

# THE BOOK REVIEW

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stant Editor Adnan Farooqui  
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**BSITE MANAGEMENT**  
ital Empowerment Foundation  
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**OMPUTER INPUTS,  
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ish Kumar  
igital Empowerment Foundation

**lease Address All Mail To:**  
ne Book Review Literary Trust  
9, Vasant Enclave  
ew Delhi 110 057

**Telephone:**  
1-11-41034635  
278089024 / 9811702695

**Website:**  
www.thebookreviewindia.org

**mail:**  
bandrachan44@gmail.com  
ma.iyengar@gmail.com

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tor, Seema Mustafa, describes how Shaheen Bagh for the 'first time in living history', Muslim women, long stereotyped as demure and caged, participate in direct political action, leading from the front. 》

ational Citizens Register (NRC). discipline, respect and dignity with the protestors not only conducted themselves but also gave to their opponent, a powerful state, has led many to liken the movement to an avatar of Gandhian Satyagraha.

In the end, the book asks, 'Who won?' The goal of the Shaheen Bagh protests was? Shaheen Bagh did not result in a roll back of the CAA-NPR-NRC. As Apoorvanand writes in the book, Shaheen Bagh exposed the majoritarian, monitory face of India wherein an entire social class (including opposition leaders and any Dalit and OBC leaders) never rallied around or took ownership of the political cause of Shaheen Bagh. Deep anxieties of the Muslims which Shaheen Bagh were ignored, misunderstood or worse vilified. However, the dissent as 'a civilized discourse on pending questions that need answers' (Ar, 2020), the Shaheen Bagh resistance marks a historic democratization of the rights of Indians to question the secular and liberal credentials of the homogenizing, majoritarian Indian state. Today, as we see farmers agitation developing across India, the vocabulary of protest introduced by Shaheen Bagh has seeped into the national discourse and changed the optics of dissent. The powers that be stonewalled the CAA protests, that they are ready to negotiate with the protesting farmers is itself a result of the snowballing impact of protest movements like Shaheen-Bagh.

The book under review would be a read for general readers, students, academics and journalists alike, who are engaged in thinking through the how and why of protest movements like Shaheen Bagh and what they foretell for the nation.

Source: *Journal 2020, Voices of Dissent: An Essay. General Books.*

## Understanding Post-Accord Politics of Assam

Parvin Sultana

ASSAM POLITICS IN POST-CONGRESS ERA: 1985 AND BEYOND VOLUME 4

By Sandhya Goswami

Sage Publications, 2020, pp. 188, ₹1095.00

The tripartite Assam Accord signed between the Indian government, the State Government of Assam and the All Assam Students Union (AASU) in 1985 marks a watershed moment in Assam's socio-political history. The Accord ushered in a new era of competitive politics. Assam has been mostly under Congress rule with the exception of the time of the Janata Government led by Golap Borbora (1978-79). Post 1985, the State witnessed the formation of new political parties as well as the fragmentation of the electorate.

Two important developments took place in Assam after 1985; firstly, there was a multiplication of the number of political parties and secondly, a politicization of multiple ethnic groups which gave a further push to the demand of ethnic homelands. Sandhya Goswami's *Assam Politics in Post-Congress Era: 1985 and Beyond* is a detailed study of the change that took place in Assam post 1985.

The book starts with a detailed account of historical issues like illegal immigration initiated by a colonial power and how it continues to shape the State's politics. Migration of farmers from erstwhile East Bengal was both a colonial project and a respite for farmers from an exploitative Permanent Settlement of Bengal to a relaxed Ryotwari system prevalent in Assam. However, Partition and Independence did not end this human movement and it puts an extra pressure on land. The author reiterates that land is a crucial component of the identity of a largely agrarian community and identity crisis of the people of Assam is due to this scarcity of land.

Post-Independence, the Assam electorate backed Congress to power again and again which was a catch-all party and initially responded to the concerns of the people of Assam. But with the 1960s and the language movement, fragmentations became prominent. The decade saw threats in the

## ASSAM POLITICS IN POST-CONGRESS ERA

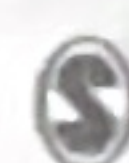
1985 AND BEYOND



SANDHYA GOSWAMI

SAGE SERIES ON POLITICS IN INDIAN STATES

VOLUME 4



Bengal originally allied with the Assamese speakers and identified Assamese as their mother-tongue. The author borrows from her work on language movement in Assam and points out how language played a central role in the State in the decade of the 60s.

The ultimate challenge to Congress dominance came in the form of the six year long Assam Agitation that lasted from 1979 to 1985. The decade of the 1980s saw unprecedented violence in the State. The conduct of elections in 1983 against the call for boycott further worsened the situation. The State was heavily polarized on communal lines. The Congress tried to assuage the Muslims with the appointment of Anowara Taimur as Chief Minister in 1983. An increased activity of RSS and Jamiat in the State further fragmented the State's social fabric and this culminated in the massacres in 1983. While Nellie is often cited as it saw more than two thousand Bengali Muslim women and children bludgeoned to death, many other places in Assam witnessed similar violence across communities.

The Assam Movement saw the assertion of the Assamese speakers which alienated the tribal population of the State. This period also saw the assertion of Bodos for a separate State. The movement culminated in the signing of the Assam Accord and on the political front, it saw the fresh entry of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP). Riding on post-accord popular support, the AC