

Muslim Neighboring Countries: Minorities to become Indians Faster

CAA: Modi Government to enforce the law

March 12, 2024

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March 12, 2024: **New Delhi**, India: Minorities, who have taken shelter in India and who have left behind their homes, where they might have been staying for 'uncounted' generations, would get a **faster track for acquiring Indian citizenship**, so that their families might be able to lead **normal lives**.

When a poor family is 'stateless' in a country, the **disadvantages, it suffers** and the **handicaps in daily life** that the family members, from 'school-going children' to 'adults, looking for a job', face cannot be imagined easily, by those who have not suffered 'stateless-ness'.

The **Citizenship Amendment Act** (CAA) will allow non-Muslim religious minorities from **Pakistan, Bangladesh** and **Afghanistan** to obtain Indian citizenship faster, if they have been staying in India as 'stateless' persons. CAA amends (for the sole purpose of providing a faster track) the **Citizenship Act, 1955**, which currently prevents illegal migrants from becoming Indian citizens.



March 11, 2024: **Matua community** celebrates Implementation of CAA:
Thakurbari, North 24-Parganas' Thakurnagar, West Bengal, India

STATEMENT, dated March 11, 2024, by **India's HOME MINISTRY**: Those eligible can apply online for Indian citizenship. An online portal for receiving applications has been set up for this purpose.

The ministry said that implementation of CAA had been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. "This act is only for those who have **suffered persecution for years** and have no other shelter in the world except **India**," it added.

The implementation of the CAA has been one of the key poll-promises of Mr Modi's ruling **Bharatiya Janata Party** (BJP) in the run-up to General Elections in 2024.

Under the new law, those seeking citizenship will have to prove that they arrived in India from **Pakistan, Bangladesh** or **Afghanistan** by 31 December 2014.



PM Narendra Modi
*lives and works for the dreams of
the poor, the Innovators and the Learners*

Under the **Citizenship Act, 1955**, (*before CAA*) anyone, who has been staying in India on a valid Visa **for seven years**, can apply for Indian citizenship. Most of such persons, who have been applying from 1955 till 2019, are Muslims from **Pakistan, Bangladesh** and **Afghanistan**, which are Muslim-majority countries with Muslims forming 92% to 100% of population.

In November 2019, CAA was enacted. To provide the **data of grant of Indian citizenship, before enactment of CAA**, an official of the Government had said that from November 2013 to November 2019, 2,830, 172 and 912 citizens of **Pakistan, Bangladesh** and **Afghanistan** respectively were **granted Indian citizenship** and hundreds of them **were Muslims**.

In 2015-16, Government of India had amended its Rules to legalise entry as well as stay in India of **Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian** communities, from these three countries, if they had to migrate to India because of **persecution on grounds of religion**. By—**Dr. K. N. Mistry**

----A BACKGROUNDER on the MATUAS----

The Matuas, in West Bengal and the Refugees in Delhi, Jodhpur, Amritsar etc have been continuously requesting for CAA

The Matua movement began in late 19th-century Bengal among the Namasudras, who were poor peasants from parts of eastern and central Bengal, including regions like **Barishal, Faridpur, Dhaka, Khulna, and Jessore**. They felt marginalized and they were not given respect by the surrounding communities. In 1872, when an **upwardly mobile Namasudra village headman** invited persons, who owned larger pieces of land and who considered themselves to be of 'upper-caste', to his mother's funeral, they did not attend. This led to a six-month **social boycott by the Namasudras**.

Harichand Thakur, from a Namasudra peasant family, organized a religious sect in the late 1870s and the sect came to be known as **the Matuas**. The Matuas followed rural Bengal's **Vaishnava** (meaning "praying to Lord Krishna") tradition, emphasizing devotional songs. Their rituals diverged from the then prevalent Brahmanical norms.

The **Matuas**, who predominantly belong to the **Scheduled Caste Namashudras**, gained limelight for organizing protests, in Kolkata and Delhi, after the 2003 Citizenship Amendment Act which made it tougher for refugees to get Indian citizenship.

The Matua community in West Bengal is 30 Mn strong and it has migrated to West Bengal from Bangla Desh (or from East Pakistan till 1971) during the decades after 1947, due to religious persecution and communal tension. They are mostly concentrated in North and South 24 Parganas districts. They are also settled in Nadia, Howrah, Cooch Behar, Malda, East Burdwan and parts of North Bengal.

The community, which constitutes the second-largest Scheduled Caste population in Bengal, has long been demanding Indian citizenship.

FOUNDATION: The sect was founded by **Harichand Thakur** in the 19th century in East Bengal (today's Bangladesh). He expounded the concept of **equality of all human beings**, based on three principles – **truth, love and sanity**.

Thakur's son **Guruchand** organised the sect socially and politically in the early 20th Century.

The POLITICAL LEGACY of MATUAS: **Harichand Thakur's** descendants have been participating in the political developments in Bengal.

His great-grandson **Pramath Ranjan Thakur** joined the Congress and was elected to the West Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1962. **PR Thakur's** widow, **Binapani Devi**, fondly known as **Boro Ma**, was the face of the community until she died in 2019 at the age of 100.

During the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, she sided with the **Trinamool Congress (TMC)**. In 2011, her younger son **Manjul Krishna Thakur** was given a berth in the Cabinet of **Mamata Banerjee**, the Leader and the founder of TMC.

Binapani Devi's eldest son, **Kapil Krishna Thakur**, was elected as a TMC Member of Parliament from Bongaon in the 2014 Lok Sabha (*Lower House of India's Parliament*) polls. In the Bongaon bypoll in 2015, necessitated after **K. K. Thakur's** death, **Manjul Krishna Thakur's** son **Subrata Thakur** fought on a **Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP)** ticket, challenging his aunt **Mamata Bala Thakur** (widow of **K. K. Thakur**) who was a TMC candidate. **Mamata Bala Thakur** defeated her nephew and retained the seat for TMC.

In the 2019 General Elections, **Narendra Modi** began BJP's Lok Sabha campaign from **Thakurnagar in South 24 Parganas** — *the mecca of Matuas* — by seeking blessings from **Boro Ma**, the matriarch of the community. (In 2015, **Subrata Thakur**, the son of **Manjul Krishna Thakur** (the younger son of **Boro Ma**) had joined BJP along with his two sons **Subrata** and **Shantanu**.)

November 5, 2020: To counter BJP's surge among the Matua community, Ms. **Mamata Banerjee**, the Leader of TMC and the **Chief Minister** of the State of West Bengal, announced the grant of 25,000 '**pattas**' (meaning '*land titles*'), to the refugees in West Bengal. Ms. **Banerjee** said that she would grant another **100,000 'pattas'** to the refugees in West Bengal, in due course of time. Ms **Banerjee** also allotted ₹ 100 Mn and ₹ 50 Mn grant for the **Matua Development Board** and **Namashudra Development Board** respectively.

The announcements of November 5, 2020 were designed to win the support of the backward community at the **State Legislative Assembly elections of 2021**.

Note: The Namasudras, who do not follow the preachings of Harichand Thakur, are considered to be even poorer than Matuas. They constitute West Bengal's second-largest Scheduled Caste community, comprising around 4% of the state's population. *It may be noted that the words "Namasudras" and "Matuas" are often used interchangeably, since Matuas are a better organized sect of Namasudras.*

EDITORIAL COMMENTS: www.DiGiNews360.com notes the inter-play between "Namasudras" and "Matuas", when the flexible caste system was being classified as "upper" and "lower" castes, through the British rulers, who made the blunder of using 'caste' as a synonym for 'Varna' and of using surnames as standing for a caste.

The stories of identifying

- Saint Valmiki, who lived and wrote Ramayana about 7,000 years back,
- Kalidas, the great writer of the 8th century *and others*

and classifying them into "upper" and "lower" castes, were created due to the highly limited British understanding of the highly-evolved culture of Indian society

This new classification, in the government's records of the new British rulers,

- eliminated self-cleansing ways of Indian culture
- fossilized and enhanced the differences between different 'castes' by using the stratification of the European society to define Indian society, and,
- created a complete divorce between the Varnas, as defined in **Bhagwat Geeta** (*name of the premier Hindus scripture*) and the castes, as defined by the British rulers.

www.DiGiNews360.com calls for cleansing, with self-confidence, of the distortions introduced in defining the culture and Dharma (meaning duties of every individual in her social and historical context) in a foreign idiom.
