

CHALLENGES IN THE COVERAGE OF

‘DIARIES FROM THE DETENTION CAMPS OF ASSAM’

It's not very often that the professional and personal lines get blurred in journalistic endeavors. It is expected of journalists to be objective in their reporting, ideally there should be no subjectivity. But **‘DIARIES FROM THE DETENTION CAMPS OF ASSAM’** is also very personal for me as some of my family members haven't made it to the Assam NRC. We are living in constant fear if they will be eventually declared foreigners, in spite of being Indians, by the Foreigners Tribunal and end up in a detention camp.

But what really happens inside a detention camp, how does it affect the families – to seek these answers I travelled to Goalpara and Barpeta district in Assam in the summer of 2019.

I had few clear challenges in front of me:

- a) to convince families to speak on camera about what they were going through.
- b) to capture their stories with all honesty and empathy. So that it connects with a wider audience
- c) to find India's biggest detention camp that was being built in Assam but no one knew where exactly it was being built.

BUT MY BIGGEST CHALLENGE was to overcome my emotions when I interviewed a 6-year-old girl Swata, who is still not ready to accept her father died in a detention camp. Without saying too many things she was able to tell the whole world what these detention camps are doing to hundreds of families across Assam.

Even though I and my family were going through the struggle to prove our nationality I still had to make a documentary which brought out the real story of these detention camps. A documentary which was factually correct, objective, gave a true perspective of the situation yet it had to be emotionally moving.

The aim was to make a new-age digital documentary, self-shot by the reporter on an i-Phone in a true immersive style. It was a completely new language of documentary filmmaking.

Though the story was from a state in the northeast but it had to connect with everyone. And it did to a large extent as it was on the universal theme of identity, migration, refugees and most importantly human rights.