



# Analyzing The Impact Of Citizenship Amendment Act On India's Political Landscape

**Author:**

Geetika

**B.A. Political Science (Hons)**

**Amity University, Noida**

## Abstract

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), enacted in December 2019, has emerged as a pivotal and contentious issue within India's political landscape, sparking widespread debate and mobilization across various segments of society. This legislation, which provides a pathway to Indian citizenship for specific religious minorities—namely Hindus,

Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians—from neighboring countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, has been met with both fervent support and vehement opposition. Notably, the CAA's explicit exclusion of Muslims has raised significant concerns regarding its alignment with the secular principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution, which guarantees equality and non-discrimination to all citizens, irrespective of their religious affiliations.

## Keywords

Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Secularism, Religious Minorities, Political Controversy, Public Mobilization, Constitutional Equality, Discrimination.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), enacted in December 2019, has been one of the most debated and controversial legislations in India's recent history. It amends the Citizenship Act of 1955 to grant fast-track citizenship to persecuted religious minorities—Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians—from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh, while excluding Muslims. The Act has sparked widespread political, legal, and social debates, with critics arguing that it challenges India's secular principles and democratic values, while supporters claim it is a humanitarian measure aimed at protecting religious minorities facing persecution in neighboring countries.

The Introduction of the CAA has reshaped India's political landscape, influencing party ideologies, center-state relations, electoral strategies, and public discourse. The law has deepened the divide between the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and opposition parties, with many non-BJP-ruled states rejecting its implementation. Protests erupted across the country, from Shaheen Bagh in Delhi to university campuses and northeastern states like Assam, highlighting regional and communal concerns. The Act also raised questions about its connection to the proposed

National Register of Citizens (NRC), fueling fears of exclusion and statelessness among marginalized communities.

Beyond domestic politics, the CAA has drawn significant international attention, with organizations like the United

Nations (UN), the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), and the European Union (EU) expressing concerns about its potential implications on religious freedom and human rights. India's diplomatic relations, particularly with Bangladesh and other South Asian nations, have been influenced by the Act, reflecting its broader geopolitical consequences.

### 1.1 Methodology

This study employs a multi-method research approach, combining legislative analysis, political discourse examination, public opinion tracking, media review, and international response assessment. A legal analysis of the CAA and its amendments to the Citizenship Act of 1955 is conducted, along with a review of parliamentary debates and Supreme Court petitions challenging the law. The study also evaluates political party responses, state-level opposition, and election rhetoric to understand the CAA's influence on governance and federalism. To assess public opinion, case studies of protests such as Shaheen Bagh and student-led demonstrations, and social media trends are analyzed. A media discourse study compares coverage from government-aligned, independent, and international outlets, identifying bias, framing, and misinformation. The global impact is examined through official statements from the UN, USCIRF, the EU, and neighboring countries, assessing how the CAA has influenced India's diplomatic relations.

## Chapter 2: The Citizenship Act Of 1955 and its Failure

The challenges of defining national identity and citizenship in India have existed since the time of Partition, largely due to the dual status of individuals as both citizens and refugees. While Pakistan enacted its first Citizenship Act in 1951, India took nearly eight years to develop its own citizenship legislation, eventually passing the Indian Citizenship Act in 1955. Despite the secular principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution, this legislation was influenced by efforts to preserve religious identity, making it somewhat restrictive in nature.

According to Joya Chatterji's observations, as referenced by Udit Sen (2018), the legal framework of Indian citizenship gradually shifted from *jus soli* (citizenship by birth) to *jus sanguinis* (citizenship by descent). This transformation was largely influenced by the political challenges of managing Partition refugees. The outcome was a hybrid form of citizenship that seemingly granted full rights to Hindu migrants while relegating many Muslim residents to a secondary status.

Religion played a significant role in shaping India's first Citizenship Act of 1955, as reflected in the Indian Ministry of Rehabilitation reports from that period, which explicitly stated that only non-Muslim refugees would receive government assistance. While this law attempted to provide a legal framework for managing Partition refugees, it failed to address the continued influx of migrants, which remained a challenge.

According to Gopal (2013), a crucial amendment to the Citizenship Act was introduced in 1985 to address migration from Bangladesh, which had increased dramatically since 1947, peaked in 1971, and continued in subsequent years. The expectation was that India's post-Partition leadership would take a broad and inclusive approach, recognizing the vast displacement and humanitarian crisis on both sides of the border. Although the Indian Constitution upheld secular ideals, the Citizenship Act of 1955 ultimately fell short of providing a clear and inclusive definition of national identity.

Its failure to align with India's secular ethos, particularly its preferential treatment of Hindu refugees, led to further polarization within both refugee communities and the broader Indian society. The violation of secular principles in citizenship policies contributed to deepening divisions, highlighting the ongoing tensions between national identity, religion, and legal frameworks in India's post-independence history.

## 2.1 Background

Citizenship and migration have been long-standing issues in India, dating back to 1947, when Partition resulted in enormous population movement between India, Pakistan, and later Bangladesh (previously East Pakistan). While India awarded citizenship to many refugees, migration from neighboring countries, particularly Bangladesh, persisted in later decades. This sparked regional tensions, particularly in Assam and the Northeast, where residents were concerned about demographic and cultural changes brought on by illegal immigration.

### The Assam Agitation

(1979-1985) and the following Assam Accord (1985) attempted to resolve these concerns by establishing March 24, 1971, as the citizenship cut-off date in Assam. However, the topic remained politically charged, impacting policies about illegal migration and national identity.

In the early 2000s, discussions about granting citizenship to **persecuted religious minorities from Islamic nations** acquired political traction, particularly with the establishment of the **Bharatiya Janata Party**. The desire to protect **Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan** was presented as a humanitarian necessity. The **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** procedure

in Assam (2013-2019) fueled the issue, as many **Hindus and Muslims** were left off the list, creating worries about their legal standing.

### Chapter 3: Socio-Political Landscape: Communalism, Secularism, and Identity

The sociopolitical context around India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is intricately linked to complex processes of communalism, secularism, and identity. Here's a look at some interconnected themes:

1. **Communalism:** Communalism is defined as the mobilization of identity-based communities, often along religious lines, for political or ideological ends. In the context of the CAA, communalism emerges as societal polarization along religious lines, with certain groups lobbying for the interests of their individual religious communities at the detriment of others. Perceptions of prejudice and marginalization can intensify communal tensions, creating social divisions and conflicts.
2. **Secularism:** Secularism is a fundamental value incorporated in the Indian Constitution, which requires the separation of religion and state and ensures that all religious communities are treated equally by the government. The CAA has sparked worries about the erosion of secularism in India, with detractors claiming that the Act weakens the country's secular fabric by favoring certain religious groups over others. The exclusion of Muslims from the Act's scope is viewed as a break from the principles of secular governance and equality.
3. **Identity Politics:** Identity politics heavily influence India's socio-political landscape, with political parties and social movements rallying around religious, caste, language, or regional identity. The implementation of the CAA has heightened identity-based politics, with various groups proclaiming their identities and interests in respect to the Act. For some, the Act reaffirms their religious identity and tradition, while others see it as a danger to their feeling of belonging and citizenship.
4. **Inter-Religious Relations:** The CAA has strained inter-religious relations in India by instilling distrust and hostility between various groups, notably Hindus and Muslims. Communal tensions have risen, resulting in violence, hate speech, and discrimination. Inter-religious conversation and collaboration foster mutual understanding, respect, and unity among distinct religious groups. However, the contentious nature of the rhetoric surrounding the CAA has made such dialogue difficult.
5. **National Identity and Citizenship:** Debates about the CAA interact with issues of national identity and citizenship. The Act questions the nation's identity and citizenship eligibility based on religious beliefs. This has sparked heated debates about the meaning

of Indian citizenship, religion's role in defining national identity, and the inclusiveness of the Indian nation-

state.

#### Chapter 4: Migrations and Memories

The CAA is deeply tied to historical migrations, particularly those linked to the Partition of India in 1947. The division of British India led to one of the largest mass migrations in human history, with millions of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs crossing borders in search of safety. The trauma of displacement, the violence of communal riots, and the struggle for resettlement remain deeply embedded in the collective memory of many families. For communities that faced persecution in neighboring countries, such as Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan and Bangladesh, the CAA was framed by the Indian government as a measure of historical justice. It was presented as an effort to address unfinished obligations from the Partition, offering a safe haven to those who remained vulnerable in their ancestral homelands.

However, migration in India is not just a story of the past; it continues to be a pressing issue in the present. Northeastern states, particularly Assam, have long dealt with concerns over illegal immigration from Bangladesh. Many indigenous communities in Assam and Tripura fear that the CAA will alter their demographic balance by granting citizenship to additional migrants. These concerns stem from decades of struggles over identity, land rights, and cultural preservation. The Assam Accord of 1985, which sought to protect indigenous communities from unchecked migration, is seen by many as being undermined by the CAA, leading to significant protests in the region. For the people of Assam, migration is not just a policy issue but an emotional and political memory, tied to their sense of self and belonging.

The CAA also intersects with memories of migration related to the Bangladeshi Liberation War of 1971. During the war, millions of refugees, both Hindu and Muslim, fled to India to escape violence and persecution. Many were granted shelter, but over the decades, their legal status remained uncertain. The CAA selectively seeks to resolve the status of non-Muslim refugees, reinforcing the idea that migration policies are being framed through a religious lens rather than a purely humanitarian one. This selective approach has fueled criticism that the Act is not just about aiding persecuted migrants but also about redefining Indian citizenship along communal lines.

Another dimension of migration linked to the CAA is the anxiety over statelessness, particularly in relation to the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC). If the NRC is implemented across India, it could require people to prove their citizenship through historical documents. For many marginalized communities, especially the poor and those who migrated due to conflict or natural disasters, such documentation is difficult to obtain. The fear is that while non-Muslim undocumented migrants might find protection under the CAA, Muslim migrants could face statelessness. This has led to widespread protests, as many see the combination of the NRC and CAA as a means of excluding certain populations rather than addressing migration issues fairly.

The emotional weight of migration memories has played a crucial role in shaping public responses to the CAA. For some, the law represents an acknowledgment of historical injustices and offers a path to dignity for persecuted minorities. For others, it revives painful memories of exclusion and raises concerns about rewriting the narrative of migration through a political lens. By selectively addressing the migration issue, the Act has deepened existing divisions and fueled debates on who belongs to India and on what terms.

#### 4.1 The "legalization" of migration

The CAA fundamentally differs from India's previous citizenship system, which was founded on territoriality and secular ideals. The law established a religious requirement for naturalization by exclusively awarding citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians, but excluding Muslims. The administration defended this action as a humanitarian response to save persecuted minority in nearby nations. However, detractors contend that this selective "legalization" of migration is unjust because it leaves out Muslim communities that are oppressed, as the Ahmadis in Pakistan or the Rohingya in Myanmar.

Politically speaking, the CAA has changed the discourse on migration by bringing it into line with the beliefs of the ruling party. The present strategy aims to reframe the concept of lawful migration via a religious perspective, whereas past governments mostly addressed migration through administrative and security-driven measures. In addition to causing turmoil at home, this change has strained India's ties with its neighbors, especially Bangladesh, which has voiced worries about being called a persecuting country.

The legalization of migration under the CAA has faced strong state-level opposition, especially in areas where conflicts over migration have historically existed. The Act has encountered robust opposition in Assam and other northeastern states, where the problem of illegal immigration has long been a politically delicate subject. Regardless of faith, protesters contend that providing citizenship to any more migrants will jeopardize economic stability and indigenous cultures. Given that it permits migration for certain individuals while disregarding the regional and historical complexity of cross-border movement, this demonstrates the inconsistencies in the CAA.

Since equality before the law is guaranteed by Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, the Act has been legally challenged in court. The opposition argues that awarding citizenship on the basis of religion is against India's secular foundation and may pave the way for future exclusions. Further complicating the conversation on migration and citizenship is the connection between the CAA and the projected National Register of Citizens (NRC), which has stoked concerns that the Act may be selectively utilized to deny certain communities the right to vote.

## Chapter 5: Controversies and Legal Debates

The CAA is being challenged primarily on the grounds that it violates Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, which protects equality before the law. Muslims are not granted the same protections under the Act, however Hindus,

Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians from the designated nations are granted a quicker citizenship process. Some who oppose the exclusion contend that it unfairly discriminates against refugees based on their religion and goes against India's secular ethos. The arbitrary classification of migrants by the Act has been questioned in a number of petitions submitted to the Supreme Court. Persecuted groups, including the Ahmadiyyas in Pakistan and the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, are excluded despite enduring extreme persecution, according to critics.

However, the government claims that the CAA does not violate constitutional rights and instead corrects a particular historical injustice.

The Act has sparked a larger discussion about India's secular ethos that goes beyond legal issues. Indian citizenship rules have maintained their religious neutrality since independence, guaranteeing equitable treatment for all communities. The CAA is viewed as violating Article

25, which protects freedom of religion, by instituting a citizenship requirement based on religion.

Many worry that this change could change the fundamental principles of the country by creating a precedent for future legislation that favors one religious group over another.

Concerns about the CAA's possible connection to the National Register of Citizens (NRC) have heightened the controversy around it. Critics contend that the CAA and NRC could cooperate to target particular communities, despite the government's insistence that they are distinct agencies. Those who do not submit adequate paperwork may be at risk of statelessness if an NRC exercise is carried out nationally. There is concern that Muslims may be left exposed by the CAA, even while non-Muslim undocumented people may be protected. Legal ambiguity and considerable public demonstrations have resulted from the government's lack of clarification on this matter.

The federal opposition from state governments is another important factor in the CAA discussion. Even though the central government has jurisdiction over citizenship rules, a number of states, including Kerala, Punjab, West

Bengal, and Rajasthan, have passed resolutions condemning the bill on the grounds that it is incompatible with India's secular framework. Kerala even went so far as to challenge the constitutionality of the Act in a Supreme Court appeal, which was an unusual move. Furthermore, several states have declined to participate in the National Population Register (NPR), which is a prelude to the NRC, on the grounds that it might unfairly affect underserved populations. States' resistance raises concerns about the distribution of power within India's federal system and draws attention to the escalating hostilities between the federal and state governments.

## Chapter 6: State-level protests in the context of federal relations

Several states openly disobeyed the CAA's implementation, especially those led by opposition parties. Several legislative assemblies, including those in Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, and West Bengal, passed motions against the law, arguing that it was discriminatory and might have violated constitutional norms. Kerala was the first state to take the Act to the Supreme Court, claiming that it weakened the country's secular foundation. Mamata Banerjee, the chief minister of West Bengal, spearheaded widespread demonstrations and charged that the central government was exploiting religion for political ends. Similar to this, there were fierce demonstrations in the northeastern states, especially Assam and Meghalaya, because of concerns that the Act will upset the demographic balance of the area and jeopardize local identities.

The weakness of India's cooperative federalism was made clear by these state-level demonstrations. The broad opposition from state governments highlighted the constraints of unilateral policymaking in a diverse federal system, even though the Constitution gives the federal government responsibility over citizenship legislation. Conflicts between the Union government and state administrations also resulted from the demonstrations; several states refused to update their statistics for the National Population Register (NPR), which was thought to be a forerunner of the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

The federal government responded by stating that states had no power to reject a law passed by Parliament, highlighting the Union's sovereignty in citizenship-related affairs. However, states' broad opposition showed that they might use legal challenges and public mobilization to affect national laws. As state governments in India are progressively asserting their autonomy against central mandates, the CAA demonstrations served to further solidify the country's changing federal ties.

Finally, the protests against the CAA at the state level brought federalism to the forefront of Indian politics by highlighting the widening gap between the federal and state administrations. While the federal government aimed to implement a unified national policy, state governments were crucial in opposing what they perceived to be a politically motivated and exclusive statute. This episode demonstrated how states continue to shape national political narratives while highlighting the challenges of government in a diverse federal democracy.

### 6.1 A moderating influence of federalism?

The opposition of a number of state governments to the CAA was one of the most prominent features of federalism's moderating influence. Resolutions opposing the Act were passed by states such as Kerala, Punjab, West Bengal, and Rajasthan, who said that it went against the secular spirit of the Indian Constitution. Some governments expressed worries that the bill may endanger indigenous populations and change demographic balances, especially in the Northeast.

This opposition successfully contested the narrative of the central government and stopped the Act from being implemented blindly in every state.

Furthermore, the legal actions taken by state governments, including Kerala's Supreme Court case, illustrated the institutional means by which measures deemed illegal might be challenged within India's federal framework. State opposition sparked the judicial review process, which further postponed the CAA's full implementation and allowed for public discussion and reconsideration.

By giving states the ability to affect how the CAA is actually implemented, federalism also served as a moderator. Although the Union List governs citizenship rules, state governments' collaboration is essential to their execution, especially when it comes to record-keeping and updating the National Population Register (NPR). In order to express their displeasure and restrict the implementation of central policies at the local level, a number of states declined to engage in NPR-related activities.

Furthermore, the Act could not be viewed only through the prism of national politics because of the decentralized structure of Indian governance, which allowed regional leaders to organize public opinion against it. As an example of how regional leadership can affect national policy decisions, chief ministers such as Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal and Pinarayi Vijayan in Kerala were instrumental in defining the opposition narrative.

To sum up, the CAA's moderating effect on federalism emphasizes how crucial it is as a check on central authority. Federalism makes ensuring that India's varied socio-political fabric is maintained by giving state governments the ability to oppose, contest, and reinterpret central policy. The CAA discussion brought to light the vital role that regional administrations play in democratic governance, guaranteeing that policymaking is inclusive, contentious, and representative of the nation's pluralistic nature.

## **Chapter 7: International Relations and Global Perceptions of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)**

The law, which expedites citizenship for persecuted religious minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh while excluding Muslims, sparked debates on human rights, secularism, and democratic values. Several countries, international organizations, and global media outlets responded to the Act with concerns over its potential to undermine India's reputation as a pluralistic democracy. The international reaction to the CAA reflects the growing intersection of domestic policies with global diplomatic relations, shaping India's engagements with key allies and global institutions.

### **1. Impact on Relations with Neighboring Countries**

The CAA has directly affected India's relations with Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, as they are specifically mentioned in the law.

- **Bangladesh:** The law has led to diplomatic friction with Bangladesh, as it implies that minorities in the country face systemic persecution. Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has downplayed this claim, stating that the law is unnecessary. Furthermore, concerns have been raised that the NRC, when combined with the CAA, might lead to a refugee influx into Bangladesh. This has contributed to anti-India sentiment and protests in the country.
- **Pakistan:** As anticipated, Pakistan has strongly opposed the CAA, calling it anti-Muslim and accusing India of violating human rights and international norms. This has further deteriorated already strained diplomatic ties, adding to tensions over Kashmir, crossborder security, and regional politics.
- **Afghanistan:** Although Afghanistan has not actively criticized the CAA, concerns have emerged regarding how persecution is defined within the law. The return of the Taliban in 2021 has renewed discussions on protecting Hindu and Sikh minorities, making the CAA relevant in India's engagement with Afghanistan.

One of the strongest reactions to the CAA came from the United Nations (UN) and various international human rights organizations. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) criticized the law, stating that it violates India's commitments under the

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by introducing religious discrimination in citizenship laws. The UN even sought to file an intervention in the Indian Supreme Court against the Act, highlighting global concerns about its impact on India's secular and democratic identity.

Western democracies, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, also raised concerns over the CAA. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) expressed fears that the law, when combined with the National Register of Citizens

(NRC), could lead to statelessness for certain communities, particularly Muslims. Some American lawmakers even proposed resolutions condemning the Act, urging India to uphold its secular traditions. In the UK, parliamentary debates were held over the potential human rights implications of the law, with calls for diplomatic engagement with India to address concerns.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), a group representing Muslim-majority nations, also voiced concerns over the CAA, viewing it as discriminatory against Muslims. Countries like

Turkey and Malaysia were particularly vocal, with their leaders directly criticizing India's policy. This created some diplomatic friction, with India countering that the law is an internal matter and does not affect the rights of Indian Muslims. Despite these criticisms, many Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, took a more neutral stance, given their strategic economic and energy ties with India.

From a strategic and economic perspective, the CAA's impact on India's global relations remained limited, as major international partners, including the European Union, Japan, and Russia, largely refrained from direct criticism. While there were diplomatic discussions on the issue, these countries prioritized their economic and security engagements with India over internal policy debates. However, the law did add an additional layer of complexity to India's international diplomatic engagements, requiring careful communication to maintain strategic partnerships while defending its internal policies.

### **Chapter 8: Public Viewpoint and Media Coverage on the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)**

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019 has been a contentious subject in India, with mainstream media, digital platforms, and public opinion strongly divided on its consequences. While the government and its supporters portray the law as a humanitarian effort to safeguard persecuted minority, critics say it breaches India's secular values and discriminates based on religion. The media has played an important influence in molding public opinion, including protests, debates, and political narratives.

#### **1. Media Coverage and Narrative Framing**

The Indian media landscape has seen a sharp ideological divide in its coverage of the CAA.

- **Pro-Government Media Outlets:** Certain news channels and publications aligned with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have defended the CAA, presenting it as a historic move to protect persecuted minorities. These outlets have framed opposition to the Act as misguided, politically motivated, or anti-national, portraying protesters as either misinformed or backed by vested interests.
- **Critical and Independent Media:** Several independent and opposition-leaning media houses have questioned the intent and implications of the CAA, highlighting its religious selectivity and potential harm to India's secular fabric. These outlets have covered antiCAA protests extensively, bringing attention to police crackdowns, civil rights concerns, and international criticism.
- **Regional Media and Its Role:** In Northeast India, especially in Assam and Meghalaya, local media has focused on the ethnic and indigenous identity concerns surrounding the CAA. Unlike the national debate, where religion was the central issue, the regional press highlighted fears of demographic changes due to immigration, leading to strong opposition to the law.

## 2. Role of Social Media and Digital Platforms

Social media has emerged as a key arena for shaping public opinion on the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). Various platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, have played a crucial role in mobilizing protests, facilitating discussions, and driving competing narratives around the legislation.

- **Trending Campaigns and Hashtags:** The debate over the CAA has been prominently reflected in trending hashtags like #RejectCAA, #NoCAA, #IndiaAgainstCAA, and #ISupportCAA, illustrating the deep divide in public sentiment. While anti-CAA activists leveraged social media to organize protests and amplify opposition, supporters of the law utilized the same platforms to emphasize its humanitarian intent and necessity.
- **Spread of Misinformation and Fake News:** The discussions surrounding the CAA have been heavily impacted by misinformation and propaganda, with both proponents and critics disseminating manipulated content, misleading claims, and conspiracy theories. The spread of fake news has intensified political and communal divisions, further complicating the public discourse.
- **Impact of Political Leaders and Influencers:** Politicians, celebrities, and social activists have significantly influenced the CAA debate on digital platforms. While government officials defended the Act, describing it as a moral and legal obligation, opposition leaders, activists, and student groups strongly opposed it, calling it discriminatory and unconstitutional. Their engagement on social media has amplified public awareness and fueled widespread discussions on the issue.

## 3. Impact of Protests and Police Actions

Public reaction to the CAA has included some of the largest protests in India's recent history.

- **Shaheen Bagh Movement:** The Shaheen Bagh protest in Delhi, led primarily by women from Muslim communities, became a symbol of resistance against the CAA. The peaceful sit-in lasted for months, drawing national and international attention.
- **Police Crackdowns and Allegations of Suppression:** Several protests saw violent clashes between demonstrators and law enforcement, with reports of police brutality, arrests, and internet shutdowns in places like Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Assam. This further intensified public anger and global criticism.

### 8.1 Social Media's Function in Political Protests: An Analysis of the CAA Movement

One of the most significant aspects of social media during the CAA protests was its ability to spread information rapidly. Protest organizers used platforms like Twitter and Instagram to share real-time updates, locations of demonstrations, and legal advice for those participating. Hashtags such as #RejectCAA,

#CAA\_NRCProtests, and #IndiaAgainstCAA gained massive traction, helping unify protestors across different cities. Social media allowed activists to bypass traditional media channels, which some believed were biased or censored, and directly communicate their message to a global audience.

Live-streaming of protests on Facebook and Instagram also played a major role in countering misinformation and government narratives. Videos and images shared by protesters provided firsthand accounts of police crackdowns, mass gatherings, and speeches, challenging official claims that the protests were violent or politically motivated. Many of these posts went viral, drawing international attention and prompting responses from global leaders, human rights organizations, and the United Nations.

During the CAA demonstrations, social media played a vital role in mobilizing and fostering communities. WhatsApp groups were extensively utilized to plan logistics, publicize impending demonstrations, and arrange for legal support for individuals in custody. Because of their encrypted chat capabilities, Telegram and Signal emerged as substitute sites for activists who were concerned about government monitoring. With demonstrations occurring in locations outside of India, such as New York, London, and Berlin, this digital network assisted in transforming the CAA movement from a string of individual rallies into a national and even international movement.

However, social media was also a double-edged sword. While it helped mobilize dissent, it also facilitated the spread of misinformation and propaganda. Fake news, doctored videos, and misleading narratives circulated widely, often inflaming communal tensions. Government supporters and opposition groups used digital platforms to push conflicting narratives, sometimes leading to online harassment, hate speech, and deepened polarization. Factchecking organizations had to work tirelessly to debunk false claims and ensure that accurate information reached the public.

In response to the growing influence of social media in the protests, the government took steps to curb digital activism, including internet shutdowns in certain regions. States like Assam and parts of Delhi experienced temporary suspensions of mobile internet services to prevent the "spread of rumors" and control unrest. Critics argued that these shutdowns violated democratic rights and were an attempt to suppress free speech. Despite these measures, activists found ways to work around restrictions, using VPNs and alternative communication channels to continue organizing.

The CAA movement demonstrated the transformative power of social media in modern political protests. It provided a platform for marginalized voices, challenged mainstream media narratives, and created a decentralized, leaderless movement driven by collective action. While digital activism does not replace traditional street protests, it has become an essential tool in shaping political discourse, influencing public opinion, and holding governments accountable.

## Chapter 9: Disputes

### **9.1 Meghalaya: acts of murder and protest**

Meghalaya has had several flashpoints. The state's long-standing need for an Inward Line Allow framework reappeared shortly after the citizenship degree was granted. Non-native visitors must have the permit in order to enter "secured regions" in the Northeast. Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, and Mizoram are currently using the allow structure.

In some areas of the state, it sparked a widespread financial boycott of non-tribal people and a series of violent incidents that resulted in multiple murders. Unmistakably, the Khasi Students' Union displayed blurbs in the state capital of Shillong in October that categorically stated that "all Meghalaya Bengalis are Bangladeshis."

The experts quickly threw out the blurbs, but interactions went on. Another tribal body made an unfulfilled request in November: to assign a tribal replacement and remove the non-tribal vicechancellor from North-Eastern Slope College.

### **9.2 Tripura: death of a protestor**

Tripura, which is frequently referenced by nativist groups as proof that their fears of local populations being wiped out by large-scale migration were not baseless, has also been rife with tension.

Tribal and non-tribal residents of the state have radically different opinions about the revision. While there was a great deal of opposition from indigenous populations, the Bengali speakers in the state enthusiastically welcomed the Act. This led to some brutal conflicts, particularly on the various slope zones of the state. In one instance, a group of Bengali speakers allegedly beat a tribal man to death as he was making his way to voice his disapproval.

### **9.3 Mizoram: A boundary dispute**

An old dispute over the border between Assam and Mizoram escalated into a major ethnic conflict. A Bengali Muslim guy who was imprisoned in Mizoram died as a result of the unutilized fires on the state boundary, which began in October.

## Chapter 10: Conclusion

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) has had a profound impact on India's political landscape, sparking intense debates, protests, and shifts in both domestic and international perspectives. The evolution of citizenship laws in India, beginning with the Indian Citizenship Act of 1955, has long been shaped by Partition-era complexities and religious considerations. The introduction of the CAA, which selectively grants

citizenship to persecuted minorities from neighboring countries, has further intensified political, social, and communal tensions, raising concerns about India's secular identity. Politically, the Act has deepened ideological divides, influenced electoral patterns, and fueled policy discussions on immigration and national identity.

From a social and communal perspective, the law has divided public opinion, leading to both support and opposition, particularly among religious minorities and civil rights groups. Digital platforms and social media have played a significant role in shaping narratives, mobilizing protests, and spreading both information and misinformation. On the global stage, the CAA has drawn criticism from international media, human rights organizations, and foreign governments, challenging India's reputation as a secular democracy and affecting its diplomatic relations. Furthermore, insights from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) highlight how the Act reinforces power dynamics, social inequalities, and historical injustices, particularly for marginalized communities still grappling with the consequences of Partition.

While the government defends the CAA as a humanitarian measure, opponents argue that it undermines India's inclusive and secular constitutional foundations. This study, which employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, has provided a comprehensive examination of the Act's impact from political, legal, media, and social perspectives. The findings suggest that the CAA extends beyond legal considerations, affecting India's internal unity, electoral politics, and global standing. As discussions around citizenship and national identity continue, it is essential to strike a balance between security concerns and democratic values, ensuring that policies uphold India's diverse and secular fabric.

## References

- I. Chatterji, J. (2007). *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947–1967*. Cambridge University Press.
- II. Gopal, P. (2013). *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent*. Verso Books.
- III. Sen, U. (2018). *Citizen Refugee: Forging the Indian Nation after Partition*. Cambridge University Press.
- IV. Basu, T. (2020). Citizenship, constitutional morality and the CAA. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 55(5), 10-13.
- V. Roy, A. (2020). The CAA and the politics of exclusion. *India Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in>
- VI. Ministry of Home Affairs. (2019). *Citizenship Amendment Act Text*. Government of India. Retrieved from <https://mha.gov.in>
- VII. United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2020). *UNHCHR Intervention on CAA*. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org>

VIII. Bhargava, R. (2020). Secularism and the CAA: A constitutional critique. The Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy.

IX. United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). (2020). Annual Report. Retrieved from <https://uscirf.gov>

X. Varshney, A. (2020). Citizenship, identity, and the Indian state. *Journal of Democracy*, 31(4), 52–64.

XI. Rajagopal, K. (2020). CAA challenges in Supreme Court: What lies ahead? *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <https://thehindu.com>

XII. Al Jazeera. (2020). India's CAA protests: Timeline and background. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com>

XIII. BBC News. (2019). What is India's controversial citizenship law? Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-50670393>

XIV. Scroll.in. (2020). CAA, NRC and NPR: An explainer. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in>

XV. Guardian, M. K. (2024, September 8). India is witnessing the slow-motion rise of fascism. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com>

XVI. Menon, N. (2020). The CAA-NRC and the crisis of citizenship. *Seminar*, 731. Retrieved from <https://www.india-seminar.com>

XVII. Human Rights Watch. (2020). Shoot the Traitors: Discrimination Against Muslims under India's New Citizenship Policy. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org>