CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: ADVENT OF MUSLIMS

Growth of Muslims in Assam

The growth of Muslims in Assam can be traced to 1206 AD, when the Turkish army led by Mahammad Ibn Bakhtiar Khilji were defeated in their attack on ancient Kamrup.¹ Half a century latter in 1257 AD, Tugril Khan attacked Kamrup but failed to make any headway. Subsequently, in 1498, Nabab Hussain Shah of Gaur made successful inroads in Kamatapur and appointed his son to administer Hajo.² Now-a-days, Hajo is famous for having a prominent Muslim shrine known as Poamecca established by Giasuddin Aulia who had been accompanied by Hussain Shah.³

In 1532, Turbak, a Pathan general invaded the Ahom Territory. There were several scuffles between the Muslims and the Ahom soldiers where gun was used for the first time in Assam by the Muslims.⁴ Turbak was killed in battle and the Ahom won. The Muslim soldiers who were captured and taken as prisoners by the Ahom, settled in different parts of Assam. These Muslims are known as Moria Muslims. The war captives are said to be the earliest Muslim settlers in the Upper Assam valley.⁵ Mir Jumla a Mughal General, conquered the entire Assam including the Ahom Capital Garhgaon in 1662 and kept it under his possession for a period of ten months i.e. from March 17th, 1962, to the last week of January, 1663.⁶ Then the treaty of Ghilajharighat was concluded in 1663 between Mir Jumla and the Ahom king. As per the terms of the treaty some parts of Assam were transferred to the Mughals. Finally, in 1882, the Ahom expelled the Mughals from Assam and established their authority over the entire territory till the termination of their rule in 1826, by the British.
The prolonged and intermittent wars between the Muslim rulers and the kings of Ahom led to the gradual growth of the Muslim population in Assam. Many Muslim army officers, war captive soldiers, and traders settled in various parts of Assam during the invasions of the Muslims. A fairly good number of Muslim Preachers, Saints, Pirs, Darbesh etc. entered into Assam at different points of time. Some of them came with the invading Muslims army and stayed in this land permanently while others returned after staying for a short time. These Pir, Darbesh, Fakir etc. who came to Assam much earlier i.e. during the 11th and the 12th centuries, propagated Islam and a sizeable portion of the local people were converted to Islamic faith by them. According to Edward Gait, the majority of the people professing Islamic faith in Assam were local converts from lower caste Hindus and aboriginal tribals as was the case in Eastern Bengal. These converts described themselves as Sheikhs. But it seems to be doubtful whether a large scale conversion occurred in Assam or not during medieval period. Because the socio-political condition of Assam during this period was different from that of East Bengal. The people of Assam were tolerant and free from religious fanaticism. Of course, conversion at certain level took place in Assam in different circumstances. It is manifested from their physical appearance, habits and manners that a substantial number of present Assamese Muslims are the result of local conversion.

The sign of Islam is said to have appeared in Assam after the invasion made by Ikhtiaruddin Malik Yusbek Tugril Khan, the ruler of Bengal, in 1257. The ruler created a mosque at North Gauhati and started Islamic prayer.

Influence of Azan Fakir

The consolidation of Islam in the Assam valley dates from the early part of the 17th century. A Muslim saint named Shah Milan, popularly known as 'Azan Fakir' came to Assam from Baghdad in 1635 who was the chief source of this consolidation.
Fakir composed in simple Assamese, Zikirs and Zaris, the devotional songs embodying the teaching of Islam. Through the preaching of Azan Fakir as well as through other preachers who followed him a large number of the indigenous pupils were converted to Islam. Azan Fakir acquired a legendary status in Assamese society not so much through his preaching of Islam but by his identification with the culture of the land. Indeed, he found a very congenial atmosphere in Assam for propagating unity between the two religious groups - the Hindus and the Muslims. The Zikirs formulated by Azan Fakir in Assamese language and sung in the tune of Hindu religious hymn had attracted a large number of followers representing various groups and communities who apparently were convinced of rich scholarly contents in such Zikirs. Now-a-days, this Zikir is regarded as unifying force in Assamese society.

Ahom Kings' Patronage

During the Ahom rule (1228-1826) a good number of Muslim artisans and learned men were brought by the Ahom kings and appointed in various departments of the kingdom. These Muslims were specialists in different crafts like minting of coins, painting, embroidering, carpentry, sword-making, gun-casting and manufacturing of gunpowder. For instance, it can be mentioned that during the reign of Rudra Singha (1696-1714) eight Muslim families came to Assam with their respective professions and skills and were employed in different departments of Ahom Kingdom. They were Parsi Parhiya (Persian transcriber) Akhar Katiya (royal engraver) Gunakatiya (makers of gold and silver thread), Silakatiya (stone engraver), Khanikar Khel (guild of mason and artisans), Negeria (player of Negara) Darji (tailor) and Jola (weaver).

Muslim Migration to Assam

The people who migrated to Assam from various parts and corners during the twentieth century and settled here permanently can be divided into five major groups (i)
Muslims coming from East Bengal (ii) Nepalis of Nepal (iii) Hindu Refugees of East Pakistan, now Bangladesh (iv) Indian traders coming from Rajasthan, Bengal and so on and (v) Tea-garden labourers coming from Orissa, West Bengal and so on.

The Muslims came to Assam from erstwhile East Bengal owing to many causes. The main causes of migration of these people can be pointed out as follows:  

1. Harassment of the Zamindars  
2. Landlessness of the cultivators during Zamindary System.  
3. Comparatively less tenant exploitation in Assam.  
4. Easily found land and indifferent attitude of the Assamese cultivators to agriculture.  
5. Encouragement of the coalition Government led by Muslim League.  
6. The availability of uncultivated land in Assam and invitation of the landlords of Goalpara.  
7. Initiative taken by the British rule for bringing cultivators from East Bengal for more agro-products.

The immigrant Muslims came to Assam in different phases right from the last part of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century. The first flow of migration of the immigrant Muslims started from 1891-92. In this year the first rail-road was opened between Assam and Bengal. Moreover, steam-boat ran from Dhaka to Gauhati from 1847. It took 25 days while going to Calcutta from Gauhati by steam-boat. During this period, a few Muslim people from Bengal came to Assam in connection with business.

Another large flow of migration of the immigrant Muslims took place during the period 1905-1911. During this time, Assam was amalgamated with East Bengal by forming a new province, named Eastern-Bengal and Assam. Dhaka, Chittagong,
Rajshahi, Malda etc. were included in this new province. In October, 1905, Assam was amalgamated with the district of Deccan, Chittagong and Rajshahi commissionership of Bengal with the inclusion of the Darjeeling district and the addition of Malda to form a new province, known as Eastern Bengal and Assam, under a Lieutenant Governor. This change, however, was for a very brief duration. At the Imperial Coronation Durbar held at Delhi in December, 1911, His Majesty, announced a new distribution of territory. The sub-provinces of Bihar and Orissa were cut off from Bengal and brought into an Independent Lieutenant Governorship. Eastern Bengal was re-united with West Bengal and Assam again became a separate province under a Chief Commissioner. The scheme took effect from 1st April, 1912.18

One more big flow of migration of immigrant Muslims took place in 1911. The movement of immigrant population from East Bengal, now Bangladesh, in pre-partition days was not only economic but also political. The Zamindars of Goalpara in the first few decades of this century invited a few persons of Muslim community to settle in their land on better condition than were available in East Bengal, since then, a flood of immigration has not been abated.19

The Muslim population of Assam valley districts, excluding Garo Hills, was 3,55,320 in 1911. There was a rapid increase of this population and it rose to 5,85,955 in 1921 to 9,43,252 in 1931 and to 13,05,902 in 1941.20

Due to communal riots in post independent era some Indian displaced Muslims came to Assam in 1950-51. These people were rehabilitated mostly in Cachar, as per Indo-Pak Agreement of 1950.21

The immigrant Muslims came to Assam at different phases either by rail-road or by steam-boat and began to settle permanently in various places of Goalpara, Kamrup, Nowgaon and Darrang districts. Those who came to Assam by steam-boat, settled on the
either banks of the river Brahmaputra. Most of these people came to Assam from Mymenshing and Rangpur of erstwhile East Bengal. The Colonization Scheme of the British Government considerably encouraged the immigrant Muslims to come to Assam. The colonization scheme for opening out the remote tracts of the province encouraged people from other parts of India to come to Assam. Immigrants came in substantial numbers from Mymenshing and Pabna to Goalpara and Nowgong.22

In 1897, there occurred a great earthquake affecting Assam and Bengal. As a result, indigenous Assamese people living in low area started movement to high area. The British Government also took initiative for transferring people from one place to another place for cultivation and factory works. A part of the immigrant Muslim cultivators living in low land Char area started movement to high area and began settlement in Kayakuchi, Datirbori, Ota, Barbala, Naligaon, Kujarpith etc. of Barpeta area. These immigrant people came to Assam during 1891-1904 period from East Bengal in search of food and shelter.23 They cleared low land jungles area covered with various trees and plants like Nal (Arundo donax) Khagari (Phargmaties Karka) Simul (bomboxceiba) etc. Agro-expert people also purchased land from local people and produced jute, rice, mustard etc.in large scale. Assamese landlords lent money to the immigrant cultivators on interests.24

The immigrant Muslim cultivators who came by water-ways started settlement mostly in Goalpara district. Some of these people went forward and settled in Alopati, Nirala, Ujir Char, Garola, Kurihamari, Sontali, Tupamari, Kachumara etc. of the Brahmaputra riverine area of Barpeta and Kamrup districts.25

The Muslim cultivators who came to Assam in pre-independent era were however, not less in number. Before 1925, the immigrant cultivators coming from Mymenshing of East Bengal, were 77,753 in Goalpara, 29,575 in Kamrup, 12,460 in Darrang, 52,193 in
Nowgong, 127 in Sibsagar and 1621 in Lakhimpur districts. The grand total was 1,72,270.26

The Muslims of Lower Assam

The indigenous Muslims constitute a sizeable part of the total population of Lower Assam. The first Muslim settlement had started in this region before the advent of the Ahoms. The defeated soldiers of the Mahammad Ibn Bakhtiar Khilji's invasion in 1206 A.D. choose to settle here instead of going back with their defeated generals. These Muslims were called as the first batch of Muslim settlers in entire Assam valley. They were called Truk or Turuk. There are still some villages in Lower Assam named Turukpara, Turai gaon etc. seemed to corroborated this fact. Sankardeva (1449-1568) the real founder of Assamese Vaishnava literature, used the word Turuk and Yavana to denote the Muslim community.

The prolonged and intermittent wars between the Muslim power and the rulers of Assam had provided ample opportunities for the gradual and intensive growth of the Muslim population in Lower Assam. A good number of Muslim Saints, Pirs, Darbesh and Fakirs came to this land to propagate Islam in different historical times and most of them preferred to settle in Lower Assam. The ancient Dargahs, Mazars, Khankahs and Mosques still exist in the upper and the lower Assam definitely provide sufficient evidence to support this statement.

In the medieval period, lower Assam was the centre of Assamese literature and culture. During the Pre-Vaishnava and the Vaishnava period most of the noted Assamese poets were directly patronized by the kings of the Kamata and the Koch Kingdoms. From the references of some of these poets it is found that there was a good presence of the Muslims in the lower Assam at that time. The use of some Persi-Arabic words by the medieval Assamese poets including Hema Saraswati (14th century), Madhab Kandali,
Sankardeva, Madhab Deva (1498-1596), Ramananda (17th century) and Narayandeva (16th century) clearly show that the Islamic culture had gained its popularity at least in the western region of Kamrup i.e., lower Assam even before the conquest of Sultan Hussain Shah in 1502. Chandshai or Chand Khan who was a tailor by profession was influenced by Sankardeva and became his disciple. It is very significant regarding the early Muslim settlement in the Lower Assam.

Sultan Hussain Shah was most probably the first of the Muslim kings to rule over a part of Kamrupa or old Assam almost seventeen years. The entire region of the country up to Koch-Hajo in the east remained under his control from 1502 to 1519. According to S.K. Bhuyan, Kamrup or Lower Assam since its first annexation to the Ahom Kingdom in 1615, was ruled by the Mughals for a period of twenty six years, once from 1636 to 1658 and again from 1663 to 1667 and from 1679 to 1682. It is also a fact that the western part of Lower Assam especially the erstwhile Goalpara district was under the Muslim power more than one century. Consequently, the high concentration of the Muslim population in this region is quite natural and their dialect and culture have a strong affinity with the neighbouring districts of the North and the East Bengal, now Bangladesh. The entire Lower Assam was never for a long time under any particular dominant power. It was the cockpit of several fighting forces like the Koch, the Muslim (Turks, Pathans and Maghals) and the Ahom and the political fortunes passed from one power to another in different times. However, the repeated Muslim campaigns in the Lower Assam had certainly left behind some permanent impact on this region.

**Present day Muslims of Assam**

So far the Muslim population of Assam is concerned, they have scattered over the length and breadth of the entire region of the land. Present day Muslims of Assam are the descendants of.
(i) Muslim soldiers and war captives who settled in Assam during the Ahom-Muslim conflicts and intermittent wars.

(ii) Artisans and learned Muslims brought by the Ahom Kings.

(iii) Muslim Preachers, Pirs and Fakirs who propagated Islam in Assam.

(iv) Local converts to Islam at different historical times.

(v) Muslims who migrated to Assam over many decades and whose descendants have adopted Assamese as their language and identify themselves as Assamese.

Muslims settlement and Assamese caste Hindus resentment

The settlement and gradual growth of the Muslim population in Assam in pre-independent India was, however, a matter of concern for the caste Hindus. In case of indigenous Assamese Muslims it was not as serious as it was in case of Bengali Muslims. Because, the immigrant Bengali Muslims migrated from outside and also belonged to heterogeneous language, culture and manners. On the other hand, the indigenous Assamese Muslims originated from Assamese Hindus and belonged to homogeneous language, culture and manners of the latter.

A fear psychosis started to grow in the minds of the caste Hindu people with the rapid growth of the Bengali Muslims in several districts of Lower Assam. Of course, the Assamese Hindus were not against the coming of the outsiders i.e., the Bengali Muslim cultivators. Rather, they encouraged these cultivators to come to Assam and cultivate in the low land area to produce more corns. The resentment started to grow between the caste Hindus and the Bengali Muslims as soon as the latter started settlement in the areas comparatively higher than their earlier settlement in low land areas. Moreover, the primary sector of economy i.e. agriculture went to the cultivators who had migrated in course of the five decades preceding independence and became peasant-proprietors from...
landless condition. For example, the credit for producing twenty percent of India's total jute could be wholly attributed to the immigrant Muslims. The manners and behaviours of the Muslim cultivators were also responsible for the caste Hindus' growing resentment. Among the Muslims some were litigants, quarrelers and incontinents who often engaged in various misdeeds. In view of this, the caste Hindus as well as the Assamese Muslims were against the Bengali Muslim's assimilation. The British administration was also showed dissatisfaction over the gradual growth of the Bengali cultivators although the former initially encouraged their arrival for more production and more revenue. The British administration was afraid of the fact that their rein of dominance in Assam would be jeopardized if the Hindus and the Muslims were united. Hence, irrelevant and irritant statement was made by the British administration against the immigrant Muslim cultivators to weaken Hindu-Muslim unity.

Introduction of line system

The rapid growth of the Bengali Muslim population in Lower Assam pushed the Assamese intellectual people into deep thought that in due course of time they (Assamese people) would be minority group in their own land and the Bengali Muslims would be the majority group. As a result, Assamese culture would be in troubles. In such a suspicion some intellectual Assamese people urged upon the British administration to take necessary steps for preventing the Bengali Muslims' coming and settling in the areas of former's settlement.

The British Government in pursuance of the pressure of the Assamese intellectual and middle class people introduced the 'Line System' in 1916 which came into force in 1920.

The line system at first was originated in Nowgaon district of Assam where land were divided into three categories for settlement of the immigrant Muslims.
1. Land (or area) where immigrant Muslims may settle freely.

2. Land where the immigrant Muslims cannot settle.

3. Land (mixed areas) where both indigenous Assamese Hindus and Bengali Muslims can settle.

The application of this Line System was first implemented in the districts of Kamrup and Darrang.\textsuperscript{42}

The introduction of Line System as a means of segregating the immigrant Muslims from the indigenous Assamese Hindus proved effective initially but lost its fruitfulness due to lack of seriousness of the officials concerned. It rather increased geographic differences between the immigrants and the indigenous people causing a setback to the creation of greater Assamese nation. The majority of the immigrant Muslims did not bother about the discriminating policy of the Line System. But some conscious Muslims reacted against the system. Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan, popularly known as Bhasani Moulavi was the prominent personality to oppose the discriminating Line System.\textsuperscript{43} On the other hand, the indigenous Assamese people raised voice in support of the system for their future security. As a result, there created two groups i.e. (i) opposing group led by Moulavi Bhasani and (ii) supporting group led by Ambikagiri Roychoudhury. The conflict between the two groups resulted troubling thousands of immigrant Muslim cultivators.\textsuperscript{44}

The Muslims officially raised their heads against the Line System in 1936, when Khan Bahadur Nuruddin Ahmed, a member of Assam Legislative Council from Nowgong, moved a resolution to abolish the Line System without delay.\textsuperscript{45} Abdul Mozid Ziossham of Goalpara supported the resolution and complained that 'Line System' was a discriminatory measure by which the expansion of the Muslim settlement was to be ended.
The members of the Assam Legislative Council could not bear the resolution raised by Khan Bahadur Nuruddin Ahmed. Rai Bahadur Nilambar Datta of Dibrugarh boldly urged against the motion, which was seconded by Rohini Kumar Chowdhury of Kamrup. In regards the question of the Line System the Government and the European members of the Council played a diplomatic game by supporting the motion of the Muslim leaders. But no Indian members of the Council did cast their votes either in favour of the Line System or against the Line System. They simply remained outside the scenario. As a result, it led to the loss of the motion of Khan Bahadur Nuruddin Ahmed by seven votes to twenty. All the seven supporters were Muslim members only.

Inspite of all these the Muslim leaders at any cost tried to abolish the Line System. On 15th September, 1937, Monowar Ali (from Sylhet) of the 'Surma Valley United Muslim Party' moved a strong resolution in the Assam Legislative Assembly stating that the immigrants had turned the thickest jungles of Assam into smiling paddy land yielding all kinds of crops, bringing prosperity, health and wealth to the Province of Assam. He characterized the Line System as "Arbitrary and against all principles of nation making."

At this juncture of debate over the question of 'Line System' it turned a new dimension when a new cabinet headed by Muslim League leader Sir Saadulla along with two other members of the League had come into power in Assam in 1937. Abdul Motin Chowdhury one of the members of the Saadulla Cabinet considered the 'Line System' as an unjust and arbitrary distinction in between the indigenous Assamese and the immigrant Bengalis.

Thus, the Line System controversy became a matter of concern in the political scene of Assam and it added fuel to the fire of communal sentiment in between the
indigenous Assamese Hindus and the immigrant Bengali Muslims eventually dividing the entire population of Assam into two main groups - the Hindus and the Muslims.

This burning issue was even noticed by all India leaders. Jawaharlal Nehru who observed - "I do feel the present 'Line System' is essentially bad as it creates or likely to create two sharply divided areas hostile to each other. Immigrant should always be assimilated otherwise they become foreign bodies always giving troubles. Therefore, the present 'Line System' is certainly undesirable. At the same time to abolish it or leave to the unrestricted immigrants without any safeguard would also be undesirable".51

Thus, Nehru in order to find out an amicable solution suggested through a letter to Bishnuram Medhi, the leader of Assam Pradesh Congress Committee on November 1, as follows:

"The immigrant question is the complicated one and it has become a communal question which will make it more difficult for solution. Every effort should be made to avoid giving prominence to the communal aspect of it. The desire of the Assamese not to be overwhelmed by a non Assamese people is perfectly legitimate. But it must be recognised that a sparsely populated area with vacant lands like Assam is at present cannot continue as it is with over crowded Province surrounding it. Therefore, immigrant is bound to take place because of the economic urge for it. No amount of sentiment and not even laws will ultimately stop it. Indeed, from the point of view of developing Assam and making it a wealthy Province immigration is desirable."52

By this time the immigrant members of Assam Legislative Assembly joined the camp of Abdul Motin Chowdhury on the distinct understanding that they altogether would work from all possible ways for abolishing the Line System in Assam so that the culture and language of the Bengali immigrants could be protected.
At that tense situation, C.S. Mullan the census commissioner wrote against the immigrant Muslims stating them as land hungry community. The Muslim got highly reacted to this furious comment of Mullan and demanded more strongly the abolition of the 'Line System'. The comment of C.S. Mullan instigated the Assamese groups who demanded stopping of more migration from East Bengal and the retention of the 'Line System'. This created a troublesome and unwanted atmosphere in the politics of Assam.

In order to make an elaborate inquiry about the wasteland of Assam and to find out a note if the 'Line System' should be abolished or to be continued, a committee was appointed in the month of January, 1938. The Committee was named as "Line System Enquiry Committee". The Committee consisted of the following members:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Members</th>
<th>Designation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F.W. Hochenhull</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Motin Chowdhury</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syed Abdur Rouf</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayidur Rahman</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabi Chandra Kochari</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Mahendra Nath Saikia</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarbeswar Barua</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kameswar Das</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.G. Patton</td>
<td>do</td>
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The report of the Line System Enquiry Committee was contradictional and failed to find out any clear cut solution to the problem. However, almost all the members of the committee later on came to the conclusion that the immigrants who had already come to the Province should be provided with land from all possible ways.

The report of the Line System Enquiry Committee was submitted in the month of February, 1938. But both the Saadulla and the Bordoloi Governments did not take any steps in regard to the serious matter with any immediate action. However, the Bordoloi Government a few days before its resignation (on 4th November, 1993) published a policy

...
regarding the Line System on the report of the "Line System Enquiry Committee". The policy stressed on the following points.54

1. Settlement of land should be of planned settlement in the interests of the cultivators themselves and protection of interests of the indigenous people particularly the tribal and backward classes.

2. Eviction of persons from the village grazing grounds and the professional grazing reserves.

3. Immigrant cultivators not to be allowed land in the prohibited areas either by settlement or by transfer of annual patta.

4. Policy of relaxation would be applicable for the immigrant encroachers in prohibited areas provided that the occupation of land dated from 1st April, 1939 or when any immigrant had been bonafide occupation of land for over 12 years before 1st April, 1939.

This notification of the Bordoloi Cabinet caused a widespread resentment among the immigrant Muslims and their leaders. The disappointed Muslims in large number joined the first session of the Assam Provincial Muslim League held at Ghagmari on 18th November, 1939. To this new move, Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani delivered a highly provocative statement against the policy of the Government regarding the Line System controversy. Bhasani Said "I have lost my patience on account of the inhuman oppression carried on the lakhs of poor Mohammadans of Assam by the Government. Not only do I kick the law by means of which the houses of lakhs of people have been burnt down, I declare Jehad in the name of Allah......... . The days have come now to get our demands fulfilled by becoming Sahid in the path of Allah".55

On 25th August, 1942, Saadulla Ministry again came to power. But Sudullah was unwilling to go for the total abolition of the Line System. On 16th December, 1944,
Saadulla Government organized an All Party Conference where majority of the representatives decided to keep reserve 30 percent of available wasteland for indigenous people's expansion in future and the rest of the wasteland for the landless sons of the soil and also for the immigrant people who came to Assam before 1938. The Government also decided to allow an allotment of maximum thirty bighas of land to each family. But Bhasani group rejecting the decision uttered - no policy without the abolition of the 'Line System' would be acceptable.56

All India Muslim League leaders also condemned the discriminatory policy of Line System and expressed dissatisfaction about the Line System while addressing a public meeting at Mongaldoi. Choudhury Khaliquzzaman also alleged the Line System and pleaded for its abolition.

On 31 May, 1940, the Line System conference was held which led to the introduction of Development Scheme giving special protection to the tribal and the backward classes of people.57 Bhasani characterised this as "the safest bureaucratic method for shelving the question of the Line System ". Bhasani also accused the Premier of having forgotten the promise made in the first Assam Provincial Muslim League Conference that two lakhs of landless people would be given land within two months.

The situation had also become complicated following the advice given by the Advocate General of Assam that Line System was not maintainable under the Act of 1935. The Premier Saadulla could not turn hostile to the indigenous people by abolishing the Line System against their sentiment. In defence of his move Bhasani stated "The present Premier himself is no friend of the immigrants, under the influence of some of his colleagues whose avowed object is the retention of the Line System and killing Bengali language and their culture..... If the Ministry was sincere in what they profess the best course for them was to abolish the Line System straight way because the Line System has
lost all its force after it has been declared to be illegal by Mr. P.C. Datta, the Advocate General of Assam and a persistent supporter of the Congress Party.

Saadulla came to power on 25 August, 1942, for the second time. This time the new Saadulla Ministry formulated a new policy in dealing with the immigrant people. The policy expressed governments’ intention to remove all encroachers from Reserve Areas and to keep them reserved for future. However, the policy provided for some relaxation for the old encroachers giving fresh land in the reserve areas. The Government resolution also meant for summary eviction of the new encroachers. But this declaration dissatisfied Bhasani as he had expected that the new Government would abolish the Line System and accelerate the settlement of land with the immigrants.58

The land settlement policy took a new turn in 1946, when Gopinath Bordoloi Ministry overpowered the Saadulla Ministry. The Government initiated a very stern measure to deal with the immigrants' land settlement issue. Bordoloi Government started eviction of the immigrants' encroachers without any human compromise. It created an unexpected crisis among the immigrants and a big number of people became homeless in no time.59

The political situation in Assam became further complicated when the Government of Assam decided to resume eviction towards the end of November 1946. Saadulla condemned the proposed execution of the eviction plan as an vendetta and entirely unbecoming of an enlightened Government in these time when shortage of food staff is causing havoc in various land.60

The problem of eviction was indeed complicated one. For example, in Barpeta Sub-Division alone eight professional grazing reserves were to be cleared. The area encroached and number of immigrant involved in the eviction in five reserves of Barpeta was as shown below.61
The scheme of mass eviction of the Bordoloi Government brought a communal bitterness between the Hindus and the Muslims. Moreover, at that time the partition politics in the name of "India and Pakistan" also created strong feeling of Hindu-Muslim bitterness all over the country causing the loss of huge number of tolls and property. Communal riots in the pre as well post colonial period had brought a fearful situation for the Muslim inhabitants (both immigrant and indigenous) in Assam. Hundreds of Muslims were killed and their houses burnt in the communal riot. The Muslim immigrant getting no alternative left Assam taking shelter in East Pakistan as refugees. The number of Muslims left to Pakistan was several lakhs.

Table - 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>No. of Muslims</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cachar</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,00,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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However, in the month of April, 1950, a cordial relationship took place in between Pakistan and India. Both the Governments felt the need of solution of the problem of communal tension. Accordingly on 8th April, 1950, an agreement was signed between Jawaharlal Nehru and Liyakat Ali, the two Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan respectively. This historic agreement is known as 'Nehru-Liyakat Agreement. The Agreement resolved that the people who left their own country earlier on the wake of the communal riots may return to their own home along with bag and baggage on or before 31st December, 1950. On their return to their respective country both the Governments of India and Pakistan agreed to provide citizenship with due honour.
References:


2. Ibid

3. Ibid


5. Ibid P.3

6. Ibid


10. Ali Ahmed Kasim, *Popular Folksongs of the Muslims of Assam*, Published by Procreate Prakashan, Ganeshguri, Guwahati, 2004


14. Ibid P. 4


16. Ibid P. 3

17. Ibid P.P. 4-5

19. *Ibid* P. 145


23. *Ibid* P. 4

24. *Ibid*

25. *Ibid* P. 5

26. *Ibid* P. 5


28. *Ibid*

29. *Ibid*


31. *Ibid*

32. *Ibid*


35. Informant, Ahmed Sultan, 70, Ex-Principal H. S. School, Village Alopati, Baghbar Constituency, Dist. Barpeta.


38. *Ibid* P.4

39. *Ibid* P. 58


41. *Ibid*

42. *Ibid*

43. *Ibid*

44. *Ibid*


46. *Ibid*

47. *Ibid* P. 54

48. *Ibid*

49. *Ibid* P. 55

50. *Ibid*


52. *Ibid* P. 18


55. *Ibid*


58. *Ibid* P. 38


61. *Ibid*


63. *Ibid* P. 62

64. *Ibid*

65. *Ibid* P. 63