INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI
SHORT ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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The thesis probes the question of the history of the making of the Indian citizenship in the context of Assam, the northeastern state of India. In Assam, the idea of citizenship has always been set against the trope of the foreigner. The notion of citizenship originated as a resource and culture specific consciousness much earlier. Assam as a province of the British India developed a distinct nature of discourse about membership. After independence, born out of the tumultuous history of India's Partition at 1947, this idea went through various phases of political and cultural evolution. The citizenship question gradually got shaped within the constitutional and legal framework, but Partition continued to haunt the process. While for large part of India, the highly complex question of the citizenship did not remain a part of popular political discourse, for Assam, 'who will not be an Indian citizen?' came to be highly contested. Since 1950, the process of conferring citizenship in India remained entangled between two categories of people - the (mainly Muslim) migrants and (primarily Hindu) refugees from Pakistan. Assam's embattled journey critically influenced India's citizenship discourse. This redefining of legal citizenship in India was affected through constant reinterpretation of citizenship laws and everyday engagement of Assam's residents. The thesis attempts to unfold this long journey of Indian citizenship in Assam, starting from pre-independence to the most recent.