

Contemporary Political Scenario of Assam and the Role of Youth Organisations

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Abstract:

The contemporary political issues in Assam are basically collective in character. Illegal immigration, NRC (National Registration of Citizenship), anti-damp protests on Subansiri river, under development prospects of the region, limited scope for Assamese women in changing scenario, huge protest against the Land policy and the irrigation system of the region, problems of lands slide, river erosion, demand for separate states, Citizens Amendment Act (CAA) are some of its major issues. These kind of valuable issues raises by the youth organizations of the state and strongly adherent with that for efficiently move by means of democratic as well as non democratic processes. They have tried to pursue the concerned authority with logical explanation.

The proposed manuscript attempts at highlighting the protests taken by various youth organizations against the issues of NRC and CAA in the state of Assam.

Key Words: Illegal Immigration, NRC, Subansiri river, Land policy, Assamese, changing scenario, logical explanation.

Introduction:

'Youth bulge' is a situation where a large proportion of young people reach productive age due to transition from high to low fertility, and the proportion of children and the elderly remains small. However, proportion alone doesn't make a difference; the quality of the human resource is a paramount importance. A state as well as a country stands to reap the benefits of a youth bulge only if it puts in place policies to fit out its children with relevant skills. In today's world unorganised and neutrality of youth find little place in any employment. Similarly, the iteration of the power of 'youth organisation' in the national economic discourse arises from a consciousness in policy-making circles that Assam's youngsters have the potential to contribute much to the state's socio-economic growth. The importance of this vast mass of youngsters as human capital is unhesitatingly accepted by planners. When the predominantly youthful electorate of the country gave its mandate in favour of stability in the election in sharp contest to entrenched wisdom, so that nation's faith in its youth vision of nationhood got further strengthened.

It is argued (Atal, 2005) that organization of youth is a demographic concept that has both biological and sociological connotations. It refers to an age group in transit between childhood and adulthood. But sociologically it is a category rather than a group within which are a number of sub-groups. Youth organisation are found in all societies, but also and expectations differ from culture to culture. In developed countries with high rates of literacy, youth and students are overlapping categories. However, in countries like India where illiteracy and dropout rates are quite high, the proportion of students is quite small.

The Youth Organisation of Assam, who makes up a sizeable portion of the state's population, is a vital and vibrant resource which, according to the Policy Statement of the Government has to make not only the beneficiaries but also valuable partners in the process of planning and development. In order to ensure that these organisations of young men and women contribute towards national development in a big way, they should be effectively involved in the process of decision making. With this in view, Government of Assam, through its various programmes and policies, has recently initiated steps to address the growing concerns of the youth organisation and increase their impact and functional capabilities so as to make them economically productive, politically dynamic and socially useful. All Assam Students Union (AASU), Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad (AJYCP), All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), All Koch Rajbanshi Students Union (AKRSU), All Tie Ahom Students Union (ATASU), All Assam Minority Students Union (AAMSU) ect. are some leading youth organizations in Assam.

Objective of the Study:

- To find out the results of agitations against NRC and CAA led by the youth organizations in the State of Assam.
- To find out whether the issues of NRC and CAA is the creation of now or it has a long history in the politics of Assam.
- To assess their ideology, methods adopted for fulfill their demands and preferences with particular issues.

Methodology:

The study design is descriptive and secondary source has been used to collect data. The secondary data comprised of various books, official data, news papers etc. Analytical tools like table has been applied to examine the objectives set for the study.

Review of Related literature:

1. **Alaka Sarma (1999)** was wrote in his book entitled 'Immigration and Assam Politics' that in 1979, the Assam movement was started and it was the movement which demanded for the deportation of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and it is regarded as the regional movement as it demanded for the protection of the identity of Assamese people.

Here, the scope of study limited within the problem of immigration only.

2. **Gait Edward (2003)** was conducted a detail study in his book entitled History of Assam to know about the role of youth organizations in the North east. He found that illegal immigration to this region is the prime issue for the leading youth organizations. Adopt time bound and speedy steps for total implementation of the Assam Accord; amend the Voters' list of Assam under the provision of the Assam Accord and the Citizenship Act; Repeal the IMDT Act; Correct the Voter list ect are the prime demands of these organization.

But there was not any idea about the future occurrence like movement against NRC, CAA in her study.

3. **Deka, Dr H.(2005)** was completed his research on 'AASU and its impact on the politics of Assam since 1979'. Here he expressed that the Youth Organisation of Assam, who make up a sizeable portion of the state's population is a vital and vibrant resource which, according to the Policy Statement of the Government has to make not only the beneficiaries but also valuable partners in the process of planning and development.

Here, the scope of study limited only with the activities of AASU, in Assam numbers of youth organizations were there.

4. **Jaganath Upadhaya (2017)** expressed in his book entitled 'Students Politics in Assam' on the movement against various issues and expressed that over three decades ago the Assamese people had initiated a mass-movement unprecedented in free India. The central issue had been the continuous illegal infiltration of migrants into the State from Bangladesh. That time the Congress Government came down heavily upon the Satyagrahis.

It seems that besides numbers of agitation some important solution came to light which are totally under estimated in his book.

5. **Deka Dr. B.C (2019)** found in his research that the issue of illegal immigration from Bangladesh to North-eastern States is the most sensitive for the people of this region. So that instead of creating propaganda of its success, the Government needs to admit the reality, finds a way out to solve the situation immediately. Otherwise, unrest will ruin everything.

In his research, the initiatives taken by the Central as well as State government totally under estimated.

Findings & Interpretation:

The post independent Assam did not witness with any new social group as it was in the case of colonialisation of Assam. However, because of the partition of the country and transfer of Sylhet to Pakistan that the Bengali Hindu refugees from East Bengal started migrate to Assam. It was in 1951 when 2,74,455 Hindu refugees came to Assam and it was in 1961 when 6,24,249 Hindu Bengali refugees came to Assam. However, the Hindu Bengalis cannot be regarded as new social group as because they were there in the pre-independent Assam.

Demands for Reforming NRC:

The final National Register of Citizens (NRC) was published on 31st August, 2019 excluding names of 19,06,657 persons who had applied for inclusion of names in the citizenship document. However, the list of names of the persons excluded from NRC has not been made public. Now, any person not satisfied with the outcome of verdicts on claims and objections would be able to approach the Foreigners Tribunals. The process of receipt of NRC application forms started in May-end, 2015 and it concluded on August 31, 2015. A total of 3,30,27,661 members apply through 68,37,660 applications. The particulars submitted by the applicants were taken up for scrutiny to determine eligibility of their inclusion in the NRC and It has cost the nation more than Rs 1600 crore.

The process of NRC update in Assam is differs from the rest of the country and is governed by Rule 4A and the corresponding Schedule of the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules 2013. These rules have been framed as per the cut-off date of March 24 (midnight), 1971 decided as per the Assam Accord. Giving details of the process, State coordinator Prateek Hajela in a in a press release said that the process of NRC update was started in Assam as part of the order of the Supreme Court, in 2013. The NRC update is a mammoth exercise involving around 52,000 State government official working for prolonged period. All decisions of inclusion and exclusion are taken by these statutory officers. The entire process of NRC update has been meticulously carried out in an objective and transparent manner.

The final NRC, for which the entire State waited with bated breath, was termed as flawed and incomplete by the AASU. The student body that spearheaded the six-year long Assam Movement, questioned the margin of difference between the exclusion figure in the NRC and the estimate of illegal migrants given by the central government from time to time. "We are not happy with the outcome of the mammoth exercise and believe that there are a lot of deficiencies in the NRC. The final exclusion figure of 19.06 lakh is nowhere near the estimate given by the Union government from time to time. At one point of time, the Union Home Minister had said that the figure was approximately 50 lakh. Different estimates were given by the Union and the State governments, but none was as low as the one, which came out in the NRC," AASU chief adviser Samujjal Bhattacharya told. This is a serious problem affecting not only the North Eastern region but also the country as a whole. On this problem both All Assam Students' Union and Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) undertook the trouble of making detailed study of the problem and forwarded solution to the problem as they considered best. The solutions are not free from conflict and controversies in which the Youth Organizations like All Assam Minorities Students' Union (AAMSU) is directly involved and forwarded several arguments in favour of its views.

The AJYCP has analyzed the problem of infiltration in Assam. It has blamed the Government of India that in the interest of economic exploitation it is allowing the infiltration very systematically from outside the State and the country to Assam in such a way that it is pushing the State to a serious crisis affecting the social life. It suggested for the reform of National Register of Citizens. In its memorandum to the Prime Minister it stated that infiltration is a phenomenon of mass movement of the people from one region to another in a country and from one country to another country with social, economic and political differences. While the former results in psychological disturbances among the people in a country, the infiltration from one country becomes a threat to the very integrity of the nation. India is facing the problem of invasion of infiltrators from Nepal and Bangladesh. Therefore, it suggested a thorough survey of residents of India on State wise basis within a stipulated time. After the completion of the survey, the National Register of Citizens in each State of India should be made by following the best legal procedures. The next step will be the arrangement for maintenance of birth and death registers of the citizens. Electoral Rolls for all elections are to be prepared from the records of the reformed National Registers of Citizens, constituency wise duly corrected from the

records of births and deaths registers at the dates relevant to the election. The Electoral Rolls should neither be on the basis of residency as in present nor should these be prepared by enumeration.

The real issue in Assam is about the detection, disenfranchisement and deportation of the post March 25th 1971 illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, their unabated influx and for three decades the State and Central governments complete failure to implement some of the vital causes of the Assam Accord like sealing the international border, providing constitutional safeguards to the indigenous people or protecting the democratic rights of genuine citizens from being subverted by illegal immigrants. The illegal immigrants who entered Assam between 1951 and 25th March 1971 numbering about 2 million have been accepted as Indian citizens by the local people. Earlier on 22nd October, 1981 P.K.Mahanta and B.K.Phukan of the AASU said that certain so-called leftist parties and the Congress-I had been certain obstacles, for their narrow interests, in arriving at a solution to the foreigners' issue. The AASU was not prepared to accept the policy of identification of foreigners on the basis of religion. Several States would agree, if the Prime Minister decided to disperse the 1961-71 streams of infiltrators. The representatives of the Government failed to give any concrete suggestions towards the solution and always tried to sidetrack the main issue. An advance delegation of the AASU was in Delhi during 24-30th October, 1981, meeting various opposition leaders, in preparation for the next round of talks to be held in Delhi from 6th November. The delegation comprised Dr. D.B.Barua, Nurul Hussain, Joy Nath Sharma, Hiranya Kunwar and Deba Kr. Bora.

There is also nothing communal about the issue. Giving it a linguistic or communal slant just because an overwhelming number of the illegal immigrants are Bengali Muslims is an attempt to politicize the problem. Muslims have peacefully co-existed in Assam's heterogeneous society for centuries. A society where Assam's patron Vaisnavite saint Sri Sankardeva and the Muslim Pir Ajan Fakir earn equal reverence. In fact the indigenous Assamese Muslims themselves feel threatened by the large-scale influx and the government's policy of appeasing Muslims of foreign origin. They have therefore formed the All Assam Khilanjia Asomiya Musalman Unnayan Parishad for the welfare of the nearly 30 lakh indigenous Assamese Muslims. As per the Census of 2011 the total Muslim population in Assam was 1.8 crore.

The demographic upheaval in Assam has had ominous implications for the indigenous people politically, socially and economically. Politically the immigrant vote-banks are the deciding factor in 40 of Assam's 126 Assembly constituencies giving them immense political clout. All attempts to correct the voter's lists by reforming the National Register of Citizens (NRC) have met with stiff resistance and violent protests. Today the pattern of influx has changed. Assam and the North-East serve as an entry point from where the illegal immigrants helped by expatriates settled here infiltrate into different parts of the country. How vulnerable the country has become because of this unabated influx is illustrated by the concluding remarks of a judgment passed by Additional Sessions Judge Kamini Lau sentencing two Bangladeshi nationals accused of dacoit cum murder in Delhi-“Our country has become a haven for all these criminal elements who are most ruthless and brutal with anybody who come on their way. While genuine citizens of this country continue to suffer in abject poverty, what is it that prevents a firm, resolute, intense government action against these Bangladeshis illegally staying in India, enjoying all benefits which are otherwise the entitlements of citizens. It is this lack of concerted government/administrative action which has compelled the courts of law to step in.”

Almost all the youth organisation uniformly demanded for reforming the National Register of Citizens (NRC) updated last year and providing identity cards to voters on the basis of specified procedure are vital for protecting the interests of the indigenous people of Assam in the face of unabated infiltration of foreign nationals. According to AJYCP, the State and the Central Governments failed to show the political will to carry out the job, perhaps because of the fact that the party in power is apprehensive of losing the votes of a section of the voters.

Movement against CAA:

The movement against CAA run by various youth organization is not the beginning of now; it is related with the famous 'Assam Movement 1979'. This demanded for the deportation of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. The long six years peaceful non-violent movement was successfully concluded by signing 'Assam Accord' on 15th August 1985 between AASU, AAGSP (All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad) and representatives of the Central Government in the presence of the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on the Foreign National Issue, which reads-Government have all along been most anxious to find a satisfactory solution to the problem of foreigner of Assam.

As a result of 'Assam Accord', detention and deletion of foreigners January 1, 1966 shall be the base date and year. All persons who came to Assam prior to January 1, 1966 (inclusive) and up to 24th March 1971 shall be deleted in accordance with the provisions of the Foreigners Act 1946 and the Foreigners Order 1964. Names of foreigners so deleted will be deleted from the electoral rolls in force. Such persons will be required to register themselves before the Registration Officers of the respective districts in accordance with the provisions of the registration of Foreigners Act 1939 and the Registration of Foreigners Rules 1939. For this purpose the Government of India will undertake suitable strengthening of the Governmental machinery. On the expiry of period of ten years following the date of deletion, the names of all such persons which have been deleted from the electoral rolls shall be restored. All persons who were expelled earlier, but have since entered illegally into Assam shall be expelled. Foreigners who came to Assam on or after March 25, 1971 shall continue to be detected, deleted and expelled in accordance with law. Immediate and practical steps shall be taken to expel such foreigners. There is a vast difference in the protest movement against the CAA in Assam along with other Northeastern states and the rest of India. The protests in the rest of India which are about religion-based exclusion, in northeast the protests are about religion-based inclusion. Northeast has a history of illegal immigration from Bangladesh and Nepal which has created an existential crisis for the people of the region.

The Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) became an Act which is known as Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) on the 12th December, 2019 with the assent of the President of India. It amended the Citizenship Act of 1955 by providing a path to Indian citizenship for illegal migrants of Hindu, Shikh, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi and Christian religious minorities, who had fled persecution from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan before December 2014. But the Act would not apply to the areas under the sixth schedule of the Constitution and that have the inner-line permit. Even after the bill became an Act, the flow of agitations against it proceeds in the Northeastern states excluding Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and the six schedule areas of other states, and firmly declared that it will continue until withdrawn the Act from this region. Protest against the Act first began in Assam then in entire northeast and finally spread all over the India. Furthermore, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura are the state where the CAA has been imposed partially. The hill areas and Bodoland Territory Autonomous Districts of the states have been excluded under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Leading organizations like AASU (All Assam

Students Union), AJYCP (All Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad), (KMSS) Krishak Mukti Sangram samiti, NESO (North East Students Organisation) ect. are appeal to other section of society such as artists, intellectual, sportsman etc for support and carry on the agitation with them, accordingly a section of artists and intellectual come forwarded to support the agitation.

To them, the foreigners from the neighboring countries, particularly, Bangladesh and Nepal are illegally occupying land and enjoying political rights in Assam as well as in the North east. They are present in large numbers. This is a government admitted fact. On the basis of calculation made by the Registrar General of Census the total influx in to Assam from these countries during the 1951-1971 periods is 17.17 lakhs. This figure adequately and undoubtedly establishes that the sovereignty of our country is being dangerously threatened. The protest programme titled 'NO CAA-Concert for peace and harmony-voice of All Artists of Assam', organized by the State's artiste fraternity under the leadership of singer and filmmaker Zubeen Garg said, 'youth of Assam have the power to change the country and it is the right time to use this.' At present, the CAA is before the Supreme Court where 144 petitions of various individuals and organizations including AASU have been filed and the SC will only decide on the validity of the Act. Reply to this, existing Chief Minister of Assam, Sarbananda Sonowal and Ex President of AASU (1992-99), says that once the rules are framed, everything will be crystal clear. The figures that are doing the rounds have no basis. We would not allow any fresh influx.

Here, it may be mention that in the months of August and September' 2020 a large portion of agitators from artists against CAA joined to BJP, which is in power for both the governments (Union and State). Further, on 14th Sptember'2020 a new regional political party entitled Asom Jatiya Parishad (AJP) is formed by the two leading youth organizations namely AASU and AJYCP in Assam. And this is the second political party formed by AASU in the political history of Assam.

Conclusion:

In the name of NRC and CAA there is a formation of new regional political party entitled 'Asom Jatiya Parishad' led by AASU and AJYCP and it is the second political party formation by AASU in the history of Assam. So that it's a matter of confusion in the nature of movements led by these organizations that their 'aims and objectives behind such kinds of agitations, whether these are collective or self centered. The NRC and CAA run by various youth organization is not the beginning of now; it is related with the famous 'Assam Movement 1979'. This demanded for the deportation of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. The long six years peaceful non-violent movement was successfully concluded by signing 'Assam Accord' on 15th August 1985 between AASU, AAGSP (All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad) and representatives of the Central Government. In the subject of study, it has seen that the ideology of those youth organisations more commendable which are formed for securing the collective interest of the society like AASU, ABSU, AJYCP etc. than the organisations created for the interest of political parties like Janata Yuva Morcha (BJP), Assam Youth Congress (INC), Krishak Suraksha Parishad (AGP), SFI (CPI) etc..

Recommendations:

Aims and objectives of agitation against NRC and CAA should clear and certain, so that the general mass people can accept it without any hesitation and then the issues will get its momentum.

It has seen that the origin of both the issues (NRC & CAA) have a long history, which is related to illegal immigration to this region and movement against the issue took place time to time. But there is not seen any fruitful result. For a fruitful result there must be political discussion besides agitation.

But, it has to keep in mind that Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and right to protest to every Indian. However, it also makes clear that with freedom of rights comes 'responsibility' which implies that rights should be exercised with discretion and bounds should not be crossed. But during the agitation against CAA, numbers of youth from the region has taken extremely violent activities, which can't be legitimized. In a democratic country peaceful means are always preferred than violent activities.

Table-1

District-wise population growth rates of various communities in Assam from 1971 to 1991 (in %)

	All	Hindus	Muslims	Christian	Scheduled Castes	Scheduled Tribes
Dhubri	56.57	29.24	71.13	131.47	80.10	56.59
Kokrajhar	76.78	53.72	98.47	153.49	115.65	133.36
Goalpara	54.12	25.16	93.83	50.30	60.43	44.77
Bangaigaon	64.64	49.86	88.12	70.00	82.58	111.26
Barpeta	43.02	12.40	64.21	116.96	76.25	42.61
Nalbari	49.27	38.15	93.40	121.18	170.55	84.03
Kamrup	65.20	59.25	87.14	71.49	82.94	73.35
Darang	55.63	34.00	108.10	75.86	83.75	75.07
Sonitpur	57.14	47.35	132.90	106.62	92.47	166.86
Lakhimpur	56.29	39.01	200.52	142.12	80.55	74.88
Dhemaji	107.50	117.71	-59.03	18.22	292.91	103.18
Dibrugarh	37.78	32.91	68.43	59.29	60.05	46.41
Tinsukia	47.03	47.62	89.56	73.04	139.31	107.19
Jorhat	33.10	33.54	60.89	40.84	59.91	67.88
Golaghat	58.26	46.13	97.24	202.73	80.03	114.29
Sibsagar	39.00	36.00	59.00	78.00	70.00	50.25
Nagaon	51.26	31.19	81.91	43.73	68.99	28.45
Marigaon	50.90	37.52	71.51	31.63	66.45	40.46
Cachar	47.59	30.89	56.57	42.34	93.72	15.81
Hailakandi	45.94	34.34	55.56	72.45	50.85	50.53
Karimganj	42.08	29.20	57.93	52.48	49.28	156.2
Karbi Anglong	74.72	64.10	111.42	172.99	155.04	62.69
Dimahasao	98.00	87.70	409.92	121.93	374.33	87.96
Assam	53.26	41.89	77.42	95.37	81.84	78.97

■ Lower Assam ■ Upper Assam ■ Growth rate of SCs and STs is higher than Muslims

Source: Infiltration Genesis of Assam Movement

Tab-2

District-wise population and growth rate of Muslims

Districts	Population, 2001	Growth rate, 2001-2011
Dhubri	74.29	24.40
Marigaon	47.59	23.30
Goalpara	53.71	22.60
Darang	35.58	22.20
Nagaon	51.00	22.00
Karimganj	52.30	21.90
Hailakandi	57.63	21.40
Barpeta	59.37	21.14
Bangaigaon	38.52	20.60
Cachar	36.13	20.20
Dhemaji	1.80	20.00
Kamrup	18.30	-
Karbi Anglong	2.22	17.60
Lakhimpur	16.14	17.20
Kamrup	24.78	15.70
Sonitpui	15.94	15.60
Tinsukia	3.48	15.50
Dimahasao	2.48	13.80
Golaghat	7.91	12.70
Nalbari	22.10	12.00
Dibrugarh	4.50	11.90
Dibrugarh	4.50	11.90
Baksha	-	10.70
Udalguri	-	9.60
Sib sagar	81.5	9.40
Jorhat	4.77	9.30
Kokrajhar	20.36	5.20

Source: Infiltration Genesis of Assam Movement

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