



Assam movement and issues of illegal immigrants: A Historical Study of Assam movement and issues of illegal immigrants in Assam

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ABSTRACT:

The Assam Movement or Anti-Foreigners Agitation, was a popular uprising in Assam, India. It started from 1979 continued till 1985. This popular movement led by All Assam Students Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP). The leaders demanded the Government of India to detect, disenfranchise and deport illegal aliens. The movement defined a six-year period of sustained civil disobedience campaigns, political instability and widespread ethnic violence. The movement ended in 1985 with the signing of Assam Accord between leaders of the agitation and central government headed by Rajiv Gandhi then prime minister of India.

Key words:

Anti-Foreigners, Agitation, AASU, AAGSP. Illegal aliens, Ethnic violence, Civil disobedience & Assam Accord.

Introduction:

The Assam Movement also known as the Anti-Foreigners Movement was a popular uprising in Assam, India, starting from 1979 to 1985 demanding the Government of India to detect, disenfranchise and deport illegal aliens.

The Assam Movement was against the illegal immigrants began in 1979, spearheaded by the All Assam Student's Union (AASU). This movement, which lasted until 1985, aimed to identify and deport foreigners who had entered Assam after 1951. The movement was fueled by concerns about the impact of migration on the state's political, cultural, and economic landscape. The

central and Assam government quell down the movement through repressive measures and police atrocities and as a result 855 agitators lost their lives. The deceased agitators are declared martyr.

The Assam Movement was against illegal foreigners ended with the signing of the Assam Accord on August 15, 1985. The accord was signed between the Government of India and the leaders of All Assam Students Union, and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad..

This agreement officially concluded the six-year-long movement, which was primarily led by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP). The movement aimed to identify and deport illegal immigrants who had entered Assam after 1951.

Objectives:

Objectives of the paper is to make an:

1. Investigation of aims of Assam movement and the part played by ASSU (All Assam Student Union) and
2. inquiry the effort of the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad to deport illegal immigrants who had entered Assam after 1951.

Data and Methodology:

In this paper both primary and secondary data have been used. Primary source included oral traditions, interviews etc. The secondary sources included books and journals. The methodology adopted for the work is subaltern approach to understanding the role and the activities of ASSU (All Assam Student Union) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad and it will be presented in the form of descriptive narrative. The Assam movement implies an investigation of the part played by ASSU and Assam Ghana Parishad to deport illegal foreigners who had coming after March 24, 1971 and settled in Assam.

Analysis and Discussion:

The Assam Movement, also known as the Anti-Foreigners Agitation, was a popular uprising in Assam, India. It started in 1979 and continued till 1985. The Agitation was led by All Assam Students Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) demanding the central Government of India to detect, disenfranchise and deport illegal aliens from Assam. The movement defined a six-year period of sustained civil disobedience campaigns, political instability and widespread ethnic violence.

It was known since 1963 that foreign nationals had been improperly added to electoral roll and when the draft enrollments in Mangaldoi had showed the highest number of non-citizens in 1979 AASU decided to campaign for thoroughly revised the electoral rolls. The central

government headed by Indira Gandhi did not accept the demand of ASSU for fear of political negative impact. The Congress government of centre thought it as the considerable political cost. As a result entire state of Assam decided to boycott the Lok Sabha election held in 1980. The movement escalated to economic blockades, oppression, violent pogroms and ethnic conflict. AASU's primary demand, which fueled the movement, was the identification and deportation of all illegal foreigners, primarily from Bangladesh, who had entered Assam. This large scale influx created fear about the impact on the political rights, culture, language, and land rights of the Assamese people. The movement was driven by fears that the influx of foreigners, particularly from Bangladesh was overwhelming the native population and threatening their identity and way of life. The core demand of AASU along with other groups included the detection, disenfranchisement, and deportation of illegal foreigners who had entered Assam after 1951. The political nature of this movement was heavily debated among scholars in the journal, Economic and Political Weekly

After assassination of Indira Gandhi on 31st 1984 Rajiv Gandhi become the prime minister of India. Rajiv Gandhi was less concerned with Congress's electoral fortunes. ASSU and leaders of the Assam movement on acceding their core demands by Rajiv Gandhi, then prime minister of India, the historic Assam Accord was signed on 15th August 1985. The Assam Accord was a Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) signed between representatives of the Government of India and the leaders of the Assam Movement. It was signed in the presence of the Rajiv Gandhi then-Prime Minister of India in New Delhi on 15 August 1985.

The Citizenship Act was amended for the first time the following year in 1986 after signing the Assam Accord. It followed a six-year agitation that started in 1979 led by the All Assam Student's Union (AASU) and Assam Gana sangram Parishad. The protestors demanded the identification and deportation of all illegal foreigners –predominantly Bangladeshi immigrants. The leaders of the Assam Movement agreed to accept all migrants who had entered into Assam prior to 1 January 1966. The Government of India acknowledged the political, social, cultural and economic concerns of the Assamese people and agreed to revise the electoral roll on database. Further, the government agreed to identify and deport all refugees and migrants come after March 25 1971.

Conclusion:

The Assam Accord, signed in 1985, aimed to solve the issue of illegal immigration problem of Assam. It established a cut-off date of March 24, 1971, for the detection and deportation of foreigners, and also included provisions for safeguarding the political, economic, and cultural rights of the Assamese people. The accord specified that all individuals who entered Assam prior to January 1, 1966, would be considered citizens and those entering between January 1, 1966, and March 24, 1971, would be detected and their names deleted from the electoral rolls. Foreigners who came to Assam on or after March 25, 1971, were to be detected, deleted from electoral rolls, and expelled in accordance with the law. The accord called for sealing the India-Bangladesh border to prevent further illegal immigration through measures like fencing, increased surveillance and deployment of Border Security Forces. Clause 6 of Assam Accord

focused on safeguarding the political, social, cultural, and economic identity of the Assamese people. It proposed measures like reservation of seats in the state legislature and local bodies, as well as in government jobs and educational institutions for Assamese people. Further the accord aimed to protect and promote the Assamese language and culture.

The Assam Accord could not resolve the problem of foreigner's issue. Actually the Assam Accord and Assam Movement paved the way for the leaders of the agitation to form a political party and government in the state of Assam. AGP(Assam Gana Parishad) regional political party of Assam came into being immediately after signing Assam Accord. AGP formed government two times in Assam first term in 1985 and second time in 1996 headed by prafulla Kumar Mahanta promising the people of Assam to deport illegal Immigrants and foreigners. It is seen that the leaders of AGP used the genuine sentiment of Assamese People to capturing political power. They now alienated from the main issue and their activities proved that the foreign issue was not their chief aim rather it was secondary issue. They were actually not sincere to deportation of illegal Immigrants from Assam and involved capturing political power neglecting issues of Assamese people.

Of late it is seen that AGP(Assam Gana Parishad) alligning with BJP (Bharatiyo Janata Party) erased the Clause 6 of Assam Accord by implementing CAA in Assam and communalised the foreign issue on religious line. They divided the illegal Immigrants issue into Hindu-Muslim by imposing CAA(Citizenship Amendmend Act) in 2019 by which permitting the Hindu Bangladeshi to be valid citizens of Assam those who migrated just before 2014. The people of Assam vehemently protested the imposition of CAA. They coming out to protest against the implementation of CAA. The police cruelly subdued the movment and brutally killed 5 youth of Assam. This act may be paved the way of another Movement in Assam as it threatening Assamese language and culture.

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