not known.\(^49\) However, there is a statement from the Government that the Muslims who took shelter in East Pakistan were returned to Assam, according to the Nehru-Liyaquat agreement. It is pointed out from non-Government sources that out of eight lakh Muslims more than three lakhs did not come back after the census of 1951 and therefore, their number could not be included in the figures of report.\(^50\) Knowing full well that the 1951 census figures were defective as they did not include lakhs of Muslims, the Government of India issued National Register of Citizens (N.R.C) prepared on the basis of incorrect figures of the census Report of 1951.\(^51\) The question, why it was done so, has been raised again and agian by the Muslims of Assam. Lakhs of Muslims who had been left out of the census report of 1951, were also dropped from the National Register of Citizens (N.R.C.) of 1951. Thus lakhs of Muslims were deprived of their citizenship. This lead to uncertainty, dissatisfaction and resentment among the Muslims of Assam.

\(^49\) Ibid., p. 240.  
\(^50\) Idem.  
\(^51\) Idem.
Later on, they were treated as foreigners and lakhs of Assamese Muslims (Bengali origin) entitled for Indian citizenship were harassed by branding them as foreigners.\footnote{Ibid., p. 241.}

Muslims did not hesitate to sacrifice lives even for the Assamese Language in 1960’s. Events turned against Bengali Muslims after 1960 again. Some Assamese Chauvinists even forget the contribution of Bengali Muslims and treated them as Pakistani foreigners. They forced the Government to detect the so called Pakistanis, who were actually Bengali Muslims living in Assam. No Indian national Hindu or Muslim can support settlements of foreigners in India. A foreigner is foreigner. He should be driven out from the state or country. But the process should be legal and justified.

We have seen that there are many legislations, namely the Citizenship Act, Foreigners Act, Pass-Port Act and the Immigrants expulsion (from Assam) Act 1950 etc have been applied from time to time to detect and deport so called Muslim Immigrants. No doubt, these were legal procedures but at the time of implementation these were used communally and Muslims were forcibly harassed. There are sufficient evidences of these harassment, which are protested by different Muslim organisations from time to time. Few further attempts were made since 1957 to detect and deport illegal migrants from Assam.\footnote{Ibid., p. 241.} But the process was allegedly accompanied by persecution of the Muslim community. Therefore, the Working Committee of the Jamiat-UI-Ulema-E-Hind met at Calcutta on 7 and 8 March 1957 with Fakhruddin Ali
Ahmed in the Chair. The Proceedings of the meeting are summarised below:

1. The working Committee "strongly feels with Pain that the Government and our national leaders have so far miserably failed in achieving the objective of Secularism and national integration."

2. That secularism and national integration is the basic condition for the country's good name and progress and prosperity."

3. Condemned violence against the Hindus in Pakistan appealed to all to recognise communalism as an "enemy of the country."

4. Strongly supported Government's Policy of deportation of Pakistani infiltrators but drew their attention to the "ill treatments of the officers of Central Additional Police with Indian Muslims in Assam and other places, which is a serious matter of concern."

5. "The Working Committee is also greatly concerned over the organized campaign of communal elements in Assam and other places to forcibly drive out Muslims from such places and as such it draws the attention of the Central Government to adopt stern measures so that the traditional and mutual confidence and love between Muslims and Hindus may be restored."\(^54\)

At last the Congress Ministry of Assam instead of large scale detection and deportation of illegal immigration, a proposal was given for issuing

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\(^{53}\) Assam Pradesh Congress Committee Record, 1957, pp. 47-50.

\(^{54}\) Idem.
"Identity Cards" to people in selected areas (Specially in Border areas) of Assam to prevent further influx of infiltrators. However it was opposed by the many Congress leaders. They pointed that," instead of preventing a further influx of infiltrators, it would lead to corruption and subject the border people to harassment,,, further it would not be difficult for illegal infiltrators to manage to obtain identity cards and avoid any chance of deportation."\textsuperscript{55}

In 19 March 1964, Sri. Guljari Lal Nanda, the Home Minister of India, visited Assam and for that chance, the Assam Congress Parliamentary Party Submitted a memorandum to him.\textsuperscript{5} The main demands of the memorandum were detection and expeditious deportation of illegal Pakistani infiltrators and complete sealing of the Indo-Pak Border. They requested him in memorandum to strengthen the Police administration with sufficient equipment. Clearance of an area with sufficient depth along the Border was also demanded to Control Pakistani infiltration. Further they prayed to remove Assistant Commissioner of Pakistan from Shillong as early as possible for his doubtful activities.

The Home Minister Guljari Lal Nanda though admitted the Presence of a large number of infiltrators, yet he was not willing to take stern measures. He considered it enough that, "they should be asked to go back."\textsuperscript{56}

At last the Congress at the Centre did not approve the proposal for sealing the borders. The real fact was that door of India was opened for

\textsuperscript{56} Idem.
Pakistani Hindus, who are said to be refugee or displaced persons. After partition the migration of Muslims to India or Assam was very rare. Bengali Hindus on the other hand continuously entered India from Pakistan to make their homes here. So the complete sealing of Indo-Pak border was impossible for India only for the protection of Pakistani Hindus. India always blamed Pakistan that they failed to protect the minority community. Pakistan on the other hand always condemned Indian Policy of deporting Muslims to Pakistan forcibly. In order to solve this problem Indo-Pak dialogue had been started. Letters were also exchanged between Field Marshal Ayub Khan and Jawaharlal Nehru.\textsuperscript{57}

These exchanges were followed by a conference of the Home Ministers of the two countries at Delhi from 7 to 11 April 1964. The views of the Home Ministers were as follows :-

"The Home Minister of Pakistan impressed upon the Home Minister of India the view that eviction of a large number of persons from Assam and Tripura and other Indian States had led to tensions and consequences thereof."

"The Home Minister of India, on the other hand, explained his Government's position regarding the problems relating to the migration of minority communities from Pakistan into India the consequences arising therefrom."\textsuperscript{58}

However, efforts were made to find out a good mutual solution to these questions. For the improvement of bilateral relations Home Ministers of both

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 128.
\textsuperscript{58} Idem.
the countries forwarded some proposals.

FORMATION OF PREVENTION OF INFILTRATION FROM PAKISTAN (PIP) SCHEME:

The Proposals of the Government of India:

1. **Proposals for security:**
   
   a. Joint appeal by the two Home Ministers for communal harmony.
   
   b. Periodic meetings of representatives of the two countries for review and assessment of the implementation of Indo-Pak agreements and deviations in either or both countries.
   
   c. Joint machinery to tour different areas of both countries periodically and to report on the implementation of measures agreed upon in the Conference.
   
   d. Minorities Commissions as contemplated under the Nehru-Liaquat Pact to be revived.

2. **Adequate administrative arrangements ensuring protection to minorities:**
   
   a. To impress upon officials to treat security of minorities as their foremost duty.
   
   b. To take immediate effective steps to prevent breach of the peace.
   
   c. Adequate deployment of force in places where communal trouble was apprehended.
d. Slackness on the part of officials to be dealt severely.

e. Miscreants to be severely punished through courts.

f. Recovery of looted property.

3. **Representatives of minorities to be associated with agencies for recovery of abducted women.**

4. **The Press:**
a. Restraint to be exercised in publishing news of communal disturbances.

b. Free circulation of newspaper of one country in the other.

5. **Rehabilitation:**
a. Members of minority communities affected or displaced by such disturbances to be properly rehabilitated by the respective Governments.

b. Conditions of security and confidence for minorities to stay on in their homes.

c. Those who want to leave should be allowed to dispose of their immovable properties and migrate with their cash, jewellery and other personal assets with full protection during transit.

The proposal of the Government of India could not satisfy the Home Minister of Pakistan. As a result, Mohammad Habibulla Khan, the Home Minister of Pakistan did not pay much interest in those proposals. Instead of it, he asserted that until the eviction of Muslims from Assam, Tripura and West Bengal stopped; it would not be possible to restore communal peace and
harmony in the two countries. Therefore, he made the following proposals.\(^{59}\)

**The Proposals of the Government of Pakistan:**

1. Immediate suspension of further evictions from India.
2. International Tribunal to determine whether all evictees from Assam, Tripura and elsewhere were Pakistani infiltrators. The tribunal was to consist of three judges, one from the Pakistan Supreme Court, one Indian Judge and the third from another country.
3. A number of Subsidiary Tribunals consisting of one Judge from Pakistan High Court, an Indian judge of the same status and another from a third country, for examining the cases of those already evicted.

Instead of accepting these proposals, Guljari Lal Nanda, the Home Minister of India offered some other proposals, which were also not acceptable for Pakistan. We do not know why is the Government of India did not accept the proposal offered by Pakistan for setting up of International Tribunals for examining the cases of those already evicted? Are all Muslims illegal infiltrators, who were already evicted by the Government of India?

It is already pointed out that many Indian Muslims were harassed and forcibly deported. The Indo-Pak war now could be dealt with under the Passport Act and the Foreigners Act. Under the Provisions of the latter, any foreigner illegally staying in India might be deported without reference the Law Courts. In 1964 due to heavy political pressure of the so called patriotists

\(^{59}\) Ali, Maulana Sikandar, General Secretary, Assam State Jamiat Ulama: Souvenir, on 13th General Session of Provincial Jamiat-Ul-Ulama-E-Assam, Gauhati, 16, 17 and 18 March, 1979, pp. 36-37.
the then ruling Congress Government of Assam, at last was compelled to establish a tribunal to detect Pakistani nationals under the scheme of "Prevention of Infiltration from Pakistan" (P.I.P.) of the Indian Government. 

The Programme under P.I.P. scheme was formulated in 1964 by B.N. Mallik, the then Director of the Central Bureau of Intelligence. Under this programme following steps were to be taken:

1. Rising of Special Units of the State Police for dealing with infiltration.
2. Special Tribunals were to be established for speedy disposal of cases.
3. The Government of India would meet the expenses of those Units.
4. More than 200 Border Watch Posts were to be raised at a cost of Rs. 6000 each.
5. From 1964 to 1969, the Government of India had to spent Rs. 50,000,000 on these activities.

The State Governor Vishnu Sahi, told the Budget session of the Assembly on 27 February 1964 that a separate organisation had been set up in the Police Department "in order to make a further check on the nationality of those suspected of being illegal infiltrants" before quit-notice were served on them. The Government had also appointed two officers on Special Duty from amongst the retired judges and the process for appointing four more was on. The scheme was "followed through vigorously" by the Bimala Prasad

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60 Idem.
61 Ibid., pp. 37-38.
62 Ibid., p. 38.
Chaliha, the then Chief Minister of Assam.

There were many Muslim Ministers and M.L.A.s (Members of the Legislative Assembly) in the then Congress Government, but they did not say anything about the legal deportation. The Government handed over the power to the police to deport the so-called Pakistani from Assam. In the name of detection of Pakistani, the Police started to misuse their powers everywhere in the market, in the towns, in the lanes and even at foot paths. They (Police) suddenly, entered Muslim villages at mid-night and seized hundreds of Muslims. This was done without a warrant notice or warning. Even the people who had citizenship papers were not spared. Such evidences were simply ignored the citizenship. Police did not even care to ask whether a person is Indian? A poor illiterate Muslim was in variably branded as a Pakistani by the police. The police was biased so much that for them. Muslim meant Pakistani. So he had to be reported and later deported. Thus P.I.P. scheme became a Tyranny for Indian Muslims. During the entire period of 1962-68 neither they could live peacefully nor could sleep comfortably. Anxiety, tension and frustration gripped the Muslims so much that they could not come forward boldly to protest against this tyranny. Thus, police created a great terror among the Muslims. The Muslims who had already been dropped from the census Report as well as National Register of Citizens (N.R.C.) 1951 of the Government, were to be detected first as Pakistani. After that, the police

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63 Idem.
64 Idem.
started to harass even the Muslims having N.R.C.\textsuperscript{65} Thus, Indian Muslims of permanent residents of Assam were also harassed and finally deported to Pakistan. According to non government sources almost six lakhs Indian Muslims were forcibly deported from Assam to East Pakistan during the period 1961-66. Anjan Sarmah in his book 'Abahelita Asom' has shown the number of Muslims deported from Assam as follows:\textsuperscript{66}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Deported Muslims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) 1964</td>
<td>= 69,415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) 1965</td>
<td>= 44,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) 1966</td>
<td>= 14,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>= 1,28,107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Souvenir on the 13\textsuperscript{th} General Session of Provincial Jamiat-Ulema-E-Hind, Assam.

According to the Government report more than two lakhs Muslims were deported as Pakistanis during 1961-66. During the entire period of 1951-69, 3,40,000 Muslims were deported as Pakistanis.\textsuperscript{67} Whatever, may be the exact number, it was true that lakhs of Muslims were forcibly deported from Assam to East Pakistan without any sympathetic consideration. From the Census Report of 1971, it was clear that the number of Muslims was greatly reduced during this period.(Table-2.4)

At last, in order to stop the police tyranny on Muslims, several Muslim organisations including Jamiat-Ulema-E-Hind (Assam) had submitted

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., pp. 39-40.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., p.40.
memorandum to the Government of Assam.\textsuperscript{68} Out of 72 members of the Assam Legislative Assembly 33 Congress M.L.As including the famous leaders, Mainul Haque Choudhary, Devakanta Baruah and Sarat Chandra Singh had submitted an urgent 'Memorandum' to Bimala Prasad Chaliha, the then Chief Minister of Assam to stop this harassment on Muslims under the implied PIP scheme and to dismiss the Tribunals immediately.\textsuperscript{69} The Government of Assam, at last admitted the harassment by the police and wrote a letter (No.PLB.70/66/173, dated Shillong the 11th July 1969) to the President, Jamiat-Ul-Ulema-E-Hind, Haibargaon, Nowgong (Assam). (For detail see Annexure-9/pp. XVIII-XIX). After completing the checking the Government of Assam declared that, there were no more Pakistani foreigners residing in Assam. Even the last Pakistani already been deported from Assam. Therefore, there would be no further need of P.I.P. scheme and its tribunals. In 1969 all the tribunals were abolished and thus, the P.I.P. scheme was ended.\textsuperscript{70}

**THE SECRET CIRCULAR FOR THE PROTECTION OF PAKISTANI HINDUS:**

It was pre-assumption that immediately after partition, Hindus in Pakistan and Muslims in India would be minorities. The minorities of both the countries would be suffered in different aspects. Therefore, the Government of India gave assurances of sharing of any sorrow of Hindus, who remained in

\textsuperscript{68} Ali, Maulana Sikandar, op. cit., p. 41.
\textsuperscript{69} Idem.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., p. 42.
Pakistan. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, addressed the nation on 15 August, 1947 expressing the following wishes and pledge:

"We think of our brothers and sisters, who have been cut off from us by political boundaries and who unhappily cannot share at present in the freedom that has come. They are of us and will remain of us whatever may happen and we shall be sharing in their good fortune and ill-fortune alike."\(^{71}\)

He further said in respect of citizenship:-

"The Hon. Member referred to the question of citizenship. There is no doubt, of course, that those displaced persons who have come to settle in India are bound to have the citizenship. If the law is inadequate in this respect, the law should be changed."\(^{72}\)

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Home Minister of Independent Indian Government, assured as follows:-

"Our hearts naturally go out to those who were of us and with us so long but who are now to be separated. Few can realise the bitterness and sorrow which partition has brought to those who cherished unity but lived to fashion its details. But let not our brethren across the border feel that they are neglected and forgotten. Their welfare will claim our vigilance and we shall follow with abiding interest their future in full hope and confidence that sooner than later, we shall again be united in common allegiance to our country,"\(^{73}\)

\(^{71}\) Kar, M. Muslims in Assam Politics, (1\(^{st}\) Ed.), Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1997, p. 108.

\(^{72}\) Idem.

\(^{73}\) Ibid., p. 109.
Patel went further in assuring the welfare of such victims of the ill conceived partition:

"We cannot fully enjoy freedom that we have got until and unless we can share it with the Hindus of North and East Bengal. How can one forget the sufferings and sacrifices which they cheerfully endured for freeing our motherland from foreign domination, their future welfare must engage the most careful and serious attention by the Government and the people of the Indian Union in the light of development that may take hereafter."\(^74\)

Thus, it became clear that the commitment made by the Prime Minister and the Home Minister aimed at assuring the Hindus who would be adversely affected by the Policies of the state of Pakistan.\(^31\) Therefore, the rehabilitation and welfare of the Hindus of East Pakistan in case of their displacement not only immediately after the Partition of India but also in future, became the national commitment and liability of the country. Those who came over were called refugees, the term being replaced later by "displaced persons", a Stigma the Bengali Hindus from East Pakistan are still made to carry with them especially in North East India.\(^75\)

As a result, thousands of Bengali Hindus who migrated to India specially in Assam, Tripura and West Bengal during and after partition, were rehabilitated under the Department of "Relief and Rehabilitation" of the Government of India. Accordingly thousands of Bengali Hindus were reha-

\(^{74}\) Idem.
\(^{75}\) Ibid., pp. 109-110.
bilitated in Assam. Sri Motiram Bora, the Finance Minister of Assam in his Budget Speech on 9 March 1951 said that from 1 March to 31 December 1950 about four lakh new displaced persons had come to the state. About 55,000 "old" and 22,800 "new" displaced Persons were in the district of Cachar where responsibility for relief and rehabilitation work had been taken directly by the Central Government. Upto the end of December 1950, 7000 thousand families of the "old" and 6,000 families of the "new" displaced persons had rehabilitated themselves "through their own efforts" either as 'adhiers' on land or rural areas of the state, excluding the district of Cachar.76

Thus migration of Hindu Bengalis from East Pakistan and then from Bangladesh to Assam has been continuing till to-day, due to the sympathetic attitude of the Indian Government. Of course many of them have been rehabilitated themselves in different parts of Assam.

Legally, a Pakistani foreign national who may be a Hindu or a Muslim must be deported. But it is a matter of regret that during the deportation of Pakistani, the democratic Indian Government had issued a secret Circular No. 4/366/63-IC (Union Home Ministry) dated 16 June, 1965 to the state Governments of Bengal, Assam and Tripura to treat migrated Hindus specially from East Pakistan as 'Refugees' and lastly, to provide them 'Indian citizenship'.77 Bengali Muslims on the other hand should be treated as infil-

76 Idem.
77 Saptahik Mujahid, Gauhati, 5 March, 1982, pp. 6-7.
trators (foreigners) and to be deported. Dr. Shyma Prasad Mukherjee, one of the Members of Nehru Ministry said openly that, "I shall give each East Bengal Hindu a house in India." The Government of India allowed to settle 90,000 Bengalis, so called Hindu 'Refugees' in Assam up to 1 March 1958 and another 12,000 (Bengali Hindus) were allowed to settle in Assam between 1.1.1964 to 1.4.1965.

The Government of India announced in the Lok Sabha on 26 March 1973 that the rehabilitation of the displaced (Bengali Hindus) persons up to 31 March 1958 had by and large been completed by 1960-61; those who came between 1964 and 1969 had been rehabilitated by the end of 1969 and for those who migrated after 1969 and up to 25 March 1971, the work of rehabilitation was in Progress. Laying down the Policy and Procedure for conferment of Indian citizenship on migrants from East Pakistan it said

“As the State Governments are aware, the question of registration as Indian citizens of members of the minority communities who have recently migrated from East Pakistan, has been under Consideration. The matter has been examined in the light of the views expressed by the State Governments. It has been decided that such of the migrants (where they have come with or without migration certificates or travel documents) as have severed their ties and connection with Pakistan and have settled in service, trade and professions in India, may be regarded as Indian Citizens Under Section 5(1 A)

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78 Idem.
79 Idem.
of the Citizenship Act 1955; provided they fulfill conditions laid down in Section 9 of the Indian Citizenship Rules 1956. It is requested that necessary instruction may be issued to the registering authorities concerned and the number of migrants registered each month intimated to this Ministry by the 15th of the succeeding month.

Thus, it is due to secret letter of the Union Home Ministry (No.4/366/63-1C) thousands of Bengali Hindus, who migrated from East Pakistan were given Indian Citizenship. So from the different evidences, it is clear that the Government of India had a dual Policy, treating Muslims as 'Infiltrators' and Hindus as 'Refugees'. It was evidently discriminating against Muslims. The secret direction of the Government inspired police to take stringent and drastic measures on Muslims even though they were Indians."

**PAKISTANI BENGALI HINDUS ARE TREATED NOT FOREIGNERS:**

Bengali Hindus along with others fought for freedom of India. They were always in forefront for undivided Bengal as well as for undivided India. After the Bengal Partition they tried their best for the re-unification of Bengal. This endeavour was to some extent successful, when Lord Curzon was compelled to remove Partition in 1912. But it was again divided on the basis of religion as well as number of people under the concealing 'Divide and Rule' policy of the British Government. Bengali Hindus of East Bengal, who would be minority, tried hard for the re-unification of Bengal till 1930, but could not.

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81 Idem.
succeed and after which, Hindu-Muslim divergence was existed.\textsuperscript{82}  

The ultimate result was the Indian Partition. After partition, Bengali Hindus of East Pakistan felt grief and sorrow as like as the Muslims of India. Many Muslims started to go from India to Pakistan while many Hindus from Pakistan to India. But it was not possible to come all Hindus from Pakistan to India and all Muslims from India to Pakistan. At that time it was felt that the Hindus in Pakistan and the Muslims in India would be minority and they would be adversely affected by the policies of the respective Governments.

Therefore, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Home Minister of India gave assurances that they would be friends and guides at any unhappy moment of East Pakistani Hindus.\textsuperscript{83} They committed to give rehabilitation as well as citizenship treating them as 'Refugees' or 'Displaced Persons', whenever, they (Hindus) would be compelled to come India due to atrocities. Thus there was a commitment of the Indian Government to provide settlement and citizenship to the Hindu Refugees or displaced Hindus. A new Department of 'Relief and Rehabilitation'\textsuperscript{1} was opened both at the Centre and the states for their settlement in a planned manner.\textsuperscript{84} From that point of view, Dr. Makanlal Kar the Ex-Vice President and Working President of North East India Council for Social Science Research, Shillong and now, member of the North-East-India History Association and North-Eastern Institute of Anthropological Research

\textsuperscript{82} Kar. M., op. cit., p. 107.  
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., pp. 107-108.  
\textsuperscript{84} Idem.
at Shillong and Silchar, argued in his book "Muslims in Assam Politics" that they (Bengali Hindus) were never illegal persons or immigrants, though the very same people are now labelled as foreigners by interested politicians and their supporters.85

Similarly, the Citizens' Rights Preservation Committee (CRPC), a forum of the Bengali Hindu displaced persons from East Pakistan, who had settled in Assam, raised their voice that they were not foreigners as they were settled by the Government of India and their Citizenships were also given by the Government.86 Even so, Bengali Hindus were deprived from the Government jobs, allotment of seats in educational institutions etc. They cited an example of depriving seats for Hindu Bengali students in the Gauhati Engineering Institute during the time of Bisnunu Ram Medhi. Although forty seats were sanctioned by the Government of India for the Hindu Refugee students, yet most of the seats were not given to them due to direct interference of the Chief Minister, Medhi.87 In fact the observation of Satyen Barkataki, (a non-communal and non-partisan), Secretary, Education Department was remarkable. As regards the Chief Minister's' anger against those admissions, even though against seats sanctioned by the Central government, the Secretary observed:

"The Spectacle of the Chief Minister of a State getting so terribly upset over such a little matter like this was completely

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85 Idem.
86 Ibid., p. 204.
87 Idem.
bewildering to me, because we always expect the Chief Minister to maintain a calm, dispassionate and fair attitude towards man and things.”

The Government of Assam, from time to time also tried to evict those very people, who were in the Brahmaputra Valley for a long time simply on the plea that they were not citizens. In this connection the CRPC wanted to reveal the State Government's Press Note of March 1980.

"It said that such migrants who had entered Assam before 1971 were to be registered as citizens according to the Policy decisions laid down right upto 1969." Further, these refugees have been accepted for all practical purposes as citizens. Not only have many of them been enrolled as voters but many of them have been rehabilitated by successive Governments themselves in agriculture, trade, and industries etc. So these Bengali Hindus are foreign nationals only in the purely technical sense, that they have not applied for and secured registration as citizens of India.”

During Assam movement AASU and its allies demanded to deport both Hindu and Muslim migrants without consideration of caste, creed and religion etc, However Vishaw Hindu Parishad(V.H.P.), Bharatiya Janata Party(B.J.P.) and Central Government were not interested to deport Hindu Bengalis as they are treated as refugees. Later on AASU was influenced by Communal forces to turn this movement against Muslims only. Therefore,
Citizens Rights Preservation Committee (CRPC) have been submitting their
memoranda from time to time to establish their citizenship as per commitment
of the Government of India.\textsuperscript{90}

\textbf{FREEDOM MOVEMENT OF BANGLADESH AND ITS EFFECT ON
MIGRATION:}

Freedom movement of Bangladesh had started early in 1971, with the
full support of the Mrs. Indira Gandhi and her government. Bangladesh was
declared as sovereign independent country in 25 March 1971. During the
1971 war, some persons both Hindus and Muslims took shelter in the
neighbouring states of Tripura, Assam and West Bengal, due to oppression of
Pakistani Military.\textsuperscript{49} In a statement, Mrs. Indira Gandhi said in the Parliament
on 27 May 1971 that, "\textit{About thirty five lakhs have come into India from
Bangladesh during the last eight weeks. They belong to every religious
community. They are not refugees. They are victims of war.}\textsuperscript{91}

These people were kept in camps under keen vigilance of Indian
Government. According to the Government report nine lakhs Bengafi Hindus
and only twenty seven thousand Muslims entered in Assam during 1961-
1971.\textsuperscript{92} After forming secular Government in Bangladesh under Mujibur
Rahman's Prime Ministership most of them were send back to Bangladesh.\textsuperscript{93}

There was a commitment of the Indian Government to settle Pakistani Hindu

\textsuperscript{90} Idem.
\textsuperscript{91} Saptahik Mujahid, Gauhati, 14 November, 1980, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{92} Idem.
\textsuperscript{93} Idem.
refugees and to detect Muslims as infiltrators. So the Hindus were allowed to settle in India. All Assam Minority Students Union (AAMSU) in their report pointed out that according to the Government figures more than one lakh and nine thousand persons were send back from Assam to Bangladesh. Most of them were Muslims. All Assam Students Union (AASU) badly condemned this discriminatory policy of the Indian Government. According to AASU "Secularism, A mere slogan only" "A secular Government is willing to Identify the foreigners on the basis of religion. AASU can never accept such a condition" Though these statements of AASU were concerned with the foreigner’s movement of 1980, but the truth is that they have been true from the time of independence in 1947. The Indian Government has always been taking discriminatory steps against Muslims specially in case of foreigner's detection.

However, the emergence of Bangladesh altered the situation for the time being. Bangladesh became a good neighbour state as well as a friendly state. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India became very closed to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the then Prime Minister of Bangladesh. As a result a Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Peace was also signed on 19 March 1972 by Indira Gandhi and Seikh Mujibur Rahman (For detail see Annexure-10/pp. XIX-XXI). Therefore, as per mutual understanding, war victims were send back to Bangladesh. Then the question of immigration did

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94 Idem.
95 Idem.
96 Idem.
not arise. Muslims had got sovereign Independent country after high sacrifice of blood.

They were very pleased after getting freedom from Pakistan. A person who infiltrated from Pakistan was called Pakistani infiltrators. After existence of Bangladesh, the question of Pakistani infiltrators from erstwhile became dormant. The Government of Assam now decided to wind up the Tribunals in 1972 on the grounds that "most of such cases of infiltrants had been disposed of." Even if, any Tribunal existed that practically did not function. Therefore, the process of detection and deportation did not come to light until 1979 when ‘foreigner’ question again upsurged in the form of “Anti-foreigners” movement.

97 Ahmad, S.U., op. cit., p. 133.