PREFACE

Assam is a multi cultural, multi linguistic and multi religious state of the North East India with people coming from outside in different time from different directions. At present, the bulk of the people of Assam are Hindus and Muslims although there are other religious people in small numbers. The Hindus constitute the majority population of Assam. The Muslims namely the indigenous Assamese Muslims and the immigrant Bengali Muslims are sizeable in numbers and their habitations are found throughout Assam. The indigenous Assamese Muslims presently living in Assam have grown from the captive soldiers and other who came along with the Muslim’s invasions during the medieval period with few local conversion. On the other hand, the immigrant Muslims now living in the char areas of Assam are those Muslims whose ancestors had come from erstwhile East Bengal (now Bangladesh) in the last part of the nineteenth century and in the first part of the twentieth century. These Muslims are sizeable in numbers in the middle and the lower Assam particularly in the districts of Nowgaon, Morigaon, Darrang, Kamrup, Barpeta, Kokrajhar, Goalpara and Dhubri.

The Char area Muslims of Assam in general and the Muslims of Barpeta district in particular are mostly agriculturists. Being agriculturists, their main source of livelihood is agriculture although a few of them have taken other professions for livelihood. The hard working Char area Muslims keep themselves engaged in agriculture and produce various corns and vegetables throughout the year. These people have a great contribution in upgrading Assam’s economy.

The social life of the Char area Muslims is enriched with traditional customs, manners, and beliefs. Riddles, Proverbs, folk games and folk songs inflict great influences on their social manners and behaviours.
The Char area people are now one of the component parts of the greater Assamese nation although their ancestors had come to Assam from erstwhile East Bengal (now Bangladesh). These people, since their settlement in low land riverine areas of the river Brahmaputra, have been facing many social economic and political problems. But these problems have not been highlighted for amicable solutions. It is undeniable that without the solution of those problems faced by the Char area people, overall development of Assam would remain partial for the fact that they are sizeable in numbers in Assam. So, the social, economic and political problems of the Char area people have academic importance which should be investigated and studied. In view of this context, I have selected the topic entitled "The Char Area Muslims of Barpeta District: Problems And Prospects" for study and investigation. Barpeta district is dominated by the Char area Muslims. It is why the study and investigation of the problems of the Char area Muslims of Barpeta district is relevant and academically important.

During the course of the field survey I faced various problems and difficulties. One of the problems is that the necessary data, information and up to date census reports are not available for extensive study. Apart from this, adequate written materials about the social, economic and political life of the Char people of the district are also not found. Hence, I had to depend and rely on persons interviewed for relevant data under the study.

In the midst of all these problems, I have, however, made sincere efforts to bring to light different aspects of the topic under the study.

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