



INDIA AND THE WORLD

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CHAPTER 2

NRC and the Politics of Exclusion in Assam

Monsur Ahmed

Abstract

With the advent of National Register of Citizens (NRC) a new epoch has been started in the ethno-centric politics in the North-Eastern State of Assam. The idea of updating the NRC in Assam stems from the prolonged public demand of indigenous people of the State to identify illegal migrants from outside the Country especially Bangladesh. Organisationally the demand for recognising indigenous people of Assam was put forward by All Assam Students Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) during the six-year-long Assam Movement in 1980's. The movement culminated with the signing of the Assam Accord in 1985. The National Register of Citizens is a process of enlisting all the legal citizens of the state. It is governed by The Citizenship Act, 1955, and The Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003 (amended in 2009). There are glaring statistics that on 14th July, 2004 the Ministry of State Home Affairs, submitted a statement to Parliament that the estimated number of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants into India as on 31st December, 2001 was 1.20 crores, out of which 50 lakhs were in Assam that justify the need for such an enumeration, but there are compelling arguments on why it is a risky endeavour that has begun without the end in sight. Through this research work I intend to explore the issues and the politics revolving the process of NRC and its probable consequences in the State. The first NRC was prepared in 1951 and included all those who were mentioned in the 1951 Census of India. The process was followed by two subsequent Registrations in 1966 and 1971. The present NRC is operating under the supervision of the apex court. In a significant observation, the court has stated that the Centre, in consultation with state coordinator Prateek Hajela, shall submit modalities and a standard operating procedure, including timelines, mechanism, etc. for deciding claims and objections. The 1955 Citizenship Act and the Assam Accord of 1985 are used for the current NRC process. The National Register of Citizens is a process of forming a list of all bona fide Indian citizens residing in the premier Indian State Assam. In this backdrop, this study analyses consequences of Citizenship Amendment Bill on the People of Assam. This study also examines the politicisation of the issue.

Keywords: NRC, Indigenous people, Illegal immigrants, Citizenship, Exclusion, census.

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