CHAPTER VI

PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL POLITICS

The Muslims of Assam both Assamese and Bengali, as a community stress impact on Assam’s politics to a great extent. As stated in the preceding chapters, the numerical strength of the community has been vital for stressing political impact on Assam politics since British rule. “The Muslims, who constitute a third of the state’s population, influence and on occasion, even determine Assam’s politics as they desire”.¹ The Muslim community is a dominating political factor.²

The process of expansion of Muslim population in Assam through local conversion and migration from erstwhile East Bengal has been stated in previous chapters. By 1930, the Muslim migrants had secured large tract of land and their number had considerably multiplied. They now became more conscious in raising their voices for their community interest. A turning point in Assam political arena for the Muslims was the establishment of the Muslim League in the Brahmaputra Valley in 1938 and the appearance of the Assam Provincial Muslim League.³

Muslim League Politics

The Assam Provincial Muslim League was established by some Surma Valley Muslims in 1928 at Shillong. But till 1936, two Sylhet Muslims represented Assam in the All Indian Muslim League Central Parliamentary Board. After its Lucknow session of 1937, Sir Mahammad Saadulla joined the League, who was the most prominent Muslim of the Brahmaputra Valley. Its organization in the valley came into being in 1938 in a village called Ali Tangani in the district of Nowgaon. Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani was its President and Abdul Matin Choudhury of Sylhet its Secretary. Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani who had created a movement against the Line System, left Assam
in 1950. With the transfer of Sylhet to East Pakistan, Abdul Matin Choudhury disappeared from Assam’s political scene.

Saadulla’s Role

Saadulla as an important political figure played a dominant role in Assam politics from 1937 to his election to the Constituent Assembly of India of 1946. He was the leader of the Muslim League Legislature party. With short breaks totaling about 24 months he was the Premier of Assam for five times till 1946. Sir Saadulla was also the only Muslim member of the Constituent Drafting Committee. He was personally responsible for bringing about a Muslim-Congress entente before the election of 1952. Differences over the nomination of Muslim candidates led to his resignation from the party. But the Assam Muslims in general continuously supported the Congress till the election of 1978.

According to India Act 1935, thirty four seats were reserved for the Muslims in the Assam Legislative Assembly. Though they were elected by a separate electorate, the members were divided into various factions like the Muslim League, Jamiat-Ulema-E-Hind and Assam Valley Muslim Group. Gopinath Bordoloi, the leader of the Congress party took the advantage of this division but only for a short time. After the Lucknow session of all India Muslim League in 1937, Saadulla was able to consolidate the members of his community under his leadership and the banner of the Muslim League.

During his repeated Premiership Saadulla devised various plans for solving the problems of land settlement in consultation with all party conferences. But he was suspected to espouse the cause of Pakistan with the demand of the Muslim League for inclusion of Assam in Pakistan. He was also blamed for bringing in more Muslims to Assam for making Assam a Muslim Majority province under the ‘Grow More Food Scheme’.

The political configuration of Assam Legislative Assembly on the General Election of 1946 was as follows.
Congress - 30 members (one speaker), Assam United Party of Saadulla- 59 (all Muslims), Assam Nationalist Party-11, Independent -7. Total- 107 (one seat vacant).

The elections of 1946 brought a significant political configuration to favour the Congress. The party put up 65 candidates and won all the 47 general seats and 9 special seats thus capturing an absolute majority. The Muslim League contested all the 34 reserved seats but won 31, losing 3 to the Jamiat-Ulema-E-Hind.12

The Grouping Plan and the League

The bulk of the Muslims of Assam were with the Muslim League and supported the demand of its inclusion in Pakistan. The Jamiat-Ulema-E-Hind opposed the demand of the Muslim League for Assam’s inclusion in Pakistan.13 The Cabinet Mission Plan in placing Assam and Bengal in Group C was followed by both the Congress and the League, but differed in its interpretation. Saadulla supported the Grouping Plan so in a way the Muslim League’s claim for Assam’s inclusion into East Pakistan.14

Assam Muslim Politics after Independence

India won independence dividing it into two sovereign states- Hindustan and Pakistan. The Muslim League supremo Mahammad Ali Jinnah became the Prime Minister of Pakistan. In absence of Jinnah, League politics in India did not renounce officially the theory of separate Muslim Nationality. Now, its protagonists had to owe allegiance to the country’s constitution. Saadulla, the leader of Assam’s Muslim League in such circumstances declared in the Assam State Assembly on 20 March, 1948, that the Muslim League Party in the House can no longer exist. So in consultation with the members of the group it was decided unanimously that an announcement should be made on the floor of the House that the Muslim League Party does not exist. So, the Muslim League members were allowed by the Madras convention to join any other party with similar programmes.15 Saadulla Continued “Therefore I place before this House this fact that from to-day nobody should address me as the leader of the Muslim League Party. If
they like, I may be called the leader of the opposition. What new name and what constructive programme the new party will adopt will be placed before the House later on.\textsuperscript{16}

The pre-Pakistan spirit at least in a small section of Assam's Muslim did not die out for a quite some time. But the political dictum of the Muslim League lost its importance and made room for a realistic approach for an adjustment with the new situation. After independence, till the first general election in 1952, the Muslim had only 18 seats in Assam's Assembly which was 34 in 1946.\textsuperscript{17} Fakaruddin Ali Ahmed was the most important and sole Muslim spokesman of the Congress. Another very important Congress man was Md. Tayyebulla. But he had no good term with Bordoloi especially in respect of latter's approach to Saadulla. The Muslim League had two prominent leaders of whom Moulana Bhasani was out of the scene as he had left for East Pakistan leaving Saadulla to represent the majority of the Muslims both in and outside the Assam Legislative Assembly.

In the absence of any activities of the Muslim League between 1947 and 1950 it may be assumed that it did not exist in Assam as stated earlier. Therefore, the community as a whole was practically without any political direction. At this time, as claimed by Saadulla, he was approached by both Hindus and Muslims to get a opinion from the Muslims for the betterment of the people of Assam. Saadulla could not convene a meeting of the Muslims as he was entirely busy for Constituent Assembly's task. As soon as his term was over in the Constituent Assembly in January 1950, he convened a meeting of one hundred Muslim leaders and prominent personalities of Local Bodies, Municipalities and Legislative Assembly. But due to large-scale anti-Muslim propaganda by the Assamese Hindus the meeting could not be held.
Dhubri Meeting

About 500 leading Muslims of Goalpara district met at Dhubri on 4th August, 1951, under the Chairmanship of Sahabuddin Ahmed, Advocate. The discussion was chaired by the veteran leader and former Deputy Speaker of the Assembly, Md. Amaruddin. He referred to the advice given by Fakaruddin Ali Ahmed and Saadulla and the decisions of the Muslims of other parts of the state of Assam to join the Congress. Only one speaker pleaded for joining the Socialist Party. All others spoke in favour of joining the Congress. The resolution passed in the meeting was as follows:

1. After full and mature consideration of the position of the Muslim minority vis-a-vis the present political situation in the country it is resolved that the Muslims en mass join the Congress organization and thereby reaffirm that their faith and confidence in the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India.

2. Keeping in view the assurance given by Jawaharlal Nehru to provide adequate representation to all minorities in proportion to their population the meeting resolves that the Assam Election Committee be requested to allot five seats of the State Legislature (including four in which Muslim voters have a numerical majority) and one seat of the House of the people of the district of Goalpara for Muslim candidates and to take steps to ensure adequate representation of the Muslim minority in other parts of the state.

3. Election of Muslim candidate should be done on expected Congress principles namely-integrity, ability, past record of public services and other relevant factors and above all the wishes of the electorate of each constituency ascertained through a sound machinery.

Similar meetings of the Muslims were held at other places where decisions were taken in favour of joining the Congress. Thus the Muslims of Assam became supporters of the Congress for future political shelter in Assam’s politics.
Saadulla Left Congress

Saadulla who joined the Congress organization and was selected by Congress Central Election Committee to contest in the General Election from Goalpara - cum Garo Hills constituency resigned challenging the Congress for not keeping its promises of fair deal to Muslims.

Though Sir Saadullah had left the Congress party on the eve of the first General Election of 1952, the Muslims of Assam remained with it till the establishment of the Janata Party rule in 1978, both at the centre and a majority of the states including Assam. But till 1978, the Muslims of Assam had no independent political activities.

Since independence, the Muslims had taken shelter in the shadow of National Congress Party. But discontent among the Muslims began as they were used by the Congress for its own interest only during elections and pushing aside immediately after election. Despite constitutional guarantees of right to equality, Muslims were not given their legitimate share of public services. They got only 4.5 percent of the class – III and class- IV jobs even though they were entitled to 25 percent on the basis of population. As a result of the Congress party's deprivation of the Muslims, their representation is poor not only in jobs but also in the State Legislature and the Central Legislature. Despite constitutional and other guarantees of protection, they were victims of riots, police firing, nepotism, corruption, high-handedness and oppression of family planning. The massacre of the Muslims at Nellie, Assam, in February 1983, is one of the saddest incidents of oppression in the mankind history of the world. Insipite of the wireless message sent by Zahir Uddin Ahmed, the officer in-charge of the Nowgong Police Station to the Commandant of the 5th Battalion of Assam Police situated within 10 km from the Nellie area three days before the massacre, no safeguard initiative was taken. The genocide occurred at night on 18th February, 1983, killing 1000 innocent persons belonged to Muslim community by the supporters of Assam Foreigners' Movement.
According to unofficial report the figures of the persons killed were much more most of whom were children and women. This was only an example to indicate the magnitude of the massacre. Between 1979 and 1983 more than 3000 persons lost their lives. More importantly, during the years of the agitation the largest number of the victims belonged to Muslim community. Following such kind of oppressive activities of the Congress rule both in the Centre and the State of Assam, Muslims' faith in the Congress declined and they started thinking for their own political platform.

Need of the Muslim political forum

The Muslims could not join the newly emerging Janta Party because of the contradictions about its stability after the Congress failure in the Loka Sabha Election of 1977. A section of educated Muslims gathered at the Haji Musafir Khana, Islampur, Guwahati, on May 8. The meeting was presided over by Amjad Ali advocate, decided to form a new political party under the name of Eastern India Muslim Association (EIMA) with headquarter at Guwahati. The new outfit had the following objectives.

1. To work for the unity and integrity of India and the welfare of her people.
2. To protect and safeguard the Muslims in particular.
3. To propagate among the Muslims, the ideas of nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism.
4. To form alliance with other political parties having similar activities.
5. To foster unity among Muslims and to promote communal harmony and fraternal relationship among all communities and to secure legitimate rights and opportunities for the Muslims in the field of education, culture, employment, trade and business particularly in the field of technical education and training.

The Executive Committee was headed by Abdul Muhib Mazumdar hailing from Hailakandi of Cachar and advocate, Gauhati High Court. It also had five presidents and four secretaries. Fifty thousand members were enrolled till February, 1979. Abdul
Muhib Mazumdar was the son of Abdul Motleb Mazumdar. He was a minister in the Bordoloi Cabinet from 1946 to 1950. Following the formation of EIMA, Muhib Mazumdar entered the electoral politics and contested the election of 1978 as an Independent candidate from Hailakandi constituency but lost to the CPI (M) candidate, Dipak Bhattacharjee. Later on Mazumdar joined the Congress party and contested from the previous constituency on Congress ticket in 1983 election. Winning the election he entered the cabinet of Hiteswar Saikia as the minister of parliamentary affairs. He also contested the election of 1985 on Congress ticket and won. But he lost to a Bharatia Janata Party (BJP) candidate in the election of 1991. After 1991, the same Abdul Mahib Mazumdar was instrumental in the formation of another organization named The Muslim Forum.

Electoral Alliance

On the eve of the sixth general elections to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1978, selected Muslim leaders met at Guwahati and decided to form the Progressive Democratic Front, consisted of the EIMA, Kamata Rajya Parishad, Janata Congress, Yuva Legislative Minority Committee and the Citizens Democratic Front. The Front’s candidates numbering seventy one contested the election of 1978 as Independent Candidates as there was no recognized election symbol of the Front. Twenty one Muslims from all districts of the state were nominated. The Front captured five seats. Two of the five victors were Muslims. The Front’s Legislature party was led by Premadhar Bora of the Janata Congress and Sirajul Hoque of the EIMA. In a House of one hundred and twenty six members, there were twenty eight Muslims, seven of them hailed from Cachar, one from Darrang, eight from Goalpara, seven from Kamrup, one from Lakhimpur and four from Nowgong District.
Janata Regime and Muslim Factor

Janata Party came to power in Assam capturing 53 constituencies in the Assam Legislative Assembly election, 1978. Both the groups of the Congress- the Congress (I) and the Congress (O) faced a great defeat which altogether won only 34 seats. The main reason of such a great defeat of the Congress is the Muslim factor. In this election traditional vote bank of the Congress i.e. Muslim votes were divided into various parts. The majority of the Muslim votes went in favour of the newly formed Janata Party. During the field work the researcher has come to know that most of the Muslim voters casted their votes in favour of the Janata party candidates in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election, 1978. As a result of this anti Congress campaign by the Muslims, the Congress party lost Mankachar and Jaleswar constituencies of undivided Goalpara district to Janata party in this election. These two constituencies were under the Congress party earlier. In Barpeta district also, Congress lost its previous constituencies like Baghbar, Jania and Chenga due to anti Congress wave in Muslim dominated areas during Assam Legislative Assembly election, 1978. Umesh Chandra Das, a Janata party candidate won Boko constituency defeating Congress candidate in the election. These are some examples of the deciding role of the Muslim voters in Assam’s electioneering process in the Muslim dominated area. In the Janata party Ministry led by Golap Chandra Borbora there were two Muslim Cabinet Ministers, Abul Fazal Golam Osmani and Jahirul Islam. After the resignation of Golap Borbora for obvious reasons, Jagendra Nath Hazarika sworn in as Chief Minister on 9 September, 1979, who included Afzalur Rahman the another Muslim from Goalpara district as cabinet minister.

Muslim Chief Minister of Assam

After the resignation of Moraji Desai and his successor Charan Singh from Prime Ministerial post, Loka Sabha was dissolved and fresh general election to Loka Sabha was
held in 1980. The Congress under Indira Gandhi got a massive mandate from the people and sworn in as Prime Minister on 14 January, 1980. With the reviving of the Congress (I) in the center, the strength of Assam’s Congress (I) rose from 8 to 45, as in 1979. At that time Assam was under President’s rule. Syeda Anwara Taimur, MLA from Dalgaon constituency in the district of Darrang who was a minister of Sarat Chandra Sinha’s Cabinet joined the Congress (I). Now, centre’s choice fell on Anwara Taimur. President’s rule in Assam was revoked on 6 December, 1980. Anwara Taimur swore in as Chief Minister on the same day claiming as the leader of 50 Congress (I) MLAs.

In the mean time, Assam Congress was visibly divided into three factions each group led by Altaf Hussain Muzamdar of Cachar, Joy Chandra Rajbongshi of Dibrugarh and Tarini Mohan Barua. This situation made the weather rough for Anwara Taimur. The running of Government by Anwara Taimur became more difficult due to a opposition combined by Sarat Chandra Sinha of the Congress (U), Golap Borbora of the Janata party and Jogendra Nath Hazarika of Assam Janata party. Taimur’s Government faced many problems right from no-confidence to demand of dismissal. Though she still remained the leader of the Congress (I) legislative party, internal conflict and opposition consolidation against her compelled her to resign from the office of the Chief Minister on 28 June, 1981.

**Muslim Convention in Hojai**

The Assam Unit of the Jamiat Ulema-E-Hind was the only minority organization to react and oppose the Assam Accord signed in 1985 after six year long Foreigners’ Movement launched by AASU. Maulana Asad Madani, the All India President of the Jamiat-Ulema-E-Hind also expressed reaction to Assam Accord in a joint meeting of the Assam Unit Jamiat-Ulema-E Hind and its district committees on 27 September, 1985. Immediately after the signing of the Assam Accord the minorities residing in Assam for
generations expressed the fear that it would lead to discord instead of bringing permanent peace in Assam. One of the main causes of this fear of the minorities was the massive eviction under the provision of the agreement. Under such circumstances, several existing minorities organizations like Jamiat-Ulema-E-Hind, Citizens Right Preservation Committee (CRPC), AAMSU and All Assam Minority Forum began to plan of action for bringing an alternative to the Congress. Their plan of action was executed in phases. First, at the initiative of Abul Fazal Golam Osmani, barrister, formed a Co-ordination Committee of the minority organizations, religious and linguistic, with Emran Shah as the convener. Second, the Co-ordination Committee published a pamphlet entitled “The Memorandum of Settlement and the Minorities, in September 1985, explaining their points of view and the stand they would take.

A special convention was held at Hojai in the district of Nowgaon on 9 and 10 November, 1985. The convention was attended by more than 200 delegates representing immigrant Muslims, displaced persons, Assamese Muslim organization like the All Assam Minority Yuba Parishad, Tribal Organizations and the Nepalis. The open session was presided over by Maulana Ahmed Ali of Chachar. The delegates session was chaired by Santi Ranjan Das Gupta, a linguistic minority leader.

Birth of United Minorities Front (UMF)

The Co-ordination committee of the Minority organizations in the meantime had done spadework for forming a political party for the minorities of Assam. The representatives at the Hojai Convention expressed their views to form a United Minorities Front (UMF).

A 21 member executive committee of the UMF was formed with the following office bearers and members.
1. President : Kalipada Sen
2. Working President : Abdul Hoque
3. Vice Presidents : Santi Ranjan Das Gupta
   Khem Prasad Upadhyaya
   Dakshina Ranjan Dev
   Ganesh Basumatary
   Makhanlal Shah
   Dulal Sarkar
   Anwar Ali
   Faiznur Ali
   Idriz Ali Fakir
   Samiruddin
4. General Secretary : Abul Fazal Golam Osmani
5. Assistant Secretaries : Tarapada Bhattacharyee
   Abdur Rouf Choudhury
   Mazaharul Latif
6. Treasurer : Imam Saha
The UMF Constitution

The constitution of the UMF was adopted at its Goalpara conference. The main features of the constitution are as follows:\(^52\)

1. To act within the framework of the constitution of India.

2. To work for the social, political, economic, educational, cultural and general welfare of the people of the country, particularly of Assam, with the ideal of social justice, secularism and democracy.

3. To work for the well being of the minorities including the Ethnic Groups of Assam and to cultivate harmonious relations among all sections of the people.

4. To co-operate with the similar organization of other political and linguistic groups.

5. To stand behind the oppressed people rendering them all help and to fight for their causes.

6. To strive for the rehabilitation of the victims of circumstances and to support their cause.

7. To work for equality, unity and fraternity among the people without distinction of caste, creed and religion.

8. To fight against all reactionary and disruptive forces like racial prejudices, linguistic chauvinism, religious fundamentalism and revivalism.

9. To work for politicization of people instead of communalization of politics.
Organizational framework of the UMF

The United Minorities Front had a five-tier organization from grass root to the state level. The tiers are as follows:

1. Primary Committee
2. The Constituency Committee
3. The City or District Committee.
4. The State Council and
5. The State Executive Committee.

The UMF came to existence aiming at the social, economic, political and cultural upliftment of the minorities of Assam. Since its formation in 1985 the UMF leaders thought about how to unite all minority communities in Assam as one political strength and to stress political impacts on the electioneering process of the state. It was therefore decided that the UMF as a political party of the minority communities of Assam should contest all the constituencies dominated by minority communities. The UMF as a new political party got tremendous supports from the minority people and won 17 assembly seats in the Assam Legislative election in 1985. The UMF put up a total of 56 candidates in the election of whom 31 were Muslims and 25 were non-Muslims.

The Asom Gana Parisad (AGP) got single majority winning 63 seats in the Assam Assembly Election of 1985. The Congress (I) lost the election very badly. It got only 25 seats. Among the prominent Congress(I) losers were speaker Chand Mohammad, Finance Minister Mohammad Edris, Jehirul Islam and Mukut Sarma. The district of Dhubri, Goalpara, Kamrup and Nowgong proved the Waterloo for the Congress though they were traditional support base of the party. Hiteswar Saikia, as to the disastrous defeat of the party said "................. it would be clear to all now that the Accord
has deeply wounded the minorities and so they voted against us in a big way. It is not a question of the people for not voting for us because our candidates were bad."

The United Minorities Front (UMF) and Asom Gana Parisad (AGP) were two post Assam Accord political parties of Assam. The formation of the UMF was the culmination of the movement for safeguarding the constitutional rights of all the minority groups against the manipulative designs of the future authors of the Assam Accord. The UMF had to oppose and also weaken the Congress (I) by breaking its Muslim supports and taking away as many seats as possible rather than to win the election as a whole.

Activities of the UMF

Since its formation the UMF tried to express all grievances of the minorities in Assam for their redressal by submitting memorandum to both the Central and the State Governments. It also demanded constitutional safeguards and equal rights as guaranteed by the constitution of India for the minorities. The UMF was very critical of the Assam Accord and raised voice of protests against the partisan harassment of the AGP Government in the name of detecting and deporting foreign nationals particularly the minorities of Assam. Almost simultaneously with the ASSU- AAGSP demand for amendment to the IMDT Act, the UMF raised its voice against the amendment. It submitted a memorandum to the Union Home Minister on 10 May, 1986 demanding reasonable safeguards against the harassment of the minorities in the process of detection of the so called foreigners.

The UMF submitted seven memorandum to the State and the Central Government and issued two Press Release detailing its reactions and grievances in the matter of implementation of the Assam Accord which had really taken the form of large scale evictions of those people as well as the tribals in the name of encroachers. Here, two
memorandums only have been mentioned. The first memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister on 24 March, 1986, there were complaints as per following.63

1. The Government has violated all past circulars and legal provisions regarding eviction from Government land, forest reversers, Char lands as well as periodic patta land.

2. Large scale eviction operation was being conducted in the areas mostly inhabited by linguistic, religious and ethnic minorities for a period of 30-45 years times including people living in Railway lands in Maligaon-Pandu areas. In June and July, 1985, in the Brahmaputra Valley alone about 6000 families from 500 villages were evicted.

3. During eviction, demolition and arsons of houses, looting of properties and merciless beating of persons has been created in those areas.

4. Eviction was carried out without serving any prior notice or giving any chance for removing belonging.

5. The stay order issued by the Gauhati High Court against demolition were disregarded by the authority.

The UMF memorandum of 10 May, 1986, addressed to the Home Minister of India had the following complaints:64

1. In the name of eviction from the lands as well as Railway lands in Nowgong, Hojai, Gawahati, Silchar, Sonitpur, Darrang, Barpeta, N.C. Hills, Karbi Anglong and Lakhimpur where minority people have been living.

2. The eviction was carried out against the Government policy decision ignoring the High Court stay order. The victims of this eviction operations have been
thrown on the streets in these days of rain and sun. They are passing their days in open spaces with their kids and women folks.

3. The minorities felt that this was the outcome of the Assam Accord reached without taking the problems and views of these sections of people giving rise to uncertainties for their future.

4. The minorities have been living along the Assam – Bangladesh borders permanently for generation after generation and apprehended that construction of border roads would amount their eviction. In that case prior arrangement should be made for rehabilitations of the people likely to be uprooted.

The then Chief Minister of Assam, in a statement made on 15 May, 1986, brought the following charges against the UMF.  

1. The UMF was hatching a conspiracy to keep the foreigners in Assam.

2. Some individuals in the political parties were working as agents of foreign nationals to thwart the implementation of Assam Accord.

3. The UMF leaders were having connections with Pakistan.

The UMF reacted to the above statement in a Press Release on 24 May, 1986, and made the following statements.

1. The UMF reiterates its change against the Government’s deliberate policy of discrimination, harassment and eviction of linguistic religions and ethnic minorities.

2. The UMF condemned the Chief Minister’s statement and reiterated that it would not deviate from the path of democratic and peaceful protests against the anti-people policies and actions of the Government.

3. It complaints that the Government was trying utmost to dub a section of Indian minorities as foreigners.
4. It complaints that 20000 people had already been evicted and the eviction was proved by the Government’s threat of arrest and assault on one of the Front’s MLAs.

5. As to the Pakistan connection, the UMF challenged the Chief Minister to come up with all particulars to prove his allegation to the public.

The United Minorities Front submitted another memorandum to the President, Prime Minister, Home Minister and Law Minister of India on 30-4-1987 in which they elaborately discussed the problems faced by the minorities of Assam. The main contentions are as follows.67

1. Till that date 150000 people were evicted.

2. Those people were mainly Bengali immigrant Muslims and Scheduled Caste Hindus of the Chars and Chaparis of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries.

3. Such areas were never included in the periodic settlement surveys and as such shown as Government Khas lands but in most cases license fees known Tauji Bahar (TB) rent was realized.

4. During the last few decades those people were there but no attempt was made to peruse a policy of wholesale eviction on the plea of encroachment of Government land. This was so because of one fact that such eviction would have affected eight to ten lakhs of people and the consequence loss of agricultural products.

5. AASU volunteers under the patronage of the Government were forcibly evicting those people.

6. A systematic design was hatched to uproot the minorities.

7. More than eight lakhs of non-tribals such as Bengali Hindus displaced persons of Scheduled Caste, Rajbangshis, Hajongs and other weak sections of people
have settled by purchasing lands through registered deeds and they were also victims of evictions.

The appearance of the UMF completed the contemporary political scenario of the state by alienating the dominant group calling itself Assamese majority from the minority. Of course the new minority platform was short-lived. In less than five years it was divided into small groups, one of which was led by Santi Ranjan Das Gupta, one of the party’s erstwhile Vice-President. This group actually joined the congress (I). Kalipada Sen, the founder President of the UMF was killed by unidentified miscreants which was actually a great loss for the party. The Front began losing its previous strong stand as many of the leaders joined the Congress and other parties for their vested future political interests. Now, the Front has no existence in the political scenario of Assam.

Muslim Representation in Legislature and Cabinet

Separate electorates were abolished in India with effect from the election of 1952 and the assured representation of the Muslims in the legislature disappeared. The Assam Muslims had been with the Muslim League. Saadulla left the league after the partition of India and joined the Congress party. But he took departure from active politics after leaving the Congress party. After Saadulla’s departure from politics the Muslims had no independent political activities till 1978. But their participation and representation in the State Legislative Assembly and the cabinet were significant. From 1952 to 2006, the Brahmaputra Valley districts of Darrang, Nowgong, Kamrup and Goalpara (undivided) with large number of immigrant Muslims had a good number of representatives in the Assam State Legislative Assembly. The Barrak Valley Muslims are also playing their roles in sending Muslim representatives to Assembly. The Muslim representatives in the Assam Legislative Assembly are chronologically mentioned in the appendixes from A to L.
Muslim representation in the Council of Ministers:

Muslim representation in the Council of Ministers is always seen since the Pre-Independence of India. Whatever the strength of the ministers, there was at least one representative from Cachar district of the Barak Valley. The district of Goalpara had a representative for the first time in the Mahendra Mohan Chowdhury’s Cabinet. One of the important features of the Muslim representation in the Council of Minister is that their share is disproportionately high as compared to their members in the Assam State Legislative Assembly. The most prominent among the Muslim Cabinet Ministers are Fakaruddin Ali Ahmed and Mainul Hoque Chowdhury. The following table shows the strength of the Muslim representation in the Council of Ministers, Govt. of Assam, since 1946 to 2011.

Table – 6.1
Muslims in the Council of Ministers, Govt. of Assam, 1946-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Name of the Chief Ministers</th>
<th>Total No. of Ministers</th>
<th>Muslim Ministers</th>
<th>Districts of Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01-04-46 to 06-08-50</td>
<td>Gopinath Bordoloi</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cachar, Darrang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-08-50 to 26-12-57</td>
<td>Bishnuram Medhi</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cachar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-12-57 to 32-01-70</td>
<td>Bimala Prasad Chaliha</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cachar, Kamrup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-11-72 to 30-01-72</td>
<td>Mahendra Mohan Chowdhury</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cachar-2, Goalpara-1, Kamrup-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-01-72 to 11-03-78</td>
<td>Sarat Chandra Sinha</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cachar, Goalpara, Kamrup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-03-78 to 04-09-79</td>
<td>Golap Chandra Borbora</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cachar, Goalpara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09-09-79 to 12-12-79</td>
<td>Jogendra Nath Hazarika</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cachar-1, Goalpara – 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-12-80 to 28-06-81</td>
<td>Syeda Anwara Taimur</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cachar-1, Goalpara, Goalpara-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-01-82 to 18-03-82</td>
<td>Keshab Chandra Gogoi</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cachar-2, Goalpara-1, Kamrup-1, Nowgao-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-02-83 to 23-12-85</td>
<td>Hiteswar Saikia</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cachar-3, Darrang-1, Goalpara-1, Nowgao-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-12-85 to 28-11-90</td>
<td>Prafulla Kr. Mahanta</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cachar, Kamrup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-06-91 to April 1996</td>
<td>Hiteswar Saikia</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Cachar-1, Darrang-1, Goalpara-4, Barpeta-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 to 2001</td>
<td>Prafulla Kr. Mahanta</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cachar-2, Dhubri-1, Nalbari-1, Nowgao-1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 to 2005</td>
<td>Tarun Gogoi</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nowgao-4, Barpeta-2, Dhubri-2, Darrang-1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 to 2011</td>
<td>Tarun Gogoi</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Darrang-1, Nowgao-2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above mentioned table shows the number of the Muslim representatives in the Council of Ministers, Govt. of Assam, during the period from 1946 to 2011 elections. The
number of Muslim representatives rose in the period 1952 to 1983. So far the Congress was concerned, the majority of the Muslim votes went in favour of the party except in 1978 and 1985 elections due to the Janata and the UMF sentiments. However, in 1991 the party regained its dominance over the Muslim electors. The allegation in respect of the Muslims being the vote banks of the Congress is not correct at present day vote sharing situations of the national and regional political parties. All political parties get Muslim votes, in elections. The Assam Assembly election of 1978 is a clear example of such support of the Muslim voters to the newly formed Janata Party that established victory in the election defeating the Congress in power.

At present, Barpeta district is a part of the undivided Kamrup district of Assam. It is dominated by the Muslims. They have been playing a significant role in electing representatives to the Assam State Legislative Assembly and the House of the people of the Parliament since British period. Fakaruddin Ali Ahmed one of the great Muslim leaders of Assam was elected as an MLA from Jania constituency of present Barpeta district for two consecutive terms i.e. 1957-62 and 1962-67. He was also elected as an MP from Barpeta Parliamentary Constituency. It is our great pride that Fakaruddin Ali Ahmed became the Fifth President of India for the period, 1974-79. He died in 1977. Ataur Rahman another popular Muslim leader of lower Assam was elected as an MLA from Jania constituency for two consecutive term i.e. 1967-72 and 1972-77. He was inducted as Cabinet Minister in the Cabinet led by Mahendra Mohan Choudhury in 1972.

Moulavi Pahar Khan and Moulavi Tajuddin Ahmed were elected as MLAs from Tarabari and Barpeta constituency respectively in 1952-57. Moulavi Tajuddin Ahmed was also elected as an MLA for another two consecutive terms from Tarabari

The Muslim MLAs of Barpeta district from 1952 to 2006-11 elections are shown in the table below:

**Table 6.2**

Name of MLAs of Barpeta District in the Assam State Legislative Assembly, 1952-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the MLAs</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Name of Constituency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Moulavi Pahar Khan</td>
<td>1952-57</td>
<td>Tarabari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1962-67</td>
<td>Tarabari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Azizur Rahman Chowdhury</td>
<td>1967-72</td>
<td>Chenga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Abdul Hannan Chowdhury</td>
<td>1972-78</td>
<td>Chenga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Abdul Latif</td>
<td>1978-83</td>
<td>Barpeta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Abdul Sobhan</td>
<td>1978-83</td>
<td>Jania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Ibrahim Ali</td>
<td>1978-83</td>
<td>Baghbar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>A.F. Golam Osmani</td>
<td>1985-91</td>
<td>Jania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2001-2006</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2001-2006</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2001-2006</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Shamsul Hoque</td>
<td>2001-2006</td>
<td>Sarbhog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Abdul Khaleque</td>
<td>2006-2011</td>
<td>Jania</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Muslim members in the Council of Ministers from Barpeta District:

The Muslims are sizeable in numbers in Barpeta district. They can determine and even change the political directions as they like due to their numerical strength in the district. But their representation in the Council of Ministers, the Govt. of Assam, has always been disproportionate in comparison with population since independence. After Fakaruddin Ali Ahmed and Ataur Rahman as Cabinet Ministers there were no Muslim Cabinet Ministers from Barpeta district for a long time. In Hiteswar Saikia’s Ministry in 1991, only one member was inducted as Cabinet Minister. It was Ismil Hussain hailing from Barpeta constituency. He was again inducted as Cabinet Minister in the Tarun Gogoi’s first Ministry in 2001. However, a few Muslim MLAs from Barpeta were inducted in the Council of Ministers as State Ministers. They are Dildar Reza (1991, 2001), Sukur Ali Ahmed (2001) and Shamsul Hoque (2001).
References


2. *Ibid*

3. *Ibid*

4. Karim Rezaul, *Char Chaparir Samaj Aru Asamar Muslaman*, Lakayat Prakashan, Guwahati, P.72


6. *Ibid*

7. *Ibid*

8. *Ibid*


12. *Ibid*

13. *Ibid*

14. *Ibid*, P. 40
15. *Ibid*, P. 53

16. *Ibid*

17. *Ibid*, P. 56

18. *Ibid*, P. 53

19. *Ibid*, P. 60

20. Informant, Rahman Afzalur, Ex-Minister, Govt. of Assam, Present M.L.A, Jaleswar constituency, Goalpara district.

21. *Ibid*


23. *Ibid*


25. *Ibid*

26. *Ibid*

27. Informant, Aziz Abdul, Ex-AAMSU, President, Present M.L.A, Assam Legislative Assembly.

28. *Ibid*

29. Informant, Rahman Afzalur, Ex-Minister, Govt. of Assam, Present M.L.A, Jaleswar constituency, Goalpara district.
30. Ibid

31. Ibid

32. Ibid


34. Ibid, P. 180

35. Ibid

36. Ibid

37. Informant, Rahman Afzalur, Ex-Minister, Govt. of Assam, Present M.L.A, Jaleswar constituency, Goalpara district.

38. Ibid

39. Ibid


41. Ibid

42. Ibid

43. Ibid

44. Ibid

45. Ibid

46. Ibid
47. Ibid

48. Informant, Reza Dildar, MLA Baghbar Constituency, Barpeta district.


50. Ibid

51. Ibid

52. Ibid, P - 236

53. Informant, Rahman Afzalur, Ex-Minister, Govt. of Assam, Present M.L.A, Jaleswar constituency, Goalpara district.

54. Ibid

55. Ibid


57. Ibid, P. 373

58. Ibid

59. Ibid, P. 237

60. Informant, Reza Dildar, MLA Baghbar Constituency, Barpeta district.

61. Ibid

63. *Ibid*, PP. 407-408

64. *Ibid*

65. *Ibid*, P. 409

66. *Ibid*

67. *Ibid*

68. Informant, Rahman Afzalur, Ex-Minister, Govt. of Assam, Present M.L.A, Jaleswar constituency, Goalpara district.

69. *Ibid*

70. *Ibid*

71. *Ibid*


73. Informant, Rahman Afzalur, Ex-Minister, Govt. of Assam, Present M.L.A, Jaleswar constituency, Goalpara district.


75. *Ibid*

76. *Ibid*

77. Informant, Rahman Afzalur, Ex-Minister, Govt. of Assam, Present M.L.A, Jaleswar constituency, Goalpara district.
78. *Ibid*

79. Informant, Reza Dildar, MLA Baghbar Constituency, Barpeta district.

80. *Ibid*

81. *Ibid*

82. *Ibid*

83. *Ibid*

84. Informant, Ahmed Sultan, 70, retired Principal H.S. school, Vill. Alopati, Baghbar constituency, Barpeta district.

85. *Ibid*

86. *Ibid*

87. *Ibid*