

INFILTRATION FROM BANGLADESH TO INDIA:
SOME ESTIMATES

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MIGRATION OF HINDUS & MUSLIMS BETWEEN BANGLADESH AND INDIA DURING THE PERIOD 1951-2001: SOME ESTIMATES

It is a well known fact that the population of Muslims in India is increasing sharply. Some writers like Koenraad Elst* claim that one reason for this – besides the higher birth rate for Muslims – is the infiltration of Muslims from Bangladesh (earlier East Pakistan). Overall, to some extent, the above claim is true as is borne out by our calculations but it is not a very significant contributing factor – that being the higher birth rate for the Muslims – to the growth of Muslim population in India. We have used the word overall because the infiltration of Muslims in India has not been a one-way street throughout the period of our study (1951-2001). The Hindus have been continuously infiltrating into India throughout the above period but during the first two decades, (1951-71) Muslims actually migrated out of India. According to our calculations, during these two decades (1951-71) a total of 44 lakh 53 thousand Hindus infiltrated into India but there was a net outflow of 8 lakh 35 thousand Muslims from India to East Pakistan (Bangladesh). Some time before East Pakistan became Bangladesh in Dec. 1971, a very large number – about 10 million according to the official figures – of Bangladeshi refugees (both Hindus & Muslims) entered India. Most of these were sent back soon after the creation of Bangladesh. During the period 1971-2001, there was a net influx in India of about 40 lakh 10 thousand Muslims and only 36 lakh 41 thousand Hindus (Table 1.3 A, page 14).

*The Demographic Siege – Koenraad Elst, Chapter 2, pages 18-24.

From Table 1.3A it is clear that the infiltration of Muslims in India was confined only to the period 1971-2001, especially the period 1981-2001. According to our estimates, over the period 1951-2001, India received a total of 80 lakh 94 thousand Hindus and a net of 31 lakh 75 thousand Muslims (Table 1.3A) or a total of 1.126 crore migrants.* Thus the Hindu and Muslim infiltration was approximately 72% and 28% respectively of the total during the period 1951-2001. The procedure for arriving at the above estimates is clearly explained in the following pages after providing a brief historical background to the partition of the subcontinent.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 created two independent countries: India and Pakistan. Pakistan was made up of two geographically disconnected parts; East Pakistan and West Pakistan, which were 1,800 km. apart, separated by the Indian mainland. While the West Pakistan was composed of different linguistic groups like Punjabis, Sindhis and North and North-West Frontier tribes, East Pakistan had predominantly a Bengali speaking population.

*In a recent speech, Sri L. K. Advani – the former Home Minister & deputy Prime Minister and at present the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha – claimed that by December 2001 a total of 1,20,53,950 Bangladeshis had illegally entered India. In his reported speech which appeared in Organizer February 17, 2008; page 9, it is not indicated how he arrived at such an exact figure. Perhaps it was an official estimate of the Home Ministry to which Sri Advani had access as the ministry was headed by him till May 2004. Even as it is, our figures are not far off from Sri Advani's figure. And in case his (Sri Advani's) estimates are of total infiltration as opposed to ours which are of net, then they are almost exactly the same because our figure for total infiltration is $1.126 + 0.0650 + 0.0185 = 1.2095$ crore – practically the same as that given by Sri Advani.

During the 1970's, due to some political factors, there arose a conflict between the two parts of Pakistan, the East and the West. This conflict had serious repercussions for the Hindu community living in East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh – an independent sovereign country – in December 1971. Due to the turmoil before December 1971, millions of Bangladeshis, predominantly Hindus, had entered India. Due to this overflow of refugees Indian government was forced to help Bangladesh. As a result of India's military intervention, the Pakistani military was defeated and on 16th December 1971, East Pakistan became Bangladesh. Most of the refugees who had come over from Bangladesh to India during the early part of 1971 were sent back to Bangladesh soon after its creation. Presumably some of the Hindu refugees stayed back in India, while most of the Bengali Muslims from Bangladesh and perhaps some from West Bengal also went back.

Soon after gaining independence, a new government was formed in January 1972. In 1973, elections were held which gave Sheikh Mujibur Rehaman an overwhelming majority making him the first President of an independent Bangladesh. But his regime did not last long and on 15th August 1975 he, along with most members of his family, was assassinated. Because of India's help in the war, Mujib had some good-will and sympathy towards India, but after his death the new leaders, who were Muslim fundamentalists, showed no sign of good-will towards India. They were full of revenge towards the Hindus and non-Bengali Muslims (particularly Bihari Muslims) living in Bangladesh. So, due to their intolerance they started treating them very harshly. Due to

this reason, millions of Hindus and a large number of Muslims began crossing the border and migrated to India (this migration is still continuing). After the creation of Bangladesh a good number of Muslims, particularly the Bihari Muslims, had migrated to Pakistan along with the West Pakistani Muslims (mainly the military personals and their families). Our estimates of this migration are shown in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3

**Shift of Hindus & Muslims (figures in 000's)
(Actual – Estimates)**

Year	Bangladesh	India	Pakistan	(U.D.I.)
				(Growth Rate)
	Hindus : Muslims	Hindus : Muslims	Hindus : Muslims	Hindus : Muslims
1951-61	-1661 : 842	1722 : - 650	- 30 : - 192	20.61%: 26.15%
1961-71	- 2945 : 1387	2731 : - 185	240 : - 1197	23.12%: 31.24%
1971-81	- 808 : - 1481	839 : - 209	- 8 : 1695	23.91%: 31.08%
1981-91	- 1358 : - 2051	1392 : 2066	— : —	22.55%*: 31.56%
1991-01	- 1346 : - 1374	1410 : 1391	— : —	20.14%*: 27.01%

Here we shall explain how we have derived Table 1.3. Let us first look at Table 1.1 given below.

*These growth rates for Hindus and Muslims from 1981-2001, have been calculated for Undivided India (U.D.I.) after excluding Pakistan.

Table 1.1

The actual population figures of Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Undivided India during the decades 1941-2001.

Year	Undivided India	Pakistan	Bangladesh	India	U.D.I. Growth Rates
1941	Hindus : Muslims 287124 : 94447	Hindus : Muslims 5568 : 22293	Hindus : Muslims 12437 : 29509	Hindus : Muslims 269119 : 42645	Hindus : Muslims
1951	325301 : 107192	603 : 36696	9761 : 32773	314937 : 37724	13.29% : 13.49%
1961	392375 : 135225	697 : 46100	10112 : 42186	381567 : 46939	20.61% : 26.15%
1971	483118 : 177475	1078 : 59305	9505 : 56752	472516 : 61418	23.12% : 31.24%
1981	598657 : 232640	1353 : 79432	10970 : 72910	586334 : 80298	23.91% : 31.08%
1991	733918 : 312371	1888 : 110796	12086 : 93869	719944 : 107706	22.59% : 34.27%
2001	882203 : 396626	2679 : 140589	13174 : 117849	866351 : 138188	20.20% : 26.97%

Source: – Religious Demography of India – 2001 edition. Publisher: Centre for Policy Studies, Chennai.

The above Table 1.1 contains the actual population* of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Undivided India (UDI) from the period 1941-2001. The Table 1.2 below contains the estimated population of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh from the period 1951-2001.

Table 1.2

**The estimated population figures of
Pakistan, Bangladesh and India**

Year	Pakistan	Bangladesh	India	(UDI) (Growth Rate)
	Hindus : Muslims	Hindus : Muslims	Hindus : Muslims	Hindus : Muslims
1951	6308 : 25300	14090 : 33490	304885 : 48398	
1961	727 : 46292	11773 : 41343	379845 : 47589	20.61%: 26.15%
1971	858 : 60502	12450 : 55365	469785 : 61603	23.12%: 31.24%
1981	1361 : 77737	11778 : 74390	585495 : 80507	23.91%: 31.08%
1991	1659 : 106653	13448 : 97896	718787 : 107816	22.59% : 34.27%
2001	2269 : 140677	14527 : 119185	865373 : 136754	20.20% : 26.97%

This table is derived by applying the respective growth rates of the two communities (Hindus and Muslims) in Undivided India to the actual population figures of the

*Source: Religious Demography of India, 2001 edition. Publisher: Centre for Policy Studies, Chennai.

respective communities in the three subdivisions in the decade before. For example, if one wanted to know the estimated population of Hindus in India in 1971, then one would simply apply the growth rate of Hindus (23.19%) in Undivided India for the period 1961-71 to the actual population of Hindus (in India) for the year 1961 and get the desired result. Table 1.3, reproduced earlier, is derived by subtracting the figures in Table 1.2 from the corresponding figures in Table 1.1. The following is a general description of the procedure (with its implicit assumptions) that has been used to generate the estimates in Table 1.2.

THE PROCEDURE

The procedure which we have followed is very straight forward and fairly reliable. As all would agree, the demographic growth rates of Hindus and Muslims in Undivided India would not have been much affected by the partition of 1947. Moreover, we will not be too far off if we assume that the population growth rates of the two communities (Hindus and Muslims) were more or less same (or not far off) in the three subdivisions (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) and therefore equal to their growth rates in the Undivided India as a whole. Once we accept this, it is straight forward to get an estimate of the population of the two communities in the three subdivisions, if there had been no migration of the people between these parts. The difference between the actual figures and the figures so estimated for the three subdivisions will give us the estimates of the migration from one subdivision to the other.

The above assumption will be appropriate only when the population figures of the Undivided India used for calculating the growth rates have been adjusted for all the abnormal changes in the overall population figures.

SOME PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Now if we carefully examine Table 1.3 we can see that during the two decades, 1951-61 and 1961-71, while Bangladesh received Muslim migrants from both India and Pakistan; India received significant number of Hindu migrants – almost exclusively from Bangladesh. From 1971 onwards the trend was reversed as far as the Muslim migration to Bangladesh was concerned but the Hindu migration to India from Bangladesh continued unabated. So far the table figures are more or less understandable. But we have a serious problem in explaining some of the figures of decade 1971-81, as will be clear from the discussion below.

According to Table 1.3, during the decade 1971-81, a net of 14 lakh 81 thousand Muslims migrated from Bangladesh to Pakistan, while from India, Pakistan received 2 lakh 9 thousand Muslims. So, overall there was a net inflow of 16 lakh 95 thousand Muslim migrants from India and Bangladesh to Pakistan. Here it is just unexplainable that just after the break up of Pakistan in December 1971, how in 10 years 16 lakh 95 thousand Muslims can migrate, (mostly unaccounted) from Bangladesh to Pakistan. According to the official sources* the number of Muslims who migrated to Pakistan from Bangladesh during the period 1971-91, were only 3 lakh

*National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh.

32 thousand while as we have seen, according to the figures in Table 1.3, Pakistan received 14 lakh 81 thousand Muslim migrants from Bangladesh just during the period 1971-81. So, here the problem is that, how such a large scale unaccounted migration is possible between the two countries (Pakistan and Bangladesh), who do not have a common border. So, here obviously the figures are seriously mistaken for some reason – which must lie in our not having taken account of some exogenous factors affecting the actual population figures of Table 1.1. So this is something that needs to be looked into and resolved and we have in our own way tried to resolve it as described in the following pages.

THE INFLUX OF AFGHAN REFUGEES IN PAKISTAN

During the Afghan War (1978-92) millions of Afghans took asylum in their neighbouring countries. According to Encyclopedia Britannica Software 2005, about 6 million Afghan refugees sought asylum in Pakistan and Iran. Another important information obtained from the same source tells us that out of these 6 million Afghan refugees, 2.8 million Afghan refugees took asylum in Pakistan during 1978-82 and 1.5 million Afghan refugees fled to Iran during the same years. So here, we have assumed that during 1978-81, approximately 2.2 million Afghan refugees entered Pakistan. So, Pakistan's and Undivided India's Muslim population figures for the year 1981, in Table 1.1 have to be adjusted for (by deducting) the influx of 2.2 million Afghan refugees. Table 1.1A contains such adjusted figures.

Table 1.1.A

The Population figures of Undivided India and Pakistan; adjusted for the number of the following Afghan refugees:— 1981 – 2.2 million.

Year	Undivided India	Pakistan	Bangladesh	India	U.D.I. Growth Rates
	Hindus ; Muslims	Hindus ; Muslims	Hindus ; Muslims	Hindus ; Muslims	Hindus ; Muslims
1941	287124 ; 94447	5568 ; 22293	12437 ; 29509	269119 ; 42645	
1951	325301 ; 107192	603 ; 36696	9761 ; 32773	314937 ; 37724	13.29% ; 13.49%
1961	392375 ; 135225	697 ; 46100	10112 ; 42186	381567 ; 46939	20.61% ; 26.15%
1971	483118 ; 177475	1078 ; 59305	9505 ; 56752	472516 ; 61418	23.12% ; 31.24%
1981	598657 ; 230440	1353 ; 77232	10970 ; 72910	586334 ; 80298	23.91% ; 29.84%
1991	733918 ; 303371	1888 ; 101796	12086 ; 93869	719944 ; 107706	22.59% ; 31.64%
2001	882203 ; 385356	2679 ; 129319	13174 ; 117849	866351 ; 138188	20.20% ; 27.02%

Now, we use the same procedure as we did before for arriving at Tables 1.2 & 1.3 from Table 1.1, to arrive at Tables 1.2A & 1.3A (given below) from Table 1.1A.

Table 1.2 A

The estimated population figures of Pakistan, Bangladesh and India.

The figures are adjusted for the Afghan Refugees: – 1981 – 2.2 million.

Year	Pakistan	Bangladesh	India	U.D.I. Growth Rates
	Hindus ; Muslims	Hindus ; Muslims	Hindus ; Muslims	Hindus ; Muslims
1951	6308 ; 25300	14090 ; 33490	304855 ; 48398	
1961	727 ; 46292	11773 ; 41343	379845 ; 47589	20.61% ; 26.15%
1971	858 ; 60502	12450 ; 55365	469785 ; 61603	23.12% ; 31.24%
1981	1361 ; 77001	11778 ; 73687	585495 ; 79745	23.91% ; 29.84%
1991	1659 ; 101668	13448 ; 95979	718787 ; 105704	22.59% ; 31.64%
2001	2269 ; 129301	14527 ; 119232	865373 ; 136808	20.20% ; 27.02%

Table 1.3 A
Shifts of Hindus & Muslims (figure's in 000's)
(Actual – Estimate Population figures)

Year	Bangladesh	India	Pakistan	U.D.I. Growth Rates
	Hindus ; Muslims	Hindus ; Muslims	Hindus ; Muslims	Hindus ; Muslims
1951-61	- 1661 ; 842	1722 ; - 650	-30 ; - 192	20.61% ; 26.15%
1961-71	- 2945 ; 1387	2731 ; - 185	240 ; - 1197	23.12% ; 31.24%
1971-81*	- 808 ; - 777	839 ; 553	- 8 ; 231	23.91% ; 29.84%
1981-91	- 1358 ; - 2051	1392 ; 2066	— ; —	22.55%** ; 31.56%
1991-01	- 1346 ; - 1374	1410 ; 1391	— ; —	20.14% ; 27.01%
Total	- 8118 ; - 1973	8094 ; 3175	202 ; -1158	— ; —

*The population figures of Pakistan for 1981 (reported in Table 1.1 A) has been adjusted for the presence of 2.2 million Afghan refugees.

**The growth rates from 1981-2001, have been calculated for U.D.I. after excluding Pakistan.

Here, if we carefully examine Table 1.3A then we see that during the period 1971-81, Pakistan is receiving 2 lakh 31 thousand Muslim migrants from Bangladesh. So now our figure is consistent with the official figure of Muslim migrants (3 lakh 27 thousand) from Bangladesh to Pakistan during 1971-91. So now having solved this problem satisfactorily, we now proceed forward. Some explanation and analysis of Table 1.3A is in order. If we just simply have a look over Table 1.3A, then we see many negative signs (-). Here, the negative (-) sign indicates the net outflow from a country and a positive number indicates the net inflow into a country. Now, if we carefully examine column 2nd and 3rd of Table 1.3A, then we notice that right from 1951 till 2001, there has been, as discussed earlier, a continuous outflow of Hindus from Bangladesh. This seems to be mainly due to the intolerance and ill-treatment of the minority by the majority community. This trend is not same with the Muslims. During the first two decades covering the period from 1951-71, there was a net inflow of Muslims in Bangladesh from India and Pakistan – the then West Pakistan. But after 1971, this trend reversed and from 1971-2001, there was a significant inflow of Muslims into India from Bangladesh. During 1951-61, Bangladesh received 6 lakh 50 thousand Muslims (presumably Bengali Muslims) from India. During 1961-71, the outflow of Muslims from India to Bangladesh was very little and the latter received most of the Muslims from Pakistan. This was mainly because during this decade there arose a civil war between Pakistan and Bangladesh (then known as East Pakistan) and to keep its Eastern Part under control Pakistan presumably sent more and more army and personnel over there from the Western Part. By the end of the period 1961-71 and just before the

December 1971 war with India, the number of West Pakistani Military & personnel was maximum in the East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and this we believe is reflected in the figure of 13 lakh 87 thousand for 1961-71 (column 2nd, Table 1.3 A).

During the war, over 10 million refugees from Bangladesh entered into India but soon after the war was over in December 1971, most of these refugees were sent back to Bangladesh. But some of them must have stayed back in India and even those who were sent back, some may have spuriously re-entered into India. For the first time (during 1971-81) there was a net inflow of Muslims from Bangladesh to India and this must have been mainly due to the war with Pakistan and poor economic and living conditions in Bangladesh following the war. So once the door of entry was discovered – as it was during the war in 1971 – more and more Bangladeshis, even Muslims, illegally entered into India. And this was mainly due to the sheer laxity of the Indian government over the Indo-Bangladesh border and due to this laxity their number reached its climax during the decade 1981-91. But during the next decade 1991-2001, the Indian government paid more attention to this issue and the numbers are comparatively lower for this period. The last row (totals) in Table 1.3A gives the total net inflow or outflow (-) of refugees in a country over the period 1951-2001. The figures in this row are simply algebraic sums of the entries in the respective columns. If we look at row 8th of Table 1.3A, we see that India received a total of 80 lakh 94 thousand Hindus and 31 lakh 75 thousand Muslims or a total of 1.13 crore (approx.) refugees during the five decades (1951-2001).

According to the above figures it is clear that between 1951-2001 out of the total number of refugees who entered into India, approximately 28% were Muslims and 72% were Hindus.

BANGLADESHI MUSLIM INFILTRATION AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE GROWTH OF THE SHARE OF MUSLIM POPULATION IN INDIA

According to the official population figures, in India the Muslims were 10.44%* of the total in 1951. In 2001 they became 13.43%. Thus the share of Muslim population increased by 2.99 percentage points or by 28.63% during the five decades. It would be interesting to know how much of the above increase was due to the infiltration from Bangladesh and how much of it was due to a higher (compared to others) birth rate for the Muslims. To find this out one may ask what the 2001 figure of the percentage of Muslims in India would have been if there was no Muslim infiltration from Bangladesh. For this we have deducted the figure of 31,75,000 – the total number of Muslims infiltration in India by 2001 (Table 1.3A, 8th row) from the figures 13,81,88,000 and 1,02,87,37,000 – respectively the figures of total population of Muslims and total population of all the communities in India in 2001 – to get the respective figures of 13,50,13,000 and 1,02,55,62,000, which are net of all Muslim infiltration. Now the percentage of Muslims becomes – $(13,50,13,000 \div 1,02,55,620) = 13.16$ percent.

As we have seen above, in 1951, the percentage of

*Source: Religious Demography of India, 2001 Revision; Page 10.

Muslim population was 10.44% of the total which became 13.43% by 2001. So, they increased by 2.99 percentage points. If we exclude all the Muslim infiltration (over the period 1951-2001), then the corresponding 2001 figures becomes – as calculated above – 13.16% or now an increase of 2.72 percentage points or 91% of the earlier increase. So in this case the contribution of infiltration accounted for 9% of the increase in the share of Muslim population during the above five decades.

Here, we consider that the Muslims who have entered or left India, if they have grown (in India or elsewhere) like the rest of the Muslim population in UDI, then what would be there present number in 2001. Thus, by applying the respective growth rates of the Muslims in Undivided India, to these migrants, we obtain Table 1.4 below.

The 9th row and 6th column of Table 1.4 shows the total number of Muslims – 26 lakh 89 thousand – at the end of 2001. Now again we perform the calculation, similar to what was done above, by using these new figures. Now the corresponding 2001 figure becomes 13.17%, which means an increase of 2.73 percentage points or 92% of the earlier increase of 2.99 percentage points. So in this case the result is practically the same as before.

As we know, the Muslim infiltration in India started only after the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. So, it will be more appropriate and interesting to conduct the above enquiry only for the period 1971 to 2001. Table 1.5 below which consists of the last 4 rows of Table 1.4 presents the necessary data for the period 1971-2001.

Table 1.4

**Estimates of the total number of refugees present (in India) at the end of the periods 1951 to 2001
(figure's in 000's)**

Year	1951-61	1961-71	1971-81	1981-91	1991-2001
U.D.I. Groth Rate		(23.12%)* : (31.24)*	(23.91%)* : (29.84%)*	(22.35%)* : (31.56%)*	(20.14%)* : (27.01%)*
	Hindus : Muslims	Hindus : Muslims	Hindus : Muslims	Hindus : Muslims	Hindus : Muslims
1951-61	1722 : - 650	2120 : - 853	2627 : - 1107	3219 : - 1456	3867 : - 1849
1961-71		2731 : - 185	3383 : - 240	4145 : - 315	4980 : - 400
1971-81			839 : 553	1028 : 727	1235 : 923
1981-91				1392 : 2066	1672 : 2624
1991-01					1410 : 1391
Total	1722 : - 650	4851 : -1020	6849 : - 794	9784 : 1022	13164 : 2689

*The growth rates applied to Hindus and Muslims are same as in Table 1.3A.

By using the data of Table 1.5 and performing the calculations in a way similar to what was done before – the new 2001 figure for percentage of Muslim population in India becomes (net of all infiltration) 13.01%. In 1971, the percentage of Muslim population in India was 11.20% of the total which became 13.43% by 2001. So, they increased by 2.23 percentage points. If we exclude all the Muslim infiltration (over the period 1971-2001), then the corresponding 2001 figures becomes – as mentioned above – 13.01%, which is an increase of 1.81 percentage points over the 1971 figures accounting for 81.16% of the actual total increase. So, according to the above calculation the contribution of Muslim Infiltration accounts for 18.84% of the increase in the share of Muslim population in India. So, on the basis of our estimates we can say that the Muslim Infiltration* from Bangladesh is a contributing factor in the increase of Muslim population in India but the more significant and important factor is the higher birth rate for the community.

*Here in this section, we have considered only the Muslim Infiltration. If one were to calculate the impact (on the share of Muslim population in India) of the total infiltration then the 1971 total population figures would need to be adjusted to take account of Hindu Infiltration also and in such a case the contribution of Muslim Infiltration to the growth of the share of Muslim population in India would be much lower.

Table 1.5

Estimates of the total number of refugees present (in India) at the end of the periods 1971 to 2001
(figure's in 000's)

Year	1971-81	1981-91	1991-2001
U.D.I.			
Growth Rate	(23.91%)* : (29.84%)*	(22.35%)* : (31.56%)*	(20.14%)* : (27.01%)*
	Hindus : Muslims	Hindus : Muslims	Hindus : Muslims
1971-81	839 : 553	1028 : 727	1235 : 923
1981-91		1392 : 2066	1672 : 2624
1991-01			1410 : 1391
Total	839 : 553	2420 : 2793	4317 : 4938

*The growth rates applied to Hindus and Muslims are same as in Table 1.3A.