

## **Role of Women in the Protest against Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019 and Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 in Assam**

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### **Abstract:**

The main objective of this paper is to describe and analyze the role of women in the protest against Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019 and Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 in Assam. In this paper secondary sources are used. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019 is about to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955. The main objective of the bill is to add provision that minority group namely, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian from the countries Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh shall not be called and treated as illegal migrant. It was passed by Lok Sabha on December 9, 2019 and passed through Rajya Sabha on December 11, 2019. On December 12, 2019 President of India Ram Nath Kovind signed in it, mentioning provision that person on or before December 31, 2014 from Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, Christian community entered into India from the countries Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh shall not be treated as illegal migrant. In Assam people protest against this Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019 and Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 because it violates the rules, regulations of 'Assam Accord'. Women of Assam also actively participated in this protest.

**Keywords:** Assam, Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, Citizenship (Amendment) Act, role, women.

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Date of Submission: 06-10-2020

Date of Acceptance: 20-10-2020

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### **I. INTRODUCTION:**

The Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 is an amended version of Citizenship Act, 1955. The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 1955 was the regulation which determine who will be the Indian Citizens. This Act determined that those were born in India or born to Indian parents or resided in the country for a period of time was regarded as Indian Citizen. According to section 2(1) of the Citizenship Act, 1955, citizenship can be acquired by birth in India, by descent, through registration, by naturalization (extended residence in India), and by incorporation of the territory into India. In 2005, this Citizenship Act was amended and included that those are born in a registered ship or flight they will be deemed to have been born in the country where the vehicle is registered in (R, 2019).

On the basis of Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 1955, every person born in India on or after the 26<sup>th</sup> day of January, 1950 and before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of July, 1987 regarded as Indian Citizen (The Citizenship Act, 1955, 1955).

Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 is about to amend some provision of Citizenship Act, 1955 and to add this provision : the person of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian community from the countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh entered into India shall not be regarded as illegal migrant (THE CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019, 2019). This Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019 was passed in Lok Sabha on December 09, 2019. After that it is passed by Rajya Sabha on December 11, 2019. On December 12, 2019 President Ram Nath Kovind signed in it (What is Citizenship Amendment Act, n.d). In this Act it is mentioned that the person of the community of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian from the countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh entered India on or before December 31, 2014 shall not be treated as illegal migrant. They have been exempted by the Central Government, Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 and Foreigners Act, 1946 (THE CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2019, 2019).

The people of Assam protest against Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019, Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 from the elder people to younger one. They protest against it because it violates the rules and regulations of 'Assam Accord' which will impact in lifestyle of indigenous people of Assam. After massive movement, against illegal migrant Assam Accord was signed in August 15, 1985. In Assam Accord section 5.3 it is stated that those who come to Assam after January 1, 1966 and March 1971 shall be detected on the basis of Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order 1964. In section 6 of Assam Accord it is stated that for the sake of Assamese people, to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of Assamese people constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards shall be provided (Problems of Foreigners in Assam: Memorandum of Settlement, 2015). So, this Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 cannot protect Assamese people. Throughout this paper, try to analyze role of women in the protest against

Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 and Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 that how they raised their voice against Government.

## **II. OBJECTIVE:**

Main objective of this paper is to describe and analyze the role of Women in the protest against citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019 and Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 in Assam.

## **III. METHODOLOGY:**

In this paper descriptive and analytical methods have been adopted. Here, secondary sources are used including, newspaper, internet sources.

## **ROLE OF WOMEN IN PROTEST AGAINST CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT BILL 2019 AND CITIZENSHIP ACT 2019:**

Women of Assam actively participated in movement from the pre-Independence era. In Swadeshi Movement, Quit India Movement, Indian Freedom Movement, Assam Movement they actively participated. Rajabala Baruah, Chandraprova Saikiani, Kanaklata and Nalinibala Devi played an important role in national freedom struggle and were actively taking part in picketing, strikes, withdraw themselves from colleges (Phukan, n.d.). Women of Assam play an important role in the protest against Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) 2019 and Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) 2019. From younger women to older women and women who studying, staying and working out of Assam they actively participated in this protest (Assam Protest: Many women want CAA struck, 2019). In most of the districts of Assam women were taking part in various roads shows, gathering in field associated with various organizations like AASU and others organizations of Assam. They protest against CAB and CAA shouting slogans, taking play cards and they also protest against this through reciting, singing, acting. In Dibrugarh district, more than 5000 women were taking part in this protest raising their voice against CAB, CAA. In Tinsukia district nearly 7000 people raised voice against CAB, CAA including women. In Sivasagar district thousands of people including women participate in the protest against CAB, CAA carrying anti-CAB, CAA play cards, banners, shouting slogans (Kalita and Dutta, 2019).

During the protest against CAB, CAA in Assam women expressed their own opinion. It is described as follows:

One woman name, Abhijrita Phukan, 23 year old, pursuing M.A. in Political Science from Cotton University states that CAA is not acceptable for us. She says that in Assam there are fewer jobs so if migrants are allowed to come and settle in our home state we might become minority in our own state. She said that most of the student of her university participated in the protest against CAB when it was introduced and being debated in parliament. Due to this protest university also closed. Examination was stopped. Abhijrita stated that she could only attend in three papers; two papers were left during CAA protest. She said that she joined protest in the campus, not in the streets because her parents worried about her. Another woman, named Anindrita Phukan, 29 years old, a software professional in Bengaluru said that after she arrived in Guwahati, found curfew in her city. She said that Assamese people struggled in 80s for signing Assam Accord; the protest against CAA was same. She stated that as Assamese and as women she was worried for future generation. Another 30 years old women named Ashiyana Hussain, from Guwahati states that Guwahati is the gateway to Assam, where has very less jobs than those who want employment. She says that though in Assam has natural resources but do not have much development so taking people from other countries would hurt only interest of Assamese people. So, Assamese culture needs to be protected. A woman named Mridusmita Das Bora, 32 years old says that implementation of CAA and people from other countries will definitely impact in the demography, culture and language of Assam. She says that first we identify ourselves as Assamese, speak our language and respect our 'Gamusa' as a symbol of Assamese pride which we do not want to be affected. She also states that with a spirit of Gandhian Ahimsa the protest against CAA should continue peacefully, democratically till the Centre does not listen. She hopes that Centre will understand, listen voices of people against protest. A college student named Suman Nagpuri, 23 years old says that how it is constitutionally right to permit to some particular religious groups (Assam protests: Many women want CAA struck, 2019).

Along with some members of old age home 'Amar Ghar' one old wheelchair bound woman joined in All Assam Students' Union Satyagrah to protest against CAA. She cries and says that we cannot accept this act, we people need to protect our beautiful language, culture and land. Assamese language will be gone and the Assamese people will be minority section in their own place, state. Actress Barasharani Bishaya also participates in a public rally in Guwahati and states that we people are simple and plain but we are not fool. She asked question to Home Minister about his promised regarding chasing away every 'ghuspethia' (Devi, 2019). She participated in various demonstrations. She says that this CAB, CAA is a threat to Assamese community and their indigenous identity (Assam women at forefront, n.d.). Prastuti Parashar, actress of Assam participated in the protest against CAA by reciting dialogue from her play 'Mula Gabhoru'. She says that that if needed no

Assamese women will hesitate to fight against illegal immigrants. She also says to government that where is their promise of protection jati, mati, veti of Assamese people and says Government to surrender because they failed. Amrita Gogoi, Assamese actress also not supported CAA. She protested against it (Devi, 2019).

Garima Saikia Garg, a fashion designer says that in Assam protest will continue by the people till CAA is not scrapped. We are protesting against Citizenship amendment Bill since 2016 (Hundreds of women protest, n.d).

Arunima Chang-Kakoti, a woman, who participates in the protest Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 states that history has proved that women have been at the forefront of all revolution. In Assam, there need hundreds of Mula Gabhoru. She also states that all women of Assam should unite and lead this movement. Filmmaker of Assam, Jahnua Barua also compares women with Mula Gabhoru (Mughal Opponent Inspires Assam Women, 2020).

Devangana Kalita, 30 years old from Guwahati studied in JNU actively participated in the protest against CAA and for which she was arrested by Delhi Police (JNU student from Assam, 2020). In protesting against Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 a woman, named Trishna Nath, adviser of the All Assam Primary and Upper Primary Schools's Midday Meal Cook and Helpers' Association mid-day meal worker shaved off her head in Guwahati, (Citizenship Amendment Act: Mid-day meal, 2020).

In Tangla, Udalguri 2000 women are taking part in demonstration against Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019. They shout as we don't want Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, this is our land. Sabnam Rahman says that through CAA government has attacked the soul of the Assamese people (Khan, 2019).

From Lataasil point women of Assam were taking out a rally to raise their voice against Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 to express their sorrow, anger against Government in Guwahati (Borah, 2020).

People including women participated in various protests, rallies in various places of Assam like Simaluguri, Moran, Duliajan, Nagarbera, Doomdooma, Rupai, Rangia etc. Thousands of people including women also participate in Tezpur area (Women protest against CAA, 2020).

From the above discussion, it is seen that in most of the district women were actively participated in the protest against Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 and Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Assam. They participated by singing, reciting, shouting slogans, taking anti play cards etc. In this protest from the young generation to older generation women were taking part in this protest. They also played the role of leader in this protest. They raised their voice against Government. Through this protest women express their voice in front of society though in patriarchal society they are seen as weaker section of society. In patriarchal society it is seen that without taking permission of male member of society they are unable to go outside home. But in this protest they themselves participate without any hesitation. This protest reflects active role of women in Assam.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION:**

From the pre-independence era women of Assam were actively participated in various movements. Women's participation in the protest against Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019 and Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 is not new for Assamese women. Women of Assam actively participated in the protest against Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 and Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019. They protest against this because this act will bring threat to Assamese culture, indigenous people of Assam. It violates provision of Indian Constitution as well as Assam Accord. India is a secular state. In India, there is no state religion. It is a developing state. So, first Government should gives importance on the well being of its citizen irrespective of caste, religion and gender.

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Rashmirekha Borgohain. "Role of Women in the Protest against Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019 and Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 in Assam." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)*, vol. 09(10), 2020, pp 41-44. Journal DOI- 10.35629/7722