



Newly announced transit camps (detentioncentres) of Assam: A sociological perspective

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Abstract: The construction of detention centres, renamed as transit camps in Assam is a result of the process of erosion of citizenship of illegal immigrants. The study tries to investigate the inside scenario of these camps including their health, food, sanitation, as well as impacts on the families, women and children and economic condition of those who are detained.

(Key words: health and hygiene, family deprivation, woman and children, economic breakdown)

1.Introduction:

In most of the developing regions migration creates multiple uncertainties in all spheres of society. Among many challenges posed by migration the problem of illegal immigration is the toughest one. Illegal immigration can take place by both voluntary and involuntary shift of people from one place to another.

As a part of a developing nation, Assam is not free from the uncertainties put forward by the issue of migration. Migration in Assam is not a new phenomenon as throughout the existing history of Assam one can find the examples of different communities or ethnic groups came into Assam through different routes, with different reasons and set their lives here in different places. As time passes challenges of migration gradually increased forced by the issue of illegal immigrants. Thus, in the process of removal the citizenship of illegal migrants, the concept of setting up detention centres came out.

Today Assam has six detention centres, renamed as transit camps by Assam government in Goalpara, Kokrajhar, tezpur, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, and Silchar. These are under jail premises with few distinction

between these centres and jails. The constructions of a separate residential centre for detainees took place in Matia, Goalpara district, but not open yet. Persons who are suspected as foreigner, who live without permission are detained in the centres. Present transit centres are full of suspected foreigners, where most of them have their origin in Banladesh. One can find the commonness among the detainees in language also as both Bengali speaking Hindu and Muslims are there. Almost every detained person in the camps are economically poor with less or no education and they are not very much conscious about the documents needed for the verification of their citizenship.

Statelessness of a person left him or her with no civil right. The report of NHRC Mission to Assam' s detention Centres,2018 highlights many facts about these camps. This study is designed to look at the inside situations of the camps, specifically health and hygiene, family deprivation, impact on women an children and economic breakdown of the families outside the cmaps.

2.Methodology:

The study was conducted on the basis of secondary data, collected by the researcher from different sources regarding the matter.

3.Findings:

Findings of the proposed study are-

3.1 Health & Hygiene: Statelessness of a person leads him or her towards a life without any civil right. According to the secondary sources there are facilities of sanitation but not enough according to the requirement of the camps and much time it effects on the privacy of the detainees and resulted in smelling the camp. Inmates inside the camps are given food by the authority. Sources reveals the fact that quantity and the quality of the food is substandard and insufficient too. They are given breakfast, launce and dinner. Thus they have a repeated routine. Dinner is given early approx. at 4pm. Each of the detainees has a minimum area to lay or sleep in a hall. Living condition inside the camps or the daily life of the inmates is unchanging as follow a repeated routine every day without any productive work or healthy environments. Their lives are full of fear of exclusion of their citizenship and with anxiety regarding their future. Unchanging lifestyle and uncertainty of the detainees impacts on their mental health. Mental stress and physical breakdown are common among the detainees inside the camps.

3.2 Family Deprivation: Families whose member is tagged as destined have to suffer without their loved ones. According to the sources in many cases husband and wife are in separate centres. Meeting the family members is not easy for the detainees as they are not allowed to do so. Somehow they keep the contact through the security guards or the officials. Sometime family members bring food for them but they have to give it through the guards. Sometime the poor economic condition of the families is not strong enough that they cannot afford the expanse of transportation to meet their loved one inside the camps.

3.3 Women and Children: The condition of women and children in the matter of detention centres is not an exception with the fact that in every difficult situation women and children suffer the most. Female suspected foreigners are not allowed to take their children inside the camp. Children only below 6 years can live with their mother. Even pregnant woman who give birth inside the camp has to leave the child when the child becomes 6 years old. There is no educational facility for the children inside the camps, whose mothers are accused as foreigner. It is not also clear in the cases of separated children, whose parents are detained, that who will take their legal responsibility.

3.4 Economic breakdown: Inside the camps detained persons have no right to do any productive work through which they can earn wage and support their families outside the camp. In the case when the only person who earns for the family is detained, family goes through economic vulnerability. The legal battle to proof the suspected foreigners as legal citizens also expansive for the families. According to the sources some of the families sold their properties including domestic animals and seek public help to pay the cost of the legal process. Overall a consequence of financial distress is common among the detainees as well as among their families.

4. Recommendation:

4.1 A proper guideline regarding the treatment of detainees inside the camps prepared by Central or State Government can remove the difficulties and it will be easier for the officials.

4.2 By reducing long time period in the legal battle the government can have a smooth and fast identification process of detainees, whether the person is foreigner or Indian citizen. Thus, it will also remove the long fear and anxiety of detainees as well as government as they can have a fast and clear cut decision and can exclude the actual illegal immigrants and who are proved as Indians can go back to their home.

4.3 There can be basic facility of education for children, whose mothers are detained.

4.4 In the case of the poverty both inside and outside of the camps, government can engage the detained persons in productive works.

5.CONCLUSION:

The issue of illegal immigrants is a threat towards the political, social and cultural aspects of a society. It creates conflictual situations politically, socially and culturally too. In the case of Assam this problem also has religious side. Assam is the first state in India having transit centres, both existing and proposed. The senerio has some changes due to the implementation of CAA 2019 where some particular community of immigrants would be add into Indian citizenship, which at the same time creates fear among Muslim immigrants as in the final draft of NRC 2018 many of the names, not in the list are belong to Muslim community. The recent Citizenship Amendment Act 2019, thus creates conflictual situation between the legal citizens and government too, all over India, though the bases of the protests are different. Such as the movement in Assam and North-East against CAA was going on with the base of clause6 in Assam Accord,

while in other parts CAA was opposed with the allegation of being communal. Recently the nomenclature of detention camps changed into transit camps to make it more humanised. The study has further scope of research due to its multiple socio-political aspects.

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