1.1 Statement of the Problem

Movement of population from one place to another or what is called ‘migration’ has been an inherent trait of human society since the dawn of civilization. There are multiple propelling factors that induce people to move. Therefore, migration may be either voluntary or forced. “In the last half- century, three types of primary migration have been most common: permanent settlement migration, temporary labor migration and refugee movement” (Castles 2002: 1151). Migration generates both positive and negative responses depending upon the social, economic and political situation of the host society.

Assam evolved into a multi-cultural society due to endemic migration invoked in its social and demographic history. Diverse group of population migrated to this sparsely populated land in various periods. “Ethnically, the ‘Assamese Collective Personality’ is a mixture of many prominent social groups which inhabited Assam coming from the east, the Mongoloid Assamese and the ‘indeed Assamese’, i.e., Aryan and Aryanised Hindus from the West” (cited in Ahmed 2011:24). The geographical condition in Assam, according to Mohammad Taher “With fertile river valleys, heavy rainfall, abundant water, luxuriant vegetation and rich fauna were such that they could attract primitive man to settle and hence there were streams of migration into it even during the ‘Palaeolithic age’ (Taher 1988:2).

The Kamakhya Shrine, a place of historical and spiritual significance attracted a large number of devotees who eagerly decided to settle down in this land.

Historically, movement of population had been witnessed in the region since the days of the Pragjyotisha- Kamarupa kingdom but it took place in trickles and in slow pace. In the pre-colonial period, it took place gradually and
within limitations, from time to time under royal patronage to serve the needs of the society (Hussain 1993:27). Since the annexation and colonisation of Assam, state-sponsored migration patronised by the colonial administration had wider ramifications into the semi-feudal and semi-tribal society of Assam (ibid 1993:37). The Bengali *baboos* arrived in Assam with the colonial patronage to staff the secondary posts in the administration. As early as 1834, the British introduced tea cultivation in Assam. But the first hurdle the British faced in the creation of the tea industry in Assam was the non-availability of suitable labour force. This propelled them to recruit labourers from other parts of India. Thus, they were brought from the hill areas of Southern Bihar like the Chotanagpur Plateau and the Santhals, Oraons, Mundas, Kharias, Gonds, Khoonds, Kisang, and Nagesias from Bihar and Orissa. To mobilise the economy of the region in the interests of the British colonialism, the Muslim peasants from the East Bengal districts of Mymensingh, Pabna, Bogra, and Rongpur were brought in for cultivating the land. Migration contributed significantly in the development of the economy of Assam. A significant number of Nepalis also migrated to Assam in the nineteenth century. Celebrated historian Amalendu Guha stated that the vast majority of "professional" cattle grazers-the law allows tax exemption to "nonprofessional" grazers, that is agriculturalists with fewer cattle -- in the early nineteenth century were of Nepali origin" (Guha 1977: 92-93). "The Marwaris from Rajputana also migrated to Assam as collaborators of the colonial state. Many Biharis too came in search of livelihoods and were prepared to do any toilsome job" (Hussain 1993:46).

The ever increasing number of tea gardens in Cachar propelled the migration of a significant number of tea garden labourers (Chatterjee 2000:21). In Surma Valley thousand of tea-garden labourers worked in more than hundred tea gardens (Bhattacharjee 2006:31). The migration of Bengalis began earlier but it increased substantially during the colonial period. Emigrant enterprising Bengali Hindus were engaged in local trade and commerce by the colonial administration.

The Assam District Gazetteer reported that "as it was possible to survive on agricultural income, the difficulty of obtaining ordinary servants has increased greatly of late years. Furthermore, [many] people of this class from Karimganj,
North Sylhet and South Sylhet sub divisions have settled in Cachar where lands are more readily available and have taken to cultivation" (cited in Chakrabarty 2004: 200). Assam thus emerged as a multi-ethnic region in which no single linguistic group claimed a clear majority.

However, the migration that followed with the Partition of India was fairly different from the earlier voluntary migration from part of Colonial India to other parts. Unlike others, Partition propelled a massive forced displacement of population that caused utmost physical difficulties and inflicted severe mental trauma on individual and collective psyche. Hence, the present study is primarily concerned with the issue of migration of displaced Bengali Hindus from Sylhet/East Pakistan to Cachar and their eventual resettlement, rehabilitation and integration.

India entered into the post-colonial phase of history with the joy of independence and pangs of Partition. The Mountbatten Plan of 3rd June, 1947 envisaged the setting up of Boundary Commissions to demarcate the boundaries of the divided territories of Punjab, Bengal and Assam. The boundaries were abruptly drawn over the populous Indian provinces in which Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and others lived in amicable harmony for generations together. Historian and social scientist Joya Chatterji in her article, The Fashioning of a Frontier: The Radcliff Line and Bengal’s Border Landscape: 1947-52 has explained as how “messy” the line had been (Chatterji 1999:183-242). Ajit Bhattacharjea termed the drawing of border as ‘Cyril’s Scalpel’ and described it as “the most sensitive and potentially explosive act of socio-political surgery in history” (Bhattacharjea 1997:8).

The implementation of the Radcliff Plan culminated in a worst communal violence that engulfed both sides of the border. Consequently, it generated a massive displacement of population who were forced to flee in different directions in search of a safer space. The 3rd June plan of 1947 also proposed a referendum to be held in Sylhet district of Assam to seek people’s verdict either to incorporate it in India or Pakistan. Interestingly, the referendum was not demanded by the natives of Sylhet who enjoyed an enriched inter-community life
in pre-referendum Sylhet. They largely shared the same socio-cultural space in their native land but were suddenly redefined as Hindus and Muslims just on the eve of the referendum. Hence, the district population was communally polarised that was clearly evident in the result of the referendum. Except three and half thanas of the Sylhet district which were retained in Cachar district of Assam to establish land corridor with Tripura and Lushai hills, the rest amalgamated with East Pakistan. It is ironic that accounts of Partition have tended to be Punjab and Bengal centric. However, it needs to be pointed out that Partition studies on Bengal mainly centered on the movement of people from East Bengal to West Bengal and vice-versa. Very conspicuously, the issues involving the eastern part i.e. East Bengal-Assam and vice-versa remained ignored.

In Assam, forced migration took place to the largely Assamese speaking Brahmaputra Valley, overwhelmingly Bengali speaking Surma Valley and hill areas. The Bengali speaking Surma Valley had close proximity in language and culture with the East Bengal refugees. Consequently, the refugees who migrated to Surma Valley did not face significant resentment from the host society and the response to the refugees was sympathetic in Karimganj as it was the part of the erstwhile Sylhet district in pre-partitioned Assam. “Karimganj which forms the part of Barak Valley had been the eastern portion of the British district, Sylhet. Thus, the history of Karimganj is the integral part of the history of Sylhet” (Chatterjee: 2000: 21). The refugees faced an insensitive Assam Government which had negative impact in their rehabilitation and integration.

The forced migration to Cachar from the district of East Bengal particularly from Sylhet began with Noakhali violence in October 1946 (Census of India 1951A: 356). The birth of two nations and subsequent communal violence severely changed the existing environment of Sylhet. The Hindus of the district were extremely panicked either due to perceptions of violence or hit by one or the other kind of violence in their native village. A large number of refugees who migrated to Cachar were extended hospitality, financial and moral support by their friends and relatives that helped them to respond to the initial catastrophe and to eventually rebuild their lives. “For many individuals, their relatives were already there since the colonial period as baboos in the
colonial bureaucratic structure in undivided India and proved to be a drowning men's straw for the displaced" (Dasgupta 2001 B: 343-360). Options were given to the government servants to take up job on either side of the border.

The refugees who could not mobilise the support of their friends and relatives took shelter in impoverished relief camps awaiting relief, resettlement and rehabilitation from the government. The post-colonial Indian Government and its constituent states had to share the burden of the refugees. However, the fundamental task before the government was to provide relief, resettlement and finally had to rehabilitate the refugees in the new environment of Cachar. Efforts were made to wind up the rehabilitation within the Second Five Year Plan even if the flow continued due to deliberate attempts to drive out the minority communities from East Pakistan. Thus, the government's efforts did not primarily concentrate to provide relief to the refugees or physical relocation but to stretch further to restore their livelihood as well. It was necessary to provide education and employment facilities, medical aids and other basic necessities of life. This would enable them to be self-supportive and to gradually integrate them into the host society and community. However, after proper analysis, it was found that although the number of schemes taken up to rehabilitate the refugees in Cachar was more than other districts of Assam, none of the scheme was implemented judiciously. In fact, there was a huge gap between the formulation of the schemes and their actual implementation. Since the international refugee care instruments were specifically meant for the European refugees, the victims of Partition could hardly availed any benefit out of such instruments. Hence, the rehabilitation was primarily confined to national efforts.

The displacement of a large number of refugees from their traditional homeland and consequent insecurity and uncertainty relating to their migration to a new place has been traumatic for them. The severe impact of forced displacement was reinforced in breaking up of family and community, loss of livelihood, mental agonies, loss of human potentials, disruption of communal harmony, cultural disintegration and rise of religious fundamentalism etc. The violent uprooting from home had adverse psychological impact as the Bengalis are deeply attached to their ancestral home and homeland. Thus Partition
generated not only physical difficulties but also inflicted severe mental trauma. But the government failed to comprehend the trauma and the pain suffered by the refugees. This precisely led the government to be occupied only with the physical rehabilitation of the refugees and the displaced.

Partition was implemented as a mechanism to resolve the unending trail of violence that rocked various parts of colonial India. But instead of solving the ongoing conflicts, it accentuated more conflicts. It disrupted the network of human relationship and created conditions for further division. “Partition thus will be never a settled fact in the sense of settling something, settling the disorder; in producing the differences it will remain unsettled, unsettling, provoking the ‘others’ in the sub continent” (Samaddar 1997:4).

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The joy of achievement of independence of India was eclipsed by the bloody and tragic Partition on religious basis. The existing literature on Partition was primarily based on the Partition of Bengal and Punjab and the consequent mass exodus that followed it across the border. The massive forced migration of refugees to Cachar and their rehabilitation and integration to the host society in Assam was not addressed in official correspondences, statements and literature. Consequently, this area remained unattended for a long time. The invisibility of the Partition of Assam continued to ignore the trauma of Partition of Bengali Hindu displaced and gradually their experiences of Partition passed over to silence. Hence, the main objective of the present study is to explore the impact of Partition as manifested in the forced displacement of population, their eventual migration and rehabilitation. For this we propose to take up the displacement of population from the district of East Pakistan particularly from Sylhet and their subsequent migration to Cachar in Assam/India. The study also examines the process of rehabilitation of the refugees and their eventual integration into the host society and the community.

1.3 Scope and Significance

Forced migration and refugee studies have evoked considerable interests in recent years due to a large concentration of refugees in South Asian countries.
The study also entailed crucial significance in view of the increasing trend of violence and intolerance that plagued the entire subcontinent. It is pointed out that the refugee population in South Asia constituted roughly 12 percent of the world's total refugees. The present study is an attempt to recover the hidden history of a group of Bengali Hindu refugees who were forced to migrate due to life-threatening situation in their native land. The forced migration generated by Partition basically woven around three pertinent groups – the state, the society and the refugees themselves. Hence, we intended to focus on the response of these three groups related to the migration, rehabilitation and integration of refugees to Cachar.

The displacement brought in its trail unending sufferings and incessant struggle of the refugees in rebuilding their lives in an alien land arbitrarily drawn up by the 3rd June plan of 1947. The official narrative on Partition was reinforced in historical writings that were basically concentrated on political happenings leading to the Partition of the subcontinent. The voice of the people in such official Partition discourse was sometimes bypassed and in most cases remained peripheral. The drawing of new boundaries after the Partition transformed the existing boundaries to a significant extent. As a result, new towns and cities emerged. With the coming of new settlers, territories were redefined and new boundaries emerged. Eventually, demographic, social and cultural transformation took place. Apart from relief and rehabilitation the nascent post-colonial government was to confer citizenship rights to the displaced. However, the huge migration of Bengali Hindu population to Cachar even after six decades of Partition and their rehabilitation and integration remained problematic in individual memories.

Partition played a substantial role in transforming individual and collective identity. For realising the dream of homogeneous Assam, the Bengali ethnic identity was transformed into Hindus and Muslims on the eve of the referendum. The Assam Government was clearly reluctant to accept the Bengali Hindu refugees and this led them to be the perpetual victims of state apathy and marginalisation. The same perception continued to pose threat to their linguistic identity in a largely Asamiya speaking Assam. Thus, the simple peace loving
natives of Sylhet were forced to negotiate with a different identity with utmost reluctance in a compelling situation.

Hence, the present study is an attempt at exploring the situation under which the refugees were forced to migrate to Cachar, the trauma they experienced after their violent expulsion from their native land and the constant struggle in rebuilding their lives. Since the refugees were emotionally related to their ancestral home and homeland, many of them had to survive with nostalgic yearning for their lost native land. Many others suffered from perpetual sense of homelessness. Among the surviving refugees there is still a yearning to set up ancestral connectivity by mixing the soil of the place of birth with the new home.

1.4 Concepts and Definitions

In order to understand the migration of the Partitioned-induced displacement to Cachar from Sylhet/East Pakistan, it is pertinent to conceptualise certain terms associated with such displacement and migration.

1.4.1 Voluntary and Forced Migration

Social scientist G. Beijer distinguished between migrants which are based on choice and those who are involuntary (Beijer 1969: 13). Voluntary migration is decided by an element of choice. Generally such kind of migration is based on specific reasons such as availability of fertile land, better economic condition etc. (Deb Barma and George 1993: 4-5).

Forced migration on the other hand, "was an inevitable result of processes of state formation and economic change under conditions of system competition and neo-colonialism" (Zolberg cited in Castles 2002:1144). Forcible displacement pushes people against their will to migrate. It can be conceptualised as a product or counter-product of conflict, development projects, disaster, trafficking or struggling (Khatiwada 2006:24). Displaced persons forced to leave his country of nationality or of origin under racial, religious or political compulsions falls within the purview of forced migration (United Nations 1947: 816).
1.4.2 Displaced Persons and Refugees

The term displaced persons was in the immediate post-Second World War period was used to define people “who had been removed or deported from their homes as a result of war, more particularly those Allied nationals who were removed from their homes as forced labour” (Mandal 2011:27). Immediately after the Partition of India, when the mass exodus was going on in full swing in the Eastern part of India, the Government of India defined the term “displaced” person. The Census of India 1951, Vol XII, Assam, Manipur and Tripura Part II-A, defines a displaced person as “Any person who has entered India having left or being compelled to leave his or her home in Western Pakistan on or after the 1st March 1947 or his/her home in Eastern Pakistan on or after the 15th October 1946 on account of civil disturbances or on account of the setting up of the two dominions of India and Pakistan” (Census of India 1951B: 136). The Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam had undertaken a Statistical Survey of Displaced persons from East Pakistan to Assam in the year 1955-56 and under the said Survey, a ‘displaced person’ or ‘refugee’ or ‘migrant’ from East Pakistan means a person who was ordinarily a resident in the territories now comprised in East Pakistan, but who on account of civil disturbances or on account of the Partition of India has migrated:

A) In the case of persons migrated from the district of Noakhali or the district of Comilla now forming part of East Pakistan, on or after the 1st October 1946 and

B) In the case of persons migrating from any other area in East Pakistan, on or after the 1st June 1947 to the territories now included in Assam with the intention of taking up permanent residence (Government of Assam 1958A: 1).

A refugee, on the other hand, may be defined as “a person who has fled his home or native country and who does not wish to return, at least not to the circumstances that caused his flight” (Mandal 2011:27). International Relief Agencies define refugees as uprooted people who cannot turn to their government for protection. The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences Vol XIII defines “a
refugee as any person who under stress of force *majeure* has left his home and become dependent on the hospitality of others" (Seligman 1934: 200-205).

Art 1 of the 1951 Refugee Convention defined the term refugee as

"[Any person] owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country or who not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence....is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it"

(UNHCR,N.6,P.23)

The 1951 UN Refugee Convention along with the 1967 Protocol is still the most important and the only universal instrument of international refugee law" (ibid). However, the refugees generated by the Partition of India could not fall within the parameter of the international refugee protection and hence could not avail any benefit.

1.4.3 Rehabilitation and Resettlement

Rehabilitation refers to the combined and coordinated use of medical, social, educational and vocational measures for training the individuals to the highest possible level of functional ability. Ajit Prasad Jain who was one of the Central Ministers of rehabilitation defined it as something more than the provision of houses and gainful employment. According to him, it is the process of economic recovery of displaced persons (Government of India 1950).

The Relief and Rehabilitation Division of the Ministry of Finance defines rehabilitation "as a long term programme to be provided to the displaced, unlike relief which involves the immediate provision of food, clothing, accommodation, sanitation, medical treatment, administration of camps etc. Rehabilitation involves reconstruction and development schemes. Rehabilitation is thus said to involve certain measures of permanent resettlement" (Government of India 1948 A: 641).
1.4.4 Assimilation and Integration

The *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (Seligman Vol. 1 1930:281) popularly defines assimilation as a political rather than a cultural concept. It is the name given to the process or processes whereby people of diverse racial origins and cultural heritages, occupying a common territory, achieve a cultural solidarity sufficient at least to sustain a national existence.

Assimilation means a mode of incorporation to encourage the migrants to learn the national language and to fully adopt the social and cultural practices of the receiving community (Castles 2003:1155). This involves a transfer of allegiance from the place of birth to the new country and the adoption of a new national identity. Many sociologists especially in the United States have viewed assimilation as an inevitable and necessary process for permanent migration (Alba and Wee, Gordon, Portes ibid).

Integration, according to the *Oxford Reference Dictionary* (2001) means the mixing of people or groups previously kept apart. The UNHCR defines integration as “the process by which the refugee is assimilated into the social and economic life of a new national community” (UNHCR undated: 5). Scholars like Wijbrandi (1973), Bernard (1973), Bulcha (1988) also dealt with refugee integration. Harrell-Bond suggests that it refers to a “situation in which host and refugee communities are able to co-exist, sharing the same resources -- both economic and social – with no greater mutual conflict than that which exists within the host community” (Harrell-Bond 1986:7).

1.4.5 Assamese and Asamiya

The two terms are used synonymously by most of the writers except Amalendu Guha. But to avoid terminological confusion it is precisely important to make a distinction between the two.

By the term Assamese, we mean all inhabitants who have their domicile in the present state of Assam, whether of origin or of choices. The term Asamiya covers those people who have accepted Asamiya language as their natural or acquired mother tongue. “The term Asamiya also includes the neo-Asamiyas such
as Na-Asamiya Muslims, the autochthon tribals and the black-tribals who have accepted the Asamiya language” (Hussain 1993: 21).

1.5 Hypotheses

- The implementation of the Partition Plan evoked a serious communal violence in East Pakistan that forced people to flee their native home. Consequently, a large number of refugees migrated to Cachar not due to actual violence but a threat perception generated by a situation of generalised violence.

- The Indian State officially accepted Partition but it was not prepared to handle the issue of refugees adequately.

- Though it was the responsibilities of the Indian state to resettle and rehabilitate the refugees, it succeeded partially in resettling and rehabilitating them.

- Besides the state, a large number of refugees rehabilitated themselves through their own initiatives.

- The trauma of being displaced has been deeply ingrained into the memories of the victims of Partition i.e. the refugees and the displaced.

- Despite bearing the burden of Partition trauma, the victims are still nostalgic about their place of origin from where they were displaced.

- The host communities in Karimganj extended all support to the refugees by providing emergency shelter and food.

- There was no clash between the migrants and the host communities in Karimganj. The host community of Cachar did not accept the refugees wholeheartedly.

1.6 Methodology

Migration is a complex historical process and its impact is multi-dimensional. Hence, the present study is pursued with the help of two approaches – historical and sociological / social anthropological.
In order to construct the narrative on migration and rehabilitation of the Bengali Hindu displaced and refugees from Sylhet/ East Pakistan to Cachar both primary and secondary data have been used. The main sources of the secondary data are:

A) Official publication of the government records especially those of the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation.

B) Legislative Assembly debates, memoirs, biographies and autobiography of those involved in relief and rehabilitation of the refugees.

C) Critical assessment of the government’s performance made mostly in the form of report or memorandum by the non-governmental organisations, Cachar District Refugee Board as well as individual, scholars, opposition leaders etc.

From the survey of literature, it becomes apparent that there are essential difficulties to conduct the enquiry of various aspects of the Partition and its aftermath on the basis of secondary data alone. The use of social anthropological data is significant keeping in view the need of restoring the hidden human history of Partition of Sylhet and the accompanying mass displacement of a significant number of Bengali Hindus, their rehabilitation and eventual integration to Cachar. This method has become very popular in 1960s with the rise in the field of oral history, a beginning of an inter-disciplinary field of study. In this context, the present work is based on oral narratives as primary source which are structured in the form of questionnaire with all probabilities which could reflect wide array of individual and collective experiences of migration, trauma, nostalgia etc. related to the ancestral land of the victims and their experience in rehabilitation and the process of their integration to Cachar. Essentially, this study looks into various dimensions that could possibly highlight different aspects of the problem of the refugees. An attempt is also made to categorise the displaced persons particularly on the basis of sex, economic status and the site of rehabilitation --- urban or rural. The respondents are the first generation Partition refugees i.e. the direct victims of Partition and also the second and third
introduction

generation of children of refugees, persons related to refugee rehabilitation, office bearers of different refugee and women organisations etc.

The informal interactive discussion with the refugees seemed to be more effective in order to understand their mood and feelings that was caused due to sudden forced displacement, lost homeland, transformation of their identity, separation of families or friends or whatever related to their migration. Thus, informal interactive discussion also formed a significant component of the study along with the questionnaire to extract relevant information and the feeling of the refugees. Hence, the major part of the fieldwork was concentrated within the district of Cachar. The interview was conducted in Bengali. After the collection of data the same would be processed and critically analysed. Though there are methodological problems attached to oral narratives yet the data would be analysed carefully.

1.7 Review of Literature

The Partition of India is a widely debated issue in the history of South Asia. It is observed that historical scholarship failed to address the sufferings and trauma of millions of victims affected by Partition. However, the fictional literature and autobiographical writings of Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu and Bengali cover the lacunae of written history to a significant extent. Such sensitive explorations of the experiences of the victims range from fictional genres such as stories, novels, poems to intimate autobiographical narratives, literary memory etc. The Hindi literature explores a variety of real life experiences of the victims of Partition. The Urdu short stories focus mainly on human friendship and courageous acts of rescuing each other during the catastrophe of Partition and its aftermath. The iconoclastic author of Urdu short stories Sa’adat Hasan Manto contributed significantly in understanding the human cost of Partition.

In Bengali literature, there is virtually no short story or novel that deals directly with the Partition as its central theme. In most of the novels, Partition is represented as just another event among other contemporary events in the history of Bengal. In such works, Partition was not addressed as a central theme which destroyed the lives of many individuals, disintegrated many families and
compelled the victims to survive with trauma. In fact, the three major novelists of the period like Tara Shankar Bandyopadhay, Manik Bandyopadhay and Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhay did not experience Partition as displaced and refugees. Hence their writings fail to reflect the pangs of Partition suffered by a large number of victims of Partition. Due to the peripheral presence of Partition, Tapati Chakrabarty observes "the fleeting presence of Partition in Bengali literature" (Chakrabarty 2002:275). However, Partition makes its vibrant presence in Bengali poems.

In English language, essays, fictions, literary and scholarly articles represent the sufferings and trauma generated by Partition. In scholarly articles like *Pangs of Partition- the Human Dimension*—Vol-II (Setter and Gupta 2002) edited by S. Setter and Indira B.Gupta explored the socio-psychological aspects of displacement with useful insights into the impact of riots, murder, brutality, indignity, abduction, rape and dislocation suffered by the innocents during and after Partition and it partially concentrated on Bengal and Punjab excluding Assam. Pradip Kumar Bose's *Refugees in West Bengal: Institutional Processes and Contested Identities* (Bose 2000) is a well-researched compilation of articles dealing with the rehabilitation of refugees in West Bengal. This book comprises some articles with special focus on multiple experiences of the refugees who were displaced first from their original homeland and once again deported in places like Dandakaranya etc. much against their will. Ranabir Samaddar’s ed. *Reflection on Partition in the East* (Samaddar 1997A) and *Marginal Nation* (Samaddar 1999) reflect on the "history that the Partition creates". *In Great Partition: The making of India and Pakistan* (Khan 2007) Yasmin Khan uses interviews and archival sources to underscore the catastrophic human cost of Partition and its repercussion affecting the society till today. In *Divided Countries, Separated Cities -The Modern Legacy of Partition* edited by Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes and Rada Ivekovic (Deschaumes and Ivekovic 2000-01) look at Partition as an unfinished agenda and the traumatic experiences of the victims still haunt the day today life of people in South Asia. *Translating Partition* Ravikant and (Saint 2001) is a collection of stories edited by Ravikant S and Tarun K. Saint. These narratives offer insights into the individual experiences
on Partition. Alok Bhalla in his *Partition Dialogues: Memories of a Lost Home* (Bhalla 2006) explores the interviews he conducted with six well-known novelists from India and Pakistan wherein many human concerns of Partition are explored. *Inventing Boundaries: Gender, Politics and the Partition of India* (Hasan 2000) edited by Mushirul Hasan examines the more recent debate on Partition historiography. This book attempts to cover areas of fresh research and enquiry. In *Marginal Men: The Refugees and the Left Political Syndrome in West Bengal* Prafullah K. Chakrabarti (Chakrabarti 1999) has tried to recreate the trauma and the agony of the refugees and their desperate struggle for survival in the country which they considered their own. The book deals with the arrival, reception and the tentative government attempts of rehabilitation in detail. Another pioneering work *The Uprooted: the Sociological Study of the Refugees in West Bengal* written by Kanti B Pakrasi (Pakrasi 1971) is an excellent sociological work wherein he evaluates the impact of Partition in Bengal from a sociological point of view.

Joya Chatterji in *The Fashioning of a Frontier: The Radcliff Line and the Bengal Border Landscape, 1947-52* (Chatterji 1999) critically argues about the hastily drawn Radcliff line between the two parts of Bengal by a British civil servant who had no background in Indian administration. *Right or Charity: The Debate over Relief and Rehabilitation in West Bengal, 1947-50* (Chatterji 2001), another pioneering work by the same author addresses the differences between the relief and rehabilitation measures offered by the Central and the government of West Bengal to Bengali refugees in the years after Partition and those demanded by the refugees themselves. What the government might have considered as their charitable obligations, for the Bengali Hindu refugees it was an assault, displacement, grinding poverty and broken psyche. Sudeshna Banerjee’s *Displacement within Displacement ...The crisis of old Age in the Refugee colonies in Calcutta* (Banerjee 2003) reconstructs the crisis of old male refugees in the refugee colonies of Calcutta, exploring how they were marginalised within their own community and the state. Anusua Basu Roy Chaudhury in *Nostalgia of Desh, Memories of Partition* (Roy Chaudhury 2004) has tried to understand the nostalgia and the memories for a lost homeland.
cherished by the uprooted Hindus from East Bengal. The Partition Motif in Contemporary Conflicts edited by Smita Tewari Jassal and Eyal Ben-Ari (Jassal and Ben-Ari 2007) is a compilation of articles analysing the impact of Partition in different regions and on the nation in the larger context. In Partition and South Asian Diaspora: Extending the Subcontinent, Papiya Ghosh (Ghosh 2007) seeks to widen Partition studies by looking into the sub continental Partition Diaspora and how Partition persisted in the life of the migrants and minorities in an increasingly transnational context. The Prose of Otherness (Pandey 1994) an article written by Gyanendra Pandey focuses on the lacunae of Partition historiography to address the massive violence that constituted the Partition of India. Another pioneering work by the same author Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India (Pandey 2001) is basically a work on investigation of violence, which analyses the events of history and memory and how the violent incidents were remembered. In Uprooted and Divided (Guhathakurata 2003), Meghna Guhathakurata explores the impact of migration on the divided families. Ian Talbott in his article Literature and the Human Drama of the 1947 Partition (Talbot 1995) deploys literary narratives in historical analysis to supplement history. In Witnessing Partition: Memory, History, Fiction by Tarun. K. Saint (Saint 2010) raises critical debates about the Partition and its aftermath. This book reflects the traumatic impact of Partition on South Asian society and culture. In Settling the Unsettled: A Study of Partition Refugees in West Bengal by Monika Mandal (Mandal 2011) attempts at analysing the relief and rehabilitation measures undertaken by the Central and State governments in India in response to the massive influx of refugees from East Pakistan into West Bengal. The work also reviews the assimilation and integration of the erstwhile refugees into the host society and community in West Bengal. In Bridging Partition People's Initiatives for Peace between India and Pakistan edited by Smitu Kothari and Zia Mian with Kamla Bhasin, A.H Nayyar and Mohammad Tahseen (Kothari and Mian 2010) aims at bridging the fracture inflicted by the Partition and networks for peace and co-operation between the communities across the Indo-Pakistan border.
The Story of Rehabilitation by U. Bhaskar Rao brought out by the Department of Rehabilitation, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Rehabilitation (Rao 1967) Government of India was an effort reflecting government’s initiatives and efforts in the rehabilitation of the Partition victims of India. In reality, the government discriminated the Bengali refugees from that of Punjab and the rehabilitation measures undertaken in Bengal and Punjab focused in the book was a clear pointer to this. One more surprising thing about the book is that there is no mention about Sylhet Referendum and its aftermath -- a massive influx of population into Surma Valley and Brahmaputra Valley in Assam. It clearly reflects utter disregard and insensibilities of the government towards the vulnerable Bengali Hindu refugees who had to take refuge under the largely reluctant Assam government.

The attempt to recover the gender history of Partition is accomplished in some landmark works. In the context of Punjab, some remarkable texts focus on the gender accent of Partition like Borders and Boundaries: Women in India’s Partition authored by Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin (Menon and Bhasin 1998) Meenakshi Verma’s Aftermath: An Oral History of Violence (Verma 2005) etc. and in the context of Bengal some remarkable texts could be cited as Gargi Chakrabarty’s Coming out of Partition: Refugee Women of Bengal (Chakrabarty 2005) and Jasodhara Bagchi and Subhoranjan Dasgupta ed. The Trauma and the Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India (Bagchi and Dasgupta 2003). Violent Belongings: Partition, Gender, and Post-Colonial Nationalism in India by Kavita Daiya (Daiya 2008) shows how Partition of India continues to haunt contemporary life in view of increasing ethnic and gendered violence. These works also represent the psychological scar left in the minds of the women as victims of Partition.

The use of oral narratives in reconstructing the history of Partition is of recent origin and the works basically focused on Punjab and Bengal. Urvashi Butalia’s The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India (Butalia 1998) deals with the human dimension of the Partition wherein Butalia attempts to explore the voice of the small players marginalised in Partition historiography. In another work The Partition of Memory: the Afterlife of the Division of India
(Kaul 2001) edited by Subir Kaul reflects the terrible implications of Partition in individual life. William Van Schendel’s *The Bengal Borderland: Beyond State and Nation in South Asia* (Van Schendel 2005) focuses on the social change that Partition brought about in the crucial borderlands in the context of South Asian politics. The essay focuses on how Partition created an international border separating East Bengal from Assam and other regions which joined the new state of India. Kathinka-Sinha-Kerkhoff’s *Tyranny of Partition: Hindus of Bangladesh and Muslims in India* is an effort at reconstructing the history of the aftermath of Partition through oral narratives. The work focuses on the plight of the minorities left on both sides of the border. Ravinder Kaur’s *Since 1947: Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi* (Kaur 2007) is a recent oral narrative to construct the history of violence associated with Partition and its impact on the refugees of Punjab. In an article *Forgotten Land, Forsaken People: Sylheti Women’s Tales and the Partition in Colonial North-East India* (Dutta 2010) Binayak Dutta attempts to highlight the voice of Sylheti women displaced to Assam and their plight.

Of late, sociologists, thinkers and historians of the region attempt to study migration and population flow. Myron Weiner’s *Son of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India* (Weiner 1978) speaks about the gradual evolution of the Son of the Soil theory among the local population and the consequent un-wanted Bengali migration in the said society. Homen Borgohain in his book *Bohiragotor Samossya* (Borgohain 1979) discusses the various migrant groups into the Assamese society and the problem created with their arrival in Assamese cultural and economic life. M. Kar’s *Muslims in Assam Politics* (Kar 1990), Alaka Sharma’s *Immigration and Assam Politics* (Sharmah 1999), H.K Barpujari’s *North East India: Problems, Policies and Prospects* (Barpujari 1998), Sanjib Baruah’s *India Against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality* (Baruah 1999) deals with the demographic transformation of Assam due to migration of different groups who posed cultural, economic, linguistic threat to the host society in Assam.

But there are social scientists and historians of the region who have displayed the plight of the Bengali Hindu displaced. Mention might be made
about Little Nationalism Turned Chauvinist: Assam's Anti-foreigner Upsurge (Guha 1980) by Amalendu Guha wherein he discusses the myth of the Assamese culture being threatened by the Bengali refugees and the displaced. On the Present Movement of Assam (Gohain 1980) and Assam: A Burning Question (Gohain 1985)—the two pioneering works of Hiren Gohain explore the imagined threat of the Assamese about the Bengali migrants in Assam. Monirul Hussain’s The Assam Movement: Class, Ideology and Identity (Hussain 1993) looks at the Partition-induced Bengali Hindu refugees as victims of political circumstances and religious differences. The apprehension of Assamese identity being threatened by the Bengali community was also overruled in this work. Anindita Dasgupta’s Denial and Resistance: Sylheti Partition Refugees in Assam and later published in the journal of Contemporary South Asia (Dasgupta 2001) explores the experiences of Sylheti refugees in a largely unacceptable Brahmaputra Valley and also the impact of Sylhet Referendum.

A survey of literature, dealing with the human dimension of the Partition of India demonstrates noticeable absence of the human dimension of the Partition of Sylhet and its aftermath. The historians or novelists of the erstwhile Surma Valley or present Barak Valley attempt to highlight largely the political perspective of the Partition of Sylhet. Less attention was paid regarding the huge displacement of Bengali Hindu population who had to migrate to Cachar under compelling situations of violence, fear, exclusion or insecurities in their native land in Sylhet /East Pakistan and their attempt to rebuild life in a land where the government was largely insensitive. Mention may be made of Shyamalesh Das’s Sylhet Referendum—Bharat Itihaser Kolonko,(Bangla) (Das1996), Tanmay Bhattacharjee’s Sylhet Referendum— A Retrospect, (Bhattacharjee 2006), Fight for Freedom in Sylhet by Rabindra Nath Aditya (Aditya 1964) Swadhinata Sangramer Smriti, Nirod Kumar Gupta (Bangla) (Gupta 1974)_Srihatta Ganabhubter Alik Kahini by Jayanta Bhusan Bhattacharjee (Samayik Prasanga December 24, 2001). In Harano Din Harano Manush (Bangla) (Choudhury 2004) by Sujit Choudhury, Partition is addressed as a passing reference. In a pioneering article ‘God Sent Opportunity’ in the journal Seminar (2002) the same writer focuses on Sylhet referendum and the reaction of the state and the people.
Introduction

in largely hostile Assamese speaking Brahmaputra valley. In *Kaler Jatra Dhoni (Bengla)* (Bhattacharjee 2006) edited by Tapadhir Bhattacharjee and Topojyoti Bhattacharjee, focuses in one of the chapters the efforts of Tarapada Bhattachaijee in rehabilitating a group of Partition-induced displaced who migrated to Cachar from Tripura. *Bindu Bindu Jal (Bengla)* (Das 2004) by Sekhar Das deals with the predicament of refugees in camp life.

Recently, Mousumi Datta accomplished her doctoral thesis on the migration of Partition-induced Bengali Hindus into Brahmaputra Valley in Assam and their rehabilitation and integration. She argued that the Bengali Hindu displaced who were forced to migrate to distinct socio-cultural Brahmaputra Valley faced perceptible resistance from the largely insensitive host society and the Assam government.

1.8 Scheme of Chapters

In order to study the "Partition in the East: Resettlement and Rehabilitation of Refugees in Cachar. A Case Study in Karimganj", we have divided our study into eight inter-related chapters. In the first chapter, we have outlined the problem of our study and specified the objectives, scope, significance, hypothesis, methodology and limitations. We also briefly reviewed the existing literature on Partition and rehabilitation. In addition, we have also clarified some conceptual issues involved in this study.

In the second chapter, the creation of India and Pakistan out of one civilizational entity led us to study the issues related to the emergence of India as a nation-state. We propose to review the debate on Partition historiography evolving around the division of India into two nations. We intend to situate Assam as a partitioned-land in the broad parameter of the debate. The resurgence of creative literature brought the human reality of the Partition to the forefront which contested the official history writings. In view of rising intolerance, ethnic and communal violence, we need to re-think Partition in the context of the legacy it left behind. The colonial reorganisation of Assam since 1874 forms a significant thrust of the chapter with useful insights on the First and the Second Partition of Bengal. This chapter also deals with the factors that contributed to the growth and development of communalism which ultimately divided the
subcontinent. At the fag end of decolonisation, Assam experienced another split and a referendum was held in the Muslim majority Sylhet district of Assam to decide its incorporation either in India or in Pakistan. The split which Assam faced as a result of 3rd June Plan of 1947 was a relatively less known chapter in the history of Partition. In this chapter, we seek to study Sylhet referendum, the prelude to the Partition of Sylhet. Given the multiple consequences that the Partition of Sylhet reinforced in the North-eastern part of the country, this chapter also attempts to study the impact of Partition in the region.

In the third chapter, we recognise the Partition-induced Bengali Hindu migrants as forced migrants and propose to study the factors under which they were forced to migrate. As the migration to Cachar did not take place in “one-fell-swoop” but in trickles, we propose to study each phase of migration. We also seek to examine simultaneously the causes that propelled such migration. Statistical enumeration stating the numbers would be recorded to assess the quantitative aspects of the displaced population in the region. From our study of forced migration, it is presumed that the migratory routes were often quite tortuous. We seek to study the different modes the fleeing refugees were forced to undertake in the whole process of migration to Cachar.

The fourth chapter basically delves into the recollection of pre-partitioned life represented in novels, literatures and scholarly articles etc. We also attempt to recapture the experiences of the refugees migrated to Cachar about their pre-partitioned life in Sylhet /East Pakistan and simultaneously the trauma they suffered due to violent expulsion from their native land. Adequate tools like oral history and memory of the displaced are used for reconstructing the narration. Since the Bengalis are emotionally attached to their ancestral home and homeland, we propose to study the feelings of the refugees forcibly displaced from their native land.

The implementation of the 3rd June Plan of 1947 triggered off a serious communal violence on both sides of the border which forced people to migrate in large number. In Cachar migration reached to a magnitude after the communal violence of 1950. Consequently, the government had to set up various types of camps to shelter the homeless refugees. In the fifth chapter, we are mainly concerned with the experiences of the refugees in various types of camps. The plight of the women and children as vulnerable refugees will also be studied.
Considering the need of the refugees to integrate in the host society of Cachar, we propose to look at the outside linkage of the camp refugees. Since the refugees experienced exclusion and violent expulsion in their native land and shared the same space within the camp, we propose to study the relation among the refugees in the camps. The languishing of the refugees in the existing Central Destitute Home in Cachar even after six decades of Partition indicates the apathy and insensitivity of the government towards the distressed refugees. Hence, oral interviews help us to study the existential reality of the refugees in the Central Destitute Home at Silchar in Cachar district.

In the sixth chapter, we propose to study the relief and rehabilitation measures chalked out by the government as well as the manner of their implementation. Given the disparity in providing relief and rehabilitation in the East and the West, the dichotomy of the government’s effort in rehabilitation will be studied. Since the Assam government was largely reluctant to accept the Bengali Hindu displaced and in view of the eventual conflict that grew between the Central Government and the Assam Government, we intend to study the inter-government conflict that emerged with the migration of a large number of Bengali Hindu displaced to Assam on the basis of available literature, assembly debates, private papers etc. This chapter also seeks to record the experiences of the refugees in rebuilding their lives in Cachar. In view of humanitarian service extended to the refugees by their friends, relatives, acquaintances, and many dedicated individuals and voluntary organisations, we also intend to study the responses of the non-state actors towards the Partition-induced displaced and the refugees in Cachar.

The seventh chapter attempts to explore the gender-accent of the Partition in a particular geographical area like Cachar. It is found that the women as refugees experienced the impact of the Partition more perniciously. Keeping this in view, this chapter is an attempt to recover the voice of women from the veil of silence to look into the impact of displacement on women Partition victims in Cachar. An attempt will be made to analyse their response in reconstruction of home, families and community in post-colonial period.
1.9 Limitations of the Study

However, the study was pursued with certain limitations – one was that many of the refugees did not survive to share their experiences which could possibly add more dimensions to the study. Hence we had to depend on the surviving refugees located in various refugee concentrated areas of Cachar. Though we could meet a few surviving refugee leaders and their experiences could have been informative and useful but due to their old age memory loss it could not be recovered. We also interviewed second and third generation of children of refugees besides persons related to relief, rehabilitation of refugees etc.

Secondly, though we interviewed women Partition victims, we had to confront certain difficulties. In some cases, the male members of the family considered the experiences of the women irrelevant and hence they were not allowed to speak out. In some other cases, though the women were present during interview especially housewives, but they were ‘unable to share the traumatic incidents’. Hence we could not excavate their experiences. However, the voice of the single women was relatively confident.

The burning of rehabilitation office at Karimganj, Silchar and Hailakandi was mired in mystery. It entailed destruction of relevant papers pertinent to the study. Moreover, the inertia to collect old records also posed as a limitation to the study. The Old Record Room, Deputy Commissioner’s Office at Silchar is in abysmal shape to recover relevant documents relating to Partition and rehabilitation of refugees except a few. It was under such constraints that the study was pursued and completed.

In chapter 8 we intend to summarise the contents and findings of the study.