

**Connecting Gender And Immigration: A Bi-Folding Sightedness On  
Perpetual Gender-Based Violence in The ‘Migrant Affected Zones’ Of Assam**

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**ABSTRACT**

The state of Assam has been a generous host of the massive influx of infiltration since the time immemorial, but a huge portion of undocumented immigration from Bangladesh makes the region an arena of conflict and tensions. The mere existence of illegal infiltration socio-politically paralyses the region as it has fuelled in the increment of the number of crimes in the borderline areas. Gender-based violence is one of the major problems that have faced by the migrant affected areas of the state. The relative increment of migrants has fuelled in the emergence of socio-political anxiety and disturbance that in turns jeopardized the internal security of the country as the state mechanism fail to provide safety towards women.

Simultaneously, the magnitude of illegal infiltration has been too huge and it has sown the seeds of discontent among the local tribes that ultimately fuel in the emergence of ethnic unrest in lower parts of the region, specifically in Bodoland. In this conflictual era, the women are more victimised as the whole situation can be compared to silent slaughter like structure, where women become the prime victim. Therefore here focus is given on the bi-folding analysis of gender-based violation and unsung slaughter like the structure of the region mainly due to the massive influx of the infiltration, dealing with the women right infringements, specifically in the migrant affected zones of the state that can be considered ‘infiltration sponsored violence’ towards women.

**Keywords:** *Gender-based violence, Illegal infiltration, Infiltration sponsored violence, Migrant affected zones.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Assam is the hub of ethnic communities, where multi-religion, multi-ethnic, multi-language and multi-cultural become one of the crucial fragments; as the region has flourished with the presence of variety of tribal populations, those are considered to be the aboriginals of the region. Since indefinite period, they has been worshiping the nature and therefore, women attain a superior position in their socio-economic domain, as per the region has witnessed number of matriarchal society, where women has achieved a privilege status in every fragments of the society. But the cultural interaction with the main land India and the process of cultural assimilation makes women a most vulnerable section of the society, that they face numbers organised and unorganized crime, thrown them towards the darkness and made them as 'subaltern' portion of the society.

Migration is considered to be the important phenomenon of contemporary global politics, has been commencing since the time of immemorial as the world history is well known as the history of migrants. Since the very commencement of human civilisation, people have been migrating to suitable places in search food, shelter, security and better lifestyle that have made an adverse impact, as their destination has altered the socio-economic, cultural as well as the political fabric of the society. Historically, Assam is the land of migrants, seeing no evidence of the inception of human species, where massive of migration has been seen from the time of indefinite. But, massive influx of illegal infiltration from the neighboring countries, since last decade has been devastating the composite structure of the heterogeneous Assamese society as well as it has altered the demographic and socio-cultural fabric of the region. The bordering zones of Assam have witnessed continuous influx of infiltration that back down the amalgamated structure of the society. The state has been a generous host of the massive influx of infiltration since the time immemorial, but a huge portion of undocumented immigration from Bangladesh makes the region an arena of conflict and tensions. The continuous flow of migration to the land after independence firmly affects the demographic composition as well as it also has altered the socio-economic and cultural fabric of the receiving society. In this arising situation, increasing

crime rates, specifically the crime against women become a common phenomenon for state. The increasing nature of gender based violation is becoming a threat for the 'subaltern' section of the society, where women lose everything; their status, rights as well as their purity.

Simultaneously, the magnitude of illegal infiltration has been too huge and it has sown the seeds of discontent among the local tribes that ultimately fuel in the emergence of ethnic unrest in lower parts of the region, specifically in Bodoland. In this *conflictual* era, the women are more victimised as the whole situation can be compared to silent slaughter like structure, where women become the prime victim.

Thus, the paper is trying to analyse the bi-dimensional issues of victimisation of women and increasing gender-based violence in the migrants affected zones of Assam mainly from two perspectives; from the lens of women rights victimization due to the 'Infiltration sponsored violence' and also from the angle of increasing gender based violation due to the ethnic conflict; 'Insider versus Outsider' in the migrant affected borderline areas of the region.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How increasing influx of infiltration is becoming a threat for the social-cultural fabric of the society?
2. How the continuous immigration has fuelled to the rise of gender based victimisation in the state in general and the borderline areas in particular?
3. Is illegal migration led to the birth of ethno-nationalism and migration induced conflict? How does this conflict contribute in the infringements of women rights?

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

The entire research paper is largely based on historical, descriptive and analytical methods to understand the issue of illegal immigrants of Assam and its overwhelming effect on women rights generally in Assam and particularly in the border line areas. The research method is entirely comprised of secondary sources. Internet sources are also used to update empirical data and for overall enrichment of the study. The overall research study is qualitative in nature.

**TENDENCY OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS TO THE LAND OF ASSAM AND ITS  
OVERWHELMING EFFECT ON SOCIAL FRAGMENTS**

The matter of migration is not a new phenomenon for Assam, as the region has watched massive influx of infiltration; most of the communities of Assam had their migratory histories. The entire process of migration to the land of Assam can be categorised by the analysts into five folds for study oriented usefulness (Goswami, 1985, p. 1&3). The first process of migration to the land was started in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when a number of people were migrated to Assam to work as labour in tea plantation from present-day Bihar, Jharkhand, and Orissa. Secondly, a certain amount of people migrated to the region in search of agricultural lands mainly from the thickly populated Mymensingh and Rangpur district of East Bengal to Sylhet and Goalpara district of then Assam. During the colonial era, the British imported a number of educated Bengali people in order to run their administration smoothly and effectively. The encouraging attitude of the British administration was clearly reflected from the Assam Land Revenue Administrative Report of 1921 that clearly stated about the contribution of migrants towards the agricultural development of the state. In order to meet rapid development in the agricultural sector, the colonial administration adopted “Migrants Settlement policy” of 1928. Again, the dominance of Muslim League in the politics of pre-independent Assam also encouraged the migrants to settle in the unfilled land of the state through the enactment of “Grow More Food” and “Land Development Scheme”(Goswami, 1985, p. 23 & 24). The third phase of migration has happened in the form of a number of Nepali peoples that came to Assam for the betterment of their lives and they started to settle on the ‘uncultivated and unknown land’, which were not amazingly required by the indigenous tribesmen of the state. Another practice of migration has been seen in the region from outside the states in the form of traders from Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Punjab were also migrated for business purposes.

But, the major threat towards the indigenous culture and region is from the illegal infiltrators from present-day Bangladesh. But since last century, the region has been witnessing the continuous flow of illegal infiltration from the present day Bangladesh. Due to such illegal

infiltration, the state has experienced the explosion of the Muslim population in comparison to other states of India. While analyzing the migration process, we can apply the Ravenstein's law of migration and Lee's Push-Pull factor theory. Ravenstein law of migration has three elements- reasons, distance, and migrant characteristics that basically help in the whole process migration. He explained that migrants mainly move over short distances; those going larger distances go for industry and commerce. Again, Lee in his Push-Pull theory elaborated that there exist two factors that may trigger in the flow of people from outside. These are Push factors, including poverty and political instability and Pull factors combining of economies and job opportunities. During the time of independence, a large number of Hindu refugees entered the state from then East Pakistan; presently the Bangladesh and government also took responsibility for their settlement. According to the 1951 Census report, the number was 2,73,000 that increased to 6,28,000 by the year 1961(Goswami, 1985, p. 25). On the other hand, then Congress government of Assam pressurised the central government to expel 5 lakh Muslim infiltrators that were entered the region between the year 1947 to 1950 and as a result "Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950" came into force in the state (Gogoi, 2014, p. 18&19). During that time, to rescue the land and indigenous people of Assam from the illegal infiltrators, "National Register of Citizens" was formulated in the year 1951. But due to some political reasons, the act was overruled in 1957. Again, during the time of formation of Bangladesh, a large number of refugees entered and settled in the land of Assam. But the continuous influx of infiltrators to land seems to be unstoppable as a large number of immigrants illegally entered the region that becomes an intricate problem towards the demographic composition of the state.

**INFILTRATION INDUCED CONFLICT AND GENDER-BASED VICTIMISATION: A  
RAY ON 'MIGRANTS AFFECTED ZONES' OF ASSAM**

The increasing numeric of illegitimate infiltrators is considered to be one of the major problems towards the sustainability of land and identity of indigenous tribesmen of the Assam. They are posing threat towards the existence of aboriginals of the land of Assam. Most of the infiltrators say, "They will make this place Bangladesh", they said so in front of the indigenous tribesmen of Assam. Infiltration from Bangladesh through crossing the borders has over the large

70 years altered the demographic composition of the state. Assam is considered to be the most vitally affected state that has wide-ranging borders, vast open land, and river bank areas; acted as a magnet for land grabbing incidents by the illegal infiltrators of the region and has ultimately fuelled in the emergence of resentment among the natives. Such type of resentment has triggered in the massive contrast between the immigrants and natives for establishing their rights over the natural resources. But, the politicisation of such type of contrast primarily birth to the demands of preservation of native identity and rights that in turns has fuelled in the occurrence of violence and political disturbance in the state; also jeopardised the internal security of contemporary socio-political fabric of the society. Bodoland is the one of the major zones of Assam that has witnessed massive influx of infiltration from neighboring countries, which in turns contributes towards the emergence of conflict between the Muslims and Bodos. The fear of illegal infiltration is also assisted in the rise of ethnic conflict in the region of Bodoland that can be considered as an “Infiltration sponsored conflict”, where socio political anxiety becomes a prime character of the society.

According to the Data provided by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), the peak of conflict has witnessed 4,85,921 persons displaced in September,2012 with 2,46,583 persons residing in relief camps, whose condition was even more worse than animals. Most women faced the durable burnt of repression, marginalisation and deprivation in the relief camps (Dutta, 2012, p. 5&6).The pregnant women, infants and children below the age of five mostly harms due to conflict. In 2012, an estimated 4,000 pregnant women were living in the camps while in 2014; there were approximately 888 pregnant women in relief camps (as per the official data) in Chirang and Kokrajhar district (Sinha, 2016). Education is major catalyst in bringing about changes in the status of women; hence, the educational status of women in conflict affected zones is not satisfactory one. In comparison to other areas of the state, women’s of those areas are more deprived from getting proper educational facilities. During conflict era, most of the girl child was deprived from education. Most of the families were not ready to send their girl child outside the home due to fear of rape and sexual violence. Again the political participation of women in the conflict affected zones is in an inferior position. Though the percentage of women voting increased considerably over the time, but still they are lagging

behind the decision making power. The women are eventually deprived from getting proper political freedom in those areas, where conflict devastates their socio-economic as well as cultural fabric of the society. During the conflict situation women have to manage their household, because earners of the family have been fled, been killed or joined the group of underground. Therefore, the responsibility of household management goes to the hand of women. Thus, women who were till then not allowed to join the formal economic system are suddenly faced problems while managing their families. Often women are engaging in selling liquor, drugs or even prostitution to make enough money to run their household. North-East Network Report(2004) focused that often women have to resort to selling liquor, drugs or even prostitution make enough money to run their household. They have lost their rights such as right to life, right to liberty and security etc. Life in the relief camps, the Adivasi women say, is very insecure and many of them want to be rehabilitated to their original villages. The root cause behind such kind of conditions of women is ethnic conflict, due to the continuous influx of immigrants and their threat towards the local identity and land. In this conflictual era, the women are more victimised as the whole situation can be compared to silent genocide, where women become the prime victim. They face additional human rights violence in the form of sexual violence and the denial of safe motherhood. The whole situation can be likened with the slow genocide, where women right infringements are very high.

**UNsung SLAUGHTER LIKE STRUCTURE AND WOMEN RIGHTS  
INFRINGEMENT: A SIGHTEDNESS ON 'MIGRANT INFLATED ZONES' OF ASSAM**

Infiltration from Bangladesh through crossing the borders over the large 70 years has altered the demographic composition of the state. Assam is considered to be the most vitally affected state that has wide-ranging borders, vast open land, river bank areas have acted as a magnet for land grabbing incidents by the illegal infiltrators of the region. The UN also described such migration as one of the largest mass migration and continues to be one in the last few decades. It has been said by the Central government in the parliament that as of 2001, there were 50 lakh infiltrators in Assam out of the total population of 2.61 crores as per 2001 census report. This fact reflects that one in every 5 inhabitants of Assam is a foreigner. Despite the mere

existence of anti-migration law, the Supreme Court argued that between 1985 to 2012, the Assam meets to have detected and deported 2442 illegal immigrants (Confederation of North-Eastern People, 2012, p. 2). The growing anxiety and emerging socio-political turmoil of the region can better be understood from the manner and extent of growth of Muslim population in Assam as most of the illegal infiltrators are the Muslims. The massive change and increase in the number of Muslim population in the state make the entire issue more complicated one. Amazingly, the massive influx of immigrants from Bangladesh results in the enhancement of the number of the Muslim population that has been reflected since 1901. In 1901, two out of 8 districts had the Muslim population more than 25%, namely undivided Goalpara(27.79%) and Cachar(30.55%) (Confederation of North-Eastern People, 2012, p. 10 & 12). In 1951, two more districts in Assam had a population of more than 25% Muslim, viz. Nagaon increasing from 6% in 1901 to 40.5% in 1951 and Kamrup from 9.11% to 29.3% in 1951(Confederation of North-Eastern People, 2012, p. 10 & 12). Interestingly, no district of Assam had a Muslim majority in 1951. During that time the only district with the highest number of Muslim population was Goalpara bearing 42.94% of the total population. After 50 years, the 2001 Census report reveals that the increasing number of Muslim population in the state, where 6 out of 23 districts became Muslim majority. The Supreme Court in the judgment of 12 July 2005 in SarbanandaSonowal vs. Union of India stated, “As result of population movement from Bangladesh, the spectre looms large of the indigenous people of Assam being reduced to a minority in their home state. Their cultural survival will be in jeopardy, their political control will be weakened and their employment opportunities will be undermined.”(Confederation of North-Eastern People, 2012, p. 15).Due to the rapid influx of immigrants, the region has witnessed increase of crime rate, specifically gender based crime; as the bordering areas of the state are mostly affected by such illegal infiltration. The cruel mindset and fearless attitude of the illegal migrants has fuelled in the increase of gender based violence in the region, which in turns vastly affect the genuine liberty of women section of society. The relative increment of migrants has fuelled in the emergence of socio-political anxiety and disturbance that in turns jeopardised the internal security of the country as the state mechanism fail to provide safety towards women. The pathetic reality is that women are not safe and secure in the region; more particularly in the

migrants affected zones. Sexual assault, women trafficking, rape attempt, eve-teasing become a common heading of the press and electronic media of the state. The latest official figures of Assam police has revealed the fact that violence against women are at alarming position.

The region is witnessing a continuous rise of crime rate against the women. As per the data of public sources, in the year 2016 a total number of 19,688 cases were registered across the state, which is raised to the number of 21,298 in 2017 and to 24,556 by the year 2018 (“Crimes against women witnessing A Rising Trend in Assam”, 2018). In the year 2017, total 1708 numbers of rape cases were registered across the state; increased to 1909 by the year 2018 (“Crimes against women witnessing A Rising Trend in Assam”, 2018). In case of kidnapping of women and girls, almost 4997 cases were filed in 2016, which is phenomenally increased to 5186 by the year 2017; while it increased to 6269 in 2018 (“Crimes against women witnessing A Rising Trend in Assam”, 2018). As per the latest official study of North East Now, conducted in the year 2018 it has revealed that despite the mere existence of various legislative measures by the state government and several non-governmental organisations to curb the crime against women, Dhubri district has witnessed a rising trend of women victimisation, where more than 143 women related crime cases were registered in the eight police station of the district; higher than 138 cases in 2016 (“Assam’s Dhubri district witnesses rise in Crime against women”, 2018). The police statement revealed that in the year 2017, total 1724 cases of murder, rape, kidnapping, abduction, dowry death, dowry suicide, molestation, women and girl child trafficking were filed; while in 2016, the numbers were 1657 (“Assam’s Dhubri district witnesses rise in Crime against women”, 2018). Meanwhile, almost 112 women related crime cases were registered in the first month of 2018 under Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012 (“Assam’s Dhubri district witnesses rise in Crime against women”, 2018). Again, it is noteworthy that the ratio of child marriages is also at alarming rate in the district. As per data of National Crime Records Bureau, Assam has witnessed 1779 rape cases and 821 cases of sexual molestation in the year 2016 (Parashar, 2018). Many people including the leader of ruling party is blaming illegal infiltration from Bangladesh for rising crime in the state. The police report shows that behind such type

women related crime, the accused persons are the minor, 'men of Bangladesh origin'. Again, the several political leaders of the state tries to use this issue for invoking a political milieu, makes it as the political agenda and also turns the whole issue into religious one. The making politicisation of whole issue takes the entire issue into another direction.

### **CONCLUSION**

The concern of women rights victimisation and gender based offense is identically wide-ranging and complex one. It is not possible to include all the concerns and explanations of women rights infringement in a single paper, as the paper fundamentally attempts to investigate the impact of increasing influx of infiltration in the rise of gender rights violation in the state in general and the borderline 'migrant affected zones' in particular. The various data from the governmental as well as non-governmental white paper document reveals the fact that rate of women related crime is at alarming position in the migrant affected zones of Assam, where they has witnessed massive rise of population growth of a specific particular community. The relative increment of migrants has fuelled in the emergence of socio-political anxiety and disturbance that in turns jeopardised the internal security of the country as the state mechanism fail to provide safety towards women. Again, due to massive influx of infiltration ultimately resulted in the resentment among the natives that in turns led to massive conflict in the borderline areas of the state, where the rate of women rights victimisation is very high, as the whole situation can be compared to silent slaughter like structure; women become the prime victim. The entire concern can be compared to 'infiltration sponsored violence' that can be eliminated by the means of establishing socio-political stability in the region, stopping the increasing influx of immigration from neighboring countries, implementing women and girl children's rights protection act, changing the perception and attitude of the people towards the subaltern section of the society and also through active role from police and administrative mechanism side by introducing special protection force in the borderland areas of the state that will help subalterns section of the society from being sexually and mentally exploited.

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