CONCLUSION
The present study has unfolded the origin of the Assamese middle class and the role played by it in the socio-political sphere of the Assamese society. Both Colonial and post-colonial period have been covered in it.

In pre-colonial Assamese society mainly two classes could be found — nobility and paiks forming the upper and the lower stratum of the society respectively. Besides these two major groups, there were another group of people who acted as scribes and officers under Ahom system of administration. They did not have the privileges enjoyed by the nobles. But they were also not required to render manual service. This group of people formed the basis on which modern middle class could emerge during Colonial Era. Though middle class in Assamese society emerged during Colonial Era, the basis for its emergence lay in the pre-colonial period.

Establishment of educational institutions, spread of modern education and economic changes led to the crystallization of the Assamese middle class. Facilities for formal education during British Rule were
mostly cornered by High Caste Hindus with a good financial background.

After the annexation of Assam the Britishers in
brought/middle-class people from Bengal to help them
in administration. Since Bengal came under British contact first, this was the first group to have the benefit of English and higher education. In fact, early British administration was run by these immigrants. Bengali language was introduced as court language and also the medium of instruction for the benefit of these Bengalees. The fear of linguistic and cultural domination agitated the minds of the Assamese and this caused their opposition towards Bengalees. Although, Assamese was restored to its former position in 1873, the linguistic sentiments continued to provide the basis for political agitation by the middle class, in late colonial as well as post-independence period. Such sentiments also provided the rallying point for their powerful rivals, the Bengalee middle class.

Existence of Assamese middle class as a 'class' made its presence felt only by the middle of
nineteenth century. In 1857, Mani Ram Dewan, who initially collaborated with British but later on he turned against the raj, made a covert attempt to overthrow the British Rule. Gradually Assamese middle class started participating in all the major contemporary issues of the then Assamese society.

Revolts by the peasants during the early British Rule in Assam, were the earliest popular mass based movements of Assam. The peasants protested against ban on poppy cultivation in 1860 and also against government's fiscal policy through formation of raj mels (people's Assemblies).

Formation of various sabhas and associations marked the growth of political consciousness amongst the people of the Brahmaputra Valley from the middle of nineteenth century. These associations and organizations were led by leaders from the middle class of Assamese society. Dorphat Sarvajanik Sabha was formed in 1875 through which Assamese middle class demanded that 'sons of the soil' should be given first preference in matters of recruitment in government services.
In the absence of political parties, these associations and organizations acted as a link between government and the masses. Though most of these organizations were cultural and literary in nature whose primary function was to spread advanced knowledge among the people, they created awareness of contemporary major issues and sought to arouse the spirit of national consciousness amongst them. Monthly and weekly journals, edited by high caste educated middle-class people of Assam, appeared by the end of nineteenth century to disseminate knowledge and information among the people of the Valley. Political articles were published in these journals to rouse the spirit of nationalism in the minds of the people. Though the articles published in these journals were moderate in nature, sometimes even articles condemning some of British Government policies were also published. These journals and newspapers aimed at asserting legitimate rights of the Assamese people.

With their educational qualification and awareness of the contemporary political issues, the
middle class of Assam had already established a link with the Indian mainstream by 1920. During Colonial Era, the Assamese people had to carry on two struggles simultaneously—fight for preserving their own socio-political identity and fight for wresting independence from the British in concert with the rest of India. Nabin Chandra Bordoloi and Tarun Ram Phukan were two of the important figures in this struggle. By the thirties of the present century, both Phukan and Bordoloi got themselves involved in the active politics of the valley. Assam played significant role in non-co-operation, civil disobedience and quit India movement along with the rest of the country.

Assamese nationalism manifested itself through linguistic and socio-economic issues. Due to Colonial constraints the growth and development of Assamese middle class remained feeble throughout nineteenth century. Since the Assamese middle class were at the mercy of British rulers, initially they were unable to participate in the contemporary issues. But subsequently, they came forward and vehemently opposed the raj.
Assamese nationalism took a well defined shape when various issues like language, immigration, jobs for locals, movement for collegiate education began to be articulated by the educated Assamese middle class.

Large scale influx of peasants from present day Bangladesh in search of waste lands and middle-class Hindus in search of white-collar jobs has aggravated unemployment among the locals. Most of the white-collar jobs have been monopolised by the Bengalees. The language controversy and the immigration issue provided the springboard for the Assamese middle class to assert itself. The absence of a viable Assamese bourgeoisie brought the middle-class leadership in sharp focus in the struggle for realisation of the legitimate aspirations of the Assamese people.

The state of Assam has witnessed a marked change in its demographic structure due to the influx of different groups of people from outside Assam. Landlords and zamindars employed the peasants from Mymensingh district of Bangladesh in their agricultural
field and fully utilised the services of the peasants.
Assam's availability of fertile land, its immense economic potential, and the reluctance of the local people to hard work were some of the factors responsible for large scale immigration culminating in present crisis.

There were several unorganised attempts by the Assamese people against immigration during British days which proved unproductive. After independence, people of Assam started a broad based movement against continued influx of foreigners under the banner of AASU and AAGSP. Since the inception of the movement, the Assamese people have been agitating against the threat to the identity of the Assamese people. They are scared of losing their identity.

In Assam, an equally important problem is the economic crisis which is intensified by the influx of foreigners. The economic crisis is aggravated by the domination of outsiders in the field of trade and commerce, white-collar jobs and in agricultural sphere. This economic crisis has created xenophobia in the
minds of Assamese people, who have been worst hit by the problem of unemployment.

Given the historical background of the state, it is not easy to find a solution to Assam's manifold problems, especially the problem of foreigners. In Assam, diverse religio-linguistic groups exist including Assamese Hindus, Assamese Muslims, Bengali Hindus and Muslims and tribals. In short, the whole population of Assam is an incongruous combination of diverse religio-linguistic and ethnic groups, overlapping in such a confusing mosaic which gives rise to manifold problems.

Assamese middle class played crucial role in articulating the needs and the concern of the Assamese people in these major problem areas and also in the matter of social reforms like widow remarriage and education for women. Establishment of various vocational and technical educational institutions, establishment of Gauhati University, High Court, Oil Refineries were the result of persistent effort of the middle class. Leadership of all these various movements was
drawn from this section of the society. This class remained at the forefront of all vital social and political developments before and after Independence. Middle class of Assam also have an aspiration for emerging as the dominant bourgeoisie of the region, But the absence of capital hinders them in fulfilling their aspirations.

Major problems of Assam relate to issues of economic development, Immigration and language. Assam is an economically backward state compared to other advanced regions of India. The British established tea plantations and extracted maximum profits which were repatriated to UK and these were not invested for development of Assam. Prior to independence, little attention was given to the development of industry in Assam, Investments were limited to tea industry and other sectors were utterly neglected. In the post-independence Assam, the process of industrial development started only towards the later part of second plan (1966-61). Hitherto, Assam was neglected in regard to central investment on industrial projects. The British Colonialists' main aim was to take away surplus generated in the state, But
Assam's development continued to be overlooked in the initial phase of post-independence period, while intensifying the exploitation of Assam's rich natural resources, the Central Government was neglectful and indifferent to the need for industrialising the state. Besides, private capital was also not attracted due to lack of infrastructural facilities. It is the Assamese middle class which voiced the demand for industrial development of the state and led the struggle for it. Consequently, during the third plan period (1961-66), many industries in public sector started coming up.

The roots of language tangle in Assam lie in the Colonial Era. After their annexation of Assam in 1826, the Britishers introduced Bengali language in courts and schools. After repeated protest by middle-class leadership, 'Assamese' was again introduced in schools in 1873. However, the language issue has remained essentially unresolved since then. It led to language riots in 1960 over the question of making Assamese the official language, and again in 1972 over the question of making Assamese the medium of instruction at University level. Various ethno-linguistic groups
form a part of Assam. When demand for giving due place to the Assamese language was raised, the legitimate aspirations of various linguistic groups, which formed a part of the state of Assam at that time, were not taken into consideration, by the leadership of the movement. This was one of the important reasons for the dismemberment of Assam and the creation of the Hill states. The insensitivity of the Assamese middle class towards the legitimate aspirations of the plains tribals of Assam has led to the formation of tribal organizations like Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTOA), which is demanding a separate state for the plains tribals of Assam.

Migration started with the British annexation of Assam in 1826. Initially, the Britishers as well as the local politicians were in favour of immigration. Because the immigrant peasants laboured in the fertile lands of Assam and increased agricultural productivity thereby, contributed to Assam's agricultural development. But subsequently, continued and increased flow of immigrants started putting pressure on land resulting in the decrease of per capita availability of cultivable
land in Assam.

The state of Assam has got a rich resource base. Had center not neglected the development of Assam, the magnitude of unemployment and landlessness would have been considerably less than what it is to-day.