CHAPTER – I
INTRODUCTION

MAKING AND REMAKING OF THE BOUNDARIES:

Assam is a province which lies on the north coast part of India, extends from latitudes 24° 08' 11" N and 27° 58' 15" N and longitudes 89° 42’ 05" E and 96° 01’ 14" E (approx).\(^1\) It presents a complex of physical features: hills and dales, swamps and forests, vales and meadows. Yet they can be conveniently divided into broad division: Plains and Hills. The districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur (now divided into Lakhimpur and Dibrugarh districts) along with Cacher and Sylhet formed the plains division while the Garo Hills, the Khasi and the Jaintia Hills (which is now known as the state of Meghalaya), the North Cachar and Mikir Hills, the Mizo Hills (now known as Mizoram) and the Naga Hills (now known as Nagaland) came under the Hills Division. Besides, the Northeast Frontier Tracts now known as Arunachal Pradesh formed parts of Assam, and Manipur political Agency remained under this change of Assam Administration.\(^2\) Resting between the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas and the Patkai and Naga `Ranges, it occupies a roughly triangular area of 78,488 square kilometers.\(^3\) It is connected with the rest of India by a narrow 18 km corridor. Assam may be divided broadly into two river valleys and a region of

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\(^2\) An account of Assam and its Administration, Shillong, 1903, p. 1. (Published Govt. Reports and Gazetteers).

\(^3\) Census of India, 1971, Assam Series 3, Part II-A, General Population Table, p. 12.
hills and plateaus. They are the Brahmaputra Valley, watered by the Brahmaputra throughout its length from Sadiya in the north-east to Dhubri in the coast and by its tributaries on both side of its banks and the Barak Valley, mainly watered by the Barak river and its tributaries as well as the hilly bank of Karbi Plateau and North Cachar Hills. The valley of Brahmaputra is a long alluvial plain, about 450 miles long, and of an average width of 50 miles\(^4\) shut in by mountains on the north-east and south, with the Brahmaputra flowing through its entire length from east to west, and crossed by countless tributary streams of every magnitude, falling into the central channel from the bordering mountains on either side. The uniform level of the valley is intersected by a few low conical hills, projecting like spays. The converging hills at Goalpara appears almost to shut in the Assam valley, and may be called the Gate of Assam. The low lying tracts on both sides of the river throughout the valley are subject to inundation for a width ordinarily of about six miles on each sides of the stream; beyond that distance the level rises gradually above the reach of the higher flood.\(^5\) The Brahmaputra valley again may be divided into three regions, the Uttarpar or Uttarakula (north bank), the Dakhinpar or Dakhinakula (south bank) and the Majuli Island and other riverine island formed by the river Brahmaputra. Geographically, Assam may conveniently be divided into two parts- the plain and the hills. Presently, for

\(^4\) Report on the Administration of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1905-6.
\(^5\) Idem.
administrative purpose the plain positions of the state are divided into twenty one districts in both the valley and the hills areas into two.6

The Naga Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills are a continuation of the mountains chain which sweeps round the head of the Brahmaputra valley, each range has marked physical features of its own.7

In the north-eastern parts, in the neighbouring of Jeypur, the Naga Hills consist of small broken ranges running generally northeast and southwest or long irregular spurs leading down into the plains, usually steep on the northern side, with a more gradual slope of the south.8 The intervening valleys are very narrow. The major portion of the whole tract remains uncultivated and covered with dense jungle undergrowth. In the higher hills, there is cultivation on the southern faces. Further westwards, the hills are more rugged and abrupt. The main ridge, named the Barrail, in the neighbourhood of Samaguting is remarkably precipitous in character, and towers to the height of 10,000 ft.9 On the western slope of this ridge, a good deal of terraced rice cultivation appears to be extremely spouse.

The peculiar feature of the Khasi and Jaintia range of hills in the abruptness with which they rise almost perpendicularly from the Surma Valley on their southern face, attaining rapidly on altitude of over 4,000 ft; while on the north side the ascent from the Assam Valley is characterized by a

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7 Assam Administration Report, 1874-76, p. 2.
8 Ibid., p. 3.
9 Idem.
succession of gradual spurs and detached ridges.\textsuperscript{10} The lower portions of these hills on both sides are clothed in dense forest and jungle. The upper plateau and main central tracts consist of a succession of undulating downs, broken here and there by the deep valleys of the large hill streams, and crossed mostly with short grass, having been completely demanded of forest by the migratory cultivation of the inhabitants, except where a few sacred groves have escaped the general devastation.\textsuperscript{11}

The Garo Hills the termination of this chain, present very similar characteristics, being steep and precipitous on the southern face, and sloping in gradual ridge to the plains on the northern and western sides. They are of rather lower general elevation; the highest peak of the range, below which Tura, the Headquarters of the district is situated, being not more than 4,700 ft. above sea level.\textsuperscript{12} Tura itself has an elevation of only 1,300 ft.

Assam has common boundaries with two foreign countries and seven Indian states. To the north of it is Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh which separates it from China and Burma. To the east there are Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur. The southern boundary is situated by Mizoram and Meghalaya which separates it from Bangladesh and to the west there lies, West Bengal, Tripura and Bangladesh.\textsuperscript{13} Incidentally, Assam has been reduced to one third of its original size just in 25 years after independence.

\textsuperscript{10} Idem.
\textsuperscript{11} Idem.
\textsuperscript{12} Idem.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 4.
Chapter - 1

The area of Assam according to the Surveyor of Indian before the Census of 1961 was 2,19,878' 05 sq. km. which was after 1972 reduced to an area of 78,438 sq. km.\textsuperscript{14}

**ORIGIN OF THE NAME ASSAM:**

Opinions differ into the origin of the name Assam. The name “Assam” is, according to some derived from the Sanskrit “Asama”, which means ‘pearles’ or ‘unequalled’. It has been suggested that this title was applied to the Sham invaders, now called Ahoms and the country. They conquered derive this present name ‘Assam’ from their name ‘Ahoms’. This derivation is however open to the serious objection that in Assamese ‘s’ is softened into ‘h’, as in the name of the country. It is also doubtful whether either the Ahoms themselves or the tribe they found in occupation of the country would use a Sanskrit term to denote the dominant race.\textsuperscript{15}

Bodos, the earliest inhabitants of Assam, used to call the Ahom’s as “sam”. In Bodo language “Aa” means soil or country. Adding the term “A” with ‘sam’ the word Asam (land of the sams) has been derived.\textsuperscript{16}

The Assamese historical tradition says that the name ‘Assam’ in the sense of ‘unequal’ has been applied to the Tai conquerors by the local tribes when the former entered the Brahmaputra valley in the thirteenth century. Recent research bring to the forms that all the tribes inhabiting the north-

\textsuperscript{14} Idem.
\textsuperscript{15} The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. VI, Argaon to Bardwan, Published under the Authority of His Majesty’s Secretary of State for India in Council, Oxford, 1908, pp. 14-15.
\textsuperscript{16} Provincial Gazetteer of Assam, op. cit., p. 2.
western border of Yamuna and northern Myanmar call the Tai people Asam, Lasam, Sam, Sun, Sim, Sen, Sham etc. It is supported that much terms were also applied to the Ahoms by the local tribes of eastern Assam who lived in close proximity with those in Myanmar.\textsuperscript{17}

Another argument is the term ‘Asam’ as applied to the Shans is a hybrid formation of Assamese privative prefix ‘A’ with the Tai word ‘cham’ meaning “to be defeated” and here Acham means “undefeated”.\textsuperscript{18}

Nothing, however, can be said dogmatically regarding the origin of the name of Assam.

The Ahoms ruled Assam for nearly six centuries. The rivalry among the Ahom princes weakened the Ahom administration. In despair, prince Gaurinath Singha sought help from the British in 1786 and the British restored peace and returned to Calcutta.\textsuperscript{19} It was since this incident the East India Company came into direct contact with Assam. But these sparsely populated territories did not yet have enough economic worth or surplus revenue yielding potentiality to attract the attention of British annexation.\textsuperscript{20}

After the British walked out of Assam Badan Chandra Barphukan, the officer in charge of lower Assam invited the Burmese to fight against Purandar Burha Gohin in 1817. The Burmese swept over the country three times, bring destruction and misery. At the request of king Purandar Singh, the British

\textsuperscript{17} Gazetteer of India - Assam State, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 2.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 3.
\textsuperscript{19} Gazetteer of India - Assam State, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 139.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 139.
drove out the surrender their claim over Assam under the Treaty of Yandabu, on 24 February and thus Assam became a part of British India.\textsuperscript{21} Daved Scott, agent of the Governor General on the Northeast Frontier of Bengal proclaimed “We have not come (here) to quench our thirst for the conquest of your kingdom but to destroy our enemies, interested as we are to protect ourselves” in a manifesto published in Bengal on behalf the interventionist British-Indian troops.\textsuperscript{22}

After the expulsion of the Burmese from Assam David Scott made two alternative suggestions: First, the Upper Assam should be restored to an Ahom prince. Secondly the lower Assam should be annexed to the British Indian administration.\textsuperscript{23} On 27 June, 1833 on the recommendation of Robertson, successor of David Scott, Purandar Singh was placed as a tributary in Charge of upper Assam in 1835. The territory of lower Assam was divided into three districts of Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong under the head of the Bengal administration. But the government of Purandar Singh unsatisfactory to the British Indian administration and hence he was pensioned off. The territories under him were placed under direct administration of the British India in October, 1838. Thus, the territory was divided into two districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur.\textsuperscript{24}

\begin{flushright}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 140.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Quote from Samachar Darpan (In Bengali, Serampour), 17 April 1824.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Political Conciliations, 3 March, 1825.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Gazetteer of India - Assam State, Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 143-144.
\end{itemize}
\end{flushright}
During the next couple of decades, the kingdom of Jayantia, Cachar along with their dependencies and all the petty, independent tribal states were annexed. Cachar was originally ruled by an independent native dynasty. In 1824, the Burmese invaded Cachar. Govinda Chandra, the Raja of Cachar sought help from the British on which the Britishers responded positively and expelled the Burmese. On conclusion of peace in March, 1826, Cachar was restored to Govinda Chandra who agreed to pay a tribute of Rs. 10,000 per annum and acknowledging the Company’s sovereignty. But after the death of Govinda Chandra in 1830 without any successor, Cachar was annexed to the British dominion by a proclamation on 14 August, 1832.

Matak, the tract south of Sadiya, was given to Chief called Bar Senapati, who had protected his people from the Burmese atrocities on condition of supplying ‘paiks’ (militia men) which was later converted into a monetary payment. The Bar Senapati died in 1839, nominating his son Maju Gohain but the latter refused the new terms offered to him whereupon the tract was annexed to the British territories. In 1842, by a formal proclamation, Matak and Sadiya were incorporated into British territories and were subsequently added to the Lakhimpur District, the headquarters of which were transferred to Dibrugarh in the Matak country.

In 1835, a dispute arose between the Sadiya Khowa Gohain and Bar

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26 Ibid., p. 275.
27 Ibid, p. 34.
28 Idem.
Senapati regarding a tract of land. The political agent at Sadiya attached the land in question and called the disputants to appear before him to prove their claims. The new Sadiya Khowa Gohain forcefully occupied the land without appearing before the Political agent. Thereupon the post of Sadiya Khowa Gohain was abolished and Sadiya was placed under British control. Sadiya originally had been under a Khamti chief who was disloyal to the British, but now the Khamtis were exempted from taxation but their control over Assamese people was abolished.

While these developments were taking place, the local officers of the semi-independent tribal tracts of Khasi Jaintia Hills found it necessary to bring these tracts under immediate British control. Nunklow, in the Khasi Hills, had been adopted as a place of residence by some European British subjects in 1826 under a treaty with the Raja who had agreed to allow a road to be constructed across the hills to connect Cachar and Sylhet with the Assam Valley. Some officers engaged in the construction of the road were muss and bring to a misunderstanding in 1829. Troops were called up for reprisal and in January 1833, Tirat singh surrendered himself to the Company. A political agent was appointed for general superintendence over the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

In 1832, after a mishap, by a proclamation, the political agent

30 Idem.
31 Assam Administration Report (1874-76), p. 7.
32 Idem.
annexed the Jantial parganas to British territories and added them to Sylhet. A few weeks later Gobha was similarly annexed to Nowgong. But the Hills remained under the Political agent at Jowai and the Raja was pensioned off.\textsuperscript{33}

Three Thanas of Goalpara, Dhubri and Karaibari originally formed part of the district if Rangpur of Bengal. By regulation X of 1822, they were separated from the Rangpur district and exempted from the operation of General Regulations and subjected to a special system of government along with the Garo Hills.\textsuperscript{34} The new tract was called North East Rangpur and David Scott was appointed the first Civil Commissioner to administer it. When Assam came under the East India Company in 1826, this tract was placed under the charge of the new administration of Assam.\textsuperscript{35} But in 1867, the Koch Behar Commissionership was formed and then North-East Rangpur and Eastern Duars which was obtained from the Bhutias in 1866 were made parts of this new Commissionership.\textsuperscript{36} In the following year judicial administration of the Garo Hills and Goalpara was placed under the Judicial Commissioner of Assam, but the executive control remained in the hands of the Commissioner of Koch Behar.\textsuperscript{37} Finally in 1874, when Assam was made a separate Administration, Goalpara and Eastern Duars were transferred to Assam.\textsuperscript{38}

The Garo hills were included in the district of Goalpara till the year

\textsuperscript{33} Idem.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p.8.
\textsuperscript{35} Idem.
\textsuperscript{36} Idem.
\textsuperscript{37} Idem.
\textsuperscript{38} Idem.
1866. In that year a special Civil Commissioner was appointed at Goalpara for these hills. But the measure proved a failure and an officer was posted at Tura in the Garo hills. This action proved satisfactory and the matter was then regularised by the Act XXII of 1869.39

Besides these districts Assam Administration had to deal with numerous warlike tribes who surrounded north, south and east of Assam Valley. The British after annexation of the province had to treat them fairly and liberally. At the beginning they were anxious to leave the tribes alone and paid them cash, commuting their rights and dues from the villages.40 But unrestricted intercourse with the tribes by the British subjects caused misunderstanding and quarrels with the tribes and sometimes expeditions had to be sent to punish the guilty tribes. Therefore, Bengal Frontier Regulation V of 1873 was provided for drawing of an Inner Line, travel beyond which was restricted.41 In 1880, after Assam was constituted into a Chief Commissioner's Province in 1874, Assam Frontier Tract Regulation was issued to provide for the Removal of certain enactment from the frontier tracts inhabited by these tribes.42 This was supplemented by another Regulation issued in 1884.43

Thus we see tract of the Naga Hills was annexed in 1866, the country of the Lhota Nagas in 1875, the Angami Nagas in 1878-80 and of the Ao-

39 Idem.
40 M.A. Makhenzie, A History of the relations of the govt. with the hill tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal, Calcutta, 1884, p. 11.
42 Idem.
43 Idem.
Nagas in 1889 were incorporated respectively.\textsuperscript{44} The Garo Hills, long time under slack political control, was made a separate district in 1869, but until 1872-73, the Garos could not be brought under full British administrative domain.\textsuperscript{45} Lushai Hills stretched out from south-east Assam to Chittagong. The South Lushai Hills were inhabited by the Kukis. In 1860, the Bengal Government passed Act XXII to adopt an administration for the South Lushai Hills. The North Lushai Hills, which was a constant source of trouble under Assam in the nineties. On the 1 April, 1898, the two tracts were amalgamated and placed under a Superintendent for general administration and transferred to Assam.\textsuperscript{46} Nonetheless, the British province that came into appearance as Assam, formed shape more or less by 1873.

**THE INNER LINE REGULATION:**

In the early years of British rule these was unrestricted intercourse between subjects of Assam and the wild tribles living across the frontier. This led to quarrels and disturbances. This was mainly in the case of traffic in rubber brought down by the hillmen, which generated competition with the plains. Introducing of tea garden beyond the border line also quite often and on involved the government in troublesome disputes with the frontier tribles in their vicinity.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., pp. 298-299.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., p. 301.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., pp. 301-302.
Chapter - 1

The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, William Grey formed a Regulation which, when approved by the Governor General in council was given effect under the provisions of Act XXXIII vic. Cap 3 Section, to be applicable to the districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Garo Hills, Khasi & Jaintia Hill, Naga Hills, Cachar and Chittagong Hills. This provides the executive power of summary legislation for backward areas to the Lt. Governor of Bengal which empowered him to prescribe and draw a line to be called Inner line in the tribal areas in 1973. Beyond which no British subjects or certain categories of foreigners, could cross without a license or pass. The pass or license, might impose such conditions or limitations as might be necessary, upon the person to whom it was issued by the Deputy Commissioner. The regulation also became vigilant in the matters such as trade and possession of land and to check the activities of untoward incident beyond the inner line. The local authorities were fully empowered to manage their own affairs subject to the intervention by the frontier officers in their political capacity.\textsuperscript{48} (For detail see Annexure – 1/ pp. I-II).

CHIEF COMMISSIONER PROVINCE:

The inconvenience of administering such adverse country like Assam having peculiar problems of its own. Occupying an important strategic position and possessing unexplored potentialities could not be effectively

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p. 317.
administered as a division of the unwieldy Bengal Presidency had long been felt. The issue of separation of Assam from Bengal was opened for discussion. The Lt. Governor of Bengal, Geo George Campbell wrote, “No doubt whatever that separation of and the Eastern Frontier or any other large province would be an advantage”. Even though he tried to prevent the separation of Assam from Bengal and desired to keep Bengal intact. On the other hand he wanted to keep Assam as a special commissionership.\footnote{Bose, M. L., Social History of Assam, New Delhi, 1994, p. 27.} The Secretary of State for India had, as early as April, 1871 agreed upon the proposal to make Assam as a separate province under the British Government of India. C. U. Aitchison, Secretary Government of India remarked, “I can not doubt that when strength and directness of power are required in any sub ordinate administration, it is best to place that administration immediately under Supreme Government, so that it may directly as possible, enjoy the support and carry that authority of the Governor General in council. Assam and the Eastern districts to be imminently a case requiring such an administration”.\footnote{Barpujari, H. K., the Comprehensive History of India, Vol. IV, Guwahati, 1992, p. 264.}

Thus the territories proposed to be included into new commission were the five district of Assam viz. Kamrup, Nowgong, Darrang, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur and Naga hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hill, Garo Hills and Goalpara of Cooch Behar Division and Cachar and Syllhet of Dacca Division. The total area was estimated to be 54,100sq.miles, the population 4,150,000.\footnote{Ibid., p. 271.}
The people of Syllhet submitted a memorial to the Viceroy on 10 August, 1874 against the transfer of the district to Assam mainly on the ground of deregularization. Their districts which might result in the abrogation of the jurisdiction of the High Court of judicature at Calcutta and the replacement of the system of government of Lt. Governor by a Chief Commissioner. The Secretary of State for India also at first decline the incorporation of Syllhet which formed past of the Diwani of Bengal. But the British government of India persisted in their proposal of transfer of the districts on the grounds that this was not going to alter the principle or the practice of administration.  

Having attained the endorsement of the Secretary of the State, the Government of India acquired authority by legislation to take over Assam from the Lt. Governor of Bengal. After assuming control, the Government of India entrusted the management of the districts of Kamrup, Nowgong, Darrang, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Naga Hills and Garo Hills, Cachar and Goalpara by a proclamation to the Chief Commissionership of Assam on February and also the appointment of Lt. Colonel R. K. Keating as a Chief Commissioner of the new province. Colonel R. K. Keating assumed charge of the chief commissioner on 7 February, 1874. On 12 September 1874, the district of Syllhet was added to Assam Chief

52 Ibid., pp. 273-274.
Commissionership.\textsuperscript{53} Untill 1898, when Lushi Hills were transferred to Assam, the provincial boundary of Chief Commissionership of Assam in 1874 remained intact.\textsuperscript{54}

\textbf{Fi.g 1.1: Administrative area of the Chief Commissionership of Assam, 1874}

\textsuperscript{53} Assam Administrative Report, 1874-76, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{54} Eastern Bengal and Assam Administrative Report, 1905-06, p. 13.
PARTITION OF BENGAL AND ITS IMPACT ON ASSAM

Though Assam was separated from Bengal the territorial jurisdiction of Presidency had grown unwieldy with the addition of Bihar, Orissa, Chotta Nagpur. And though a Legislative Council had been provided for, the charge of administration was too heavy for a single man.\(^\text{55}\) The growth of population, the emerging importance of the city of Calcutta, the demand for progress in all direction. The important measures of administrative developments which required constant attention, the increasing congestion of business in the Bengal Secretariat, all these made increasing calls upon the time and energy of the Lt. Governor.\(^\text{56}\)

The need for relieving Bengal administration was indeed overdue. As early as 1860 Sir George Campbell had suggested that Council of Executive officers should be created to help the Lt. Governor and the plan was approved by Sir Henry Durand and Sir John Stratchey. But the plan was rejected.\(^\text{57}\) The question of giving relief to Bengal was again raised in 1898 in connection with the proposed transfer of the Lushai Hills to Assam and four years later the whole question of territorial redistribution was taken up by the Govt. of Lord Curzon.\(^\text{58}\) The publication of the proposed redistribution raised a storm of opposition and immense public criticism. On 18 March, 1904, in a public meeting the suggestion to create an Executive Council in Bengal was

\(^{55}\) Proceedings of the Home Public Department, Govt. of India, No. 155-166, February, 1905, p. 2.
\(^{56}\) Idem.
\(^{57}\) Ibid., p. 3.
\(^{58}\) Idem.
suggested.\textsuperscript{59} It was in fact a revival of the old suggestion of 1867-68 which proposed as Executive Council for Bengal.

But Lord Curzon in an elaborate explanation emphasized the inexpediency of providing an Executive Council to Lt. Governor of Bengal. He opened that the Executive Council in Bengal it was sure to create dissension among the Councilors and that would make the administration stagnant and impotent. Finally experience showed that personal government, not the highly development form of Council Government, was best suited for the Indian Administration which demanded a well-defined source of authority.\textsuperscript{60}

The Government of India proposed the reconstitution of Bengal and the creation of a new state to be called North-Eastern Provinces by providing Chittagong Division, Cooch Behar Commissionership and Dacca Division to Assam together with Rajshahi to Assam with the exception of Darjeeling and addition of Malda from Bengal thus providing 31 million people to the new administration while retaining 54 million for Bengal. The new province would have a well-defined boundary continuous throughout its length with well-recognized geographical and social distinction. The new province would bring under one administration the typical Muhammadans of Bengal and provide the city of Dacca a natural capital for such an aggregation. Moreover, the greater part of lands which produced jute and the whole of tea-producing

\textsuperscript{59} Idem.
\textsuperscript{60} Idem.
areas with the exception of Darjeeling which had its own characteristics would be thus included in one province. Finally the scheme did not involve the breaking up of Commissioner's Divisions.⁶¹

Public criticism raised some financial objections as well. It was pointed out that the cost of administration of 78 million people would become double with the creation of a new province as 280 more civilians would be required by the new administration, and the new building required by the new province would entail more expenditure. The transfer of papers to the new province would create confusions and some might be lost as well as in 1874. The dispatch to the Secretary of State stated that separate reconstitution would, indeed involve expenditure but that would be met by the revision of provincial settlement from the government of India’s fund and the amount of Rs.85 lakhs was worth paying for the inestimable benefit to be had by relieving the evils of congestion of works in Bengal and arrested development of the province of Assam.⁶²

Ultimately, however, on 1 September, 1905, by a proclamation issued by the Government of India the tracts commonly known as North and East Bengal comprising the districts of Dacca, Chittagong and Rajshahi Commissionership with the exception of Darjeeling and addition to Malda were separated from Bengal and together with the Chief Commissionership of Assam was formed into a new Province to be known as Eastern Bengal and

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⁶¹ Ibid., p.4.
⁶² Idem.
Assam and placed under Lt. Governor who was to be aided by a Legislative Council and Board of Revenue and over which the jurisdiction of the High Court of Calcutta was to remain as it was in both criminal and civil suits. The Act of 1905 left intact laws which were in force in the areas transferred from Bengal into the new province. The new state was to come into existence on 16 September, 1905.\textsuperscript{63}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig1.png}
\caption{Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1905-12}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., p.5.
ANNULMENT OF PARTITION:

The Curzon Plan could not be sustained for long in the face of the rising forces of nationalism in his correspondence with the Secretary of State for India that political power of the Bengalis- the born agitators as they were had not been broken and that they would never cease to agitate “until they have attained a modification of the position”. So at the Delhi Durbar on 12 December, 1911, the partition was annulled by a royal declaration. Assam-Sylhet inclusive was formally reverted to its old status as a Chief Commissioner’s province with effect from 1 April, 1912. Sir Archdale Earle was appointed as the Chief Commissioner.64

GOVERNOR’S PROVINCE:

Assam was made a Governor’s province in 1921 when Monteford reforms were introduced under the British Government of India Act 1919. Sir. N. D. Beatson Bell was appointed as the first Governor of Assam in 1921. The act introduced the provincial legislatures, called legislative councils. It was consist of the Governors Executive Council, elected members and nominated members. Of the total numbers of the members of a provincial council, at least 70 percent were to be elected. While not more than 20 percent were to be officials, the remaining were to be nominated non-officials. The council was consisted of 53 members of the fifty three councilors, thirty two were elected from General Hindu and Muslims communities- sixteen from

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64 Proceedings of the Govt. of India (Foreign and Secret) Nos. 3-4, August 1911.
each valley (Brahmaputra and Barak Valley) and one from the Shillong Urban Constituency. Another six elected members represented such special interests as tea planters, commerce and industry etc. The Governor nominated twelve members including not more than seven officials. The Diarchy in operation in Assam had two wings of its provincial government - the administration of transferred and reserved subjects. The reserved subjects were administered by the Governor with the help of the members of the executive council, who were not responsible to the legislature rather to the British Government of India. The Reserved subjects include police, justice, land revenue, printing press, irrigation, factories, criminal etc. while the transferred subjects were administered by the Governor acting with ministers, appointed by him from among the elected members of the legislature. Who were to be responsible to the legislature and were to hold office during his pleasure. Local self-government, health, education and some departments relating to agriculture were included amongst transferred subjects.  

PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY:

The Government of India Act was passed in 1935, which ended the Diarchy and ushered the concept of popular Government through collective responsibility and provincial Autonomy. For the first time the Act recognized provinces as having separate legal entity. Under the Act, the Governor’s provinces were given a new legal status and largely freed from the control of

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the British Government of India and the Secretary of State except for specific areas. The province of Assam derived its power and authority directly from the British Crown. The Executive power of the province was vested with the Governor appointed to represent the crown in the province. His position was mostly identical with that of the Governor-General. The administration of the provincial affairs was carried on by a council of ministers appointed by the Governor from among the elected members of the provincial legislature. They were responsible to the Legislative Assembly. Ministers hold office so long as they enjoy the pleasure of the Governor. The Act provided for introducing a bicameral legislature consisting of a legislative council and a legislative assembly in Assam along with five other states (Bengal, Bombay, Madras, The United Province and Bihar). These were 108 members in Assam Legislative Assembly and all these members were directly elected by the people. The electoral provision of the Act were governed by the communal award of the British Government, as modified by the Poona Pact in respect of the Scheduled Castes under it, seats in the legislatures were divided among various communities and groups. Besides, there were separate constituencies for General, Muslims, European, Anglo-Indian Christian and Sikh Communities.\(^66\) (For detail see Annexure – 2 & 3/ pp. III-IV).

Table 1.1
Composition of the Assam Legislative Assembly
(Under the Act of 1935)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Territorial Constituencies</th>
<th>No. of seats</th>
<th>No. of electros</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Non-Muhammadan General (including seven reserved seats for scheduled Castes)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4,45,626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mohammadan</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2,77,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Women</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. European</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Indian Christian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5,743</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Special Constituencies**

1. (a) Backward Plain Tribes 4 27,588
   (b) Backward Hills Areas 5 18,338
2. (a) European Planters 7 975
   (b) Indian Planters 2 344
3. (a) Commerce and Industry (European) 1 18
   (b) Commerce and Industry (Indian) 1 197
4. Tea Garden Labour 4 34,279

**Total** 108 8,15,241


**POST INDEPENDENT ASSAM:**

Independence brought phenomenal changes in Assam in respect of its area and population. In July 1947, on the strength of “Referendum” the overwhelming Muslim majority district of Sylhet with an area of 5,478 sq.
miles (14,188 sq. km.) and a population of 3116,602 West to East. Pakistan (present Bangladesh).67

The Sylhet Referendum was followed by the Radcliffe Award. According to which the district of Sylhet West to East Pakistan with the exception of the three Thanas of Badarpur (47 sq. miles or 121.73 sq. km), Ratabari (240 sq. miles or 717.43 sq. km) and a portion of the Karimganj Thana (145 sq. miles or 375.55 sq. km). Thus, after the partition of 1947, a total area of 709 sq. miles (1,836.31 sq. km) and a population of 291,320 persons of the Sylhet District of Surma Valley loose retained in Assam and joined with the old district of Cachar forming a new sub-division, viz., Karimganj. Thus, the old province of Assam lost almost the whole district of Sylhet, with an area involving 4,769 sq. miles (12,351.71 sq. km) west in favour of Pakistan.68

There were also a lot of changes in the areas of individual districts. But trible areas were grouped into two parts for better administration.

**Cachar:** After creation of Sylhet in 1947 for administrative convenience a scanty part of Sylhet comprising three Thanas with an area of 709 sq. miles (1,836.31 sq. km) formed into a new subdivision of karimganj with headquarter at karimganj as tagged with Cachar. On the side the foundation of the new district of United Miker and North Cachar, Cachar lost its old sub-

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68 Idem.
division of North Carchar Hills with an area of 1,896.8 sq. miles (4,912 sq. km) and a population of 37,361 as per 1941 census.  

**Darrang:** On 1 March 1951, the plain portion of the Balipara Frontier Tract has been added to the district of Darrang with an area of 531.2 sq. miles (1375.8 sq. km).  

**Nagaon:** During the period 1941-51, a part of the Micker Hills excluded area previously joined with Nagaon district had been separated to form the new district of United Miker and N.C. Hills. Therefore, Nagaon had lost an area of 1,715.9 sq. miles (4,444.7 sq. km).  

**Lakhimpur:** In 1951, the plain portion of the Mishmi Hills (391.7 sq. miles or 1014.5 sq. km), the Abor Hills (273.9 sq. miles or 709.4 sq. km) and the Tirap Frontier tract were transferred to the Lakhimpur district. As a result, Lakhimpur district got a total 790.4 sq. miles (2,047.136 sq. km) in 1951.  

**Sibsagar:** With the formation of the United Miker and N.C. Hills district in 1951, an area known as Miker Hill Excluded Area was tagged with Golaghat sub-division of Sibsagar district had been bifurcated and included in the newly created district that minimized Sibsagar constitute 1,676.3 sq. miles (4341.61 sq. km).  

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70 Idem.  
71 Idem.  
72 Idem.  
73 Idem.
United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District: The United Khasi and Jaintia Hills district constituted with an area of 5,533 sq. miles (14,330.47 sq. km). But the district lost an area of 603.2 sq miles (1,562.29 sq. km), i.e., Block I and Block II of Jowai sub-division with a population of 22,544 which had been transferred to the newly created United Miker and N.C. Hills district during the period between 1951 to 1961. The new district had been given the status of Part A Tribe Area of Assam including in paragraph 20 of the sixth schedule of the Constitution of India.74

Mizo Hills: The Mizo district previously known as the Lushai Hills was situated at the southernmost corners of Assam covering an area of 8,134 sq. miles (21,069 sq. km). It was the largest district of Assam and no change in area and boundary of the district took place during the post independent period. The district had been elubed in Part-A Tribe Area of Assam including in paragraph 20 of the sixth schedule of the Constitution of India.75

United Miker and North Cachar Hills: A new district known as the United Miker and North Cacher Hills was framed between 1951 and 1961 by transferring the whole of the North Cachar Hills sub-division from Cachar and by amalgamating the Miker Hills Excluded Area of Nagaon district, the Miker Hills Excluded Area of Sibsagar district (Golaghat sub-division) and Block I and Block II of Jowai sub-division. Till November 1957, the area mentioned above remained under the jurisdiction of the Deputy

74 Ibid., p. 15.
75 Ibid., p. 16.
Commissioners of the parent’s districts. But as a new administrative district, it came into existence with effect from 7 November, 1951. The total area of the district constituted was 5,892.2 sq. miles (15,260.798 sq. km). The very district was categorized Part A Trible Area of Assam including in paragraph 20 of the sixth schedule of the Constitution of India.  

**Naga Tribal Area:** This new administrative unit covering an area of 2,086.4 sq. miles (5403.77 sq. km) at the time of 1951 census, it was accorded Part B Tribal Area of Assam included in paragraph 20 of the sixth schedule of the Constitution of India.

**Goalpara:** No change in area and boundary of the district took place during the post-independence period.

**Kamrup:** In the post-independent era a strip of territory measuring 32.8 sq. miles (85.952 sq. km) of Kamrup district was ceded to the Government of Bhutan on 1 September, 1951 by an enactment in the Parliament known as the Assam (Allocation of Boundaries) Act, 1951.

**Formation of Nagaland:** The Naga Hills district and the former Tuensang-Division of the North East Frontier Agency were constituted into a separate state known as Nagaland in 1960. The new state was inaugurated on December, 1963, by the then President of India, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.

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76 Ibid., p. 15.  
77 Idem.  
78 Idem.  
79 Idem.  
80 Ibid., p. 16.
Chapter - 1

Formation of Arunachal Pradesh: The North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) present Arunachal Pradesh though from the point of geography and the Constitution of India was a part of Assam, was treated as a separate area for the purpose of the 1961 census. Accordingly, the area of Assam for the 1961 census was 47,091 square miles (1,21,965.65 sq. km) excluding NEFA and Nagaland. Under section 7 of the North Eastern Area (Re-organisation) Act, 1971, the entire area of Arunachal was constituted as a Union Territory and named Arunachal Pradesh which came into existence on 21 January, 1972. 81

Formation of Meghalaya: The formation of Meghalaya as a separate state is an important change in respect of the area and boundary of Assam. Meghalaya as a separate slate within the Union of India has been created by transferring two hill districts, viz., Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills. According to 1961 census, the areas covered by these two districts were 5,546 sq. miles (14,364.14 sq. km) and 3,152 square miles (8,163.68 sq. km) respectively. Thus, on the formation of Meghalaya as a separate state Assam lost an area of 8,698 square miles (22,527.82 sq. km) and the new state came into being with effect from 1 April, 1970. 82

Formation of Mizoram: The formation of Mizo Hills as a centrally administered territory is yet another notable landslide in respect of the area of Assaam. Under section 8 of the North Eastern Areas (Re-organisation) Act,

81 Idem.
82 Idem.
1971, the territories of Mizoram were constituted a Union Territory under the name Mizoram which came into existence on 21 January, 1972. Mr. E.H. Pakyntein, Superintendent of Census Operations, Assam, recorded the position and area in the "District Census Hand Book, Mizo Hills", 1961 as follows "The Mizo District previously known as the Lushai Hills, is situated at the southernmost corner of Assam"; Tying between 21°50' and 24°30' North and 92°20' and 93°20' East. The Tropic of Cancer runs through the district. It covers an area of 8,134 square miles (21,069sq.km) and is the largest district of Assam. It is bounded on the North by Cachar district and Manipur state, on the East and the South by Chin Hills and on the West by Chittagong Hills tract of East Pakistan and the Tripura state.  

CONCLUSION:

Thus, we see that the erosion (separation) of the areas of modern Assam came along with the Independence of the country. There was also practically no change in boundaries in areas of Assam from 1901 to 1941. Thus, partition of Sylhet in 1947, and subsequently separation of Naga Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills, and Mizo Hills reduced the area of Assam to a great extent and in 1999 census (as 1981 census in Assam was not been conducted due to Assam agitation), the area of Assam was found to be reduced to 78,523 square kilometers with twenty three districts. The historical and political geography of any region has its impact on its history.

83 Idem.
84 Ibid., p. 16-17.
Thus the study of the historical background of Assam is a pre-requisite to understand and analyse the process of social-political awakening of the Muslims of Assam which will be discussed in the next chapter.

POST INDEPENDENT ASSAM

Fig. 1.3: Shaded areas within Assam during the period