CHAPTER - VI
ALL INDIA PARTITION POLITICS AND ASSAM MUSLIMS

It has already been stated elsewhere in the preceding chapters that since late 1920s, the Muslim opinion got clearly crystallized into a "united voice" on important political issues concerning their community, such as Sylhet-Bengal Reunion Question and Immigration. It has also been discussed how the issue of immigration got politicised and became the most important socio-political issue of the Assamese people. The issue of immigration also generated communal rivalry between the Hindus and Muslims, with Hindus of both the Valleys opposing the immigration and settlement of Muslim farmers and peasants from Eastern Bengal, mainly from the Mymensingh district, the Muslims of both the Valleys opposing any move to restrict immigration. The situation became worse after the passing of the Lahore Resolution (Pakistan Resolution) by the All India Muslim League in 1940, when the issue of immigration began to be linked with the Muslim League's propaganda of including the province of Assam in the proposed State of Pakistan. The years between 1940-47, therefore, were the years of hectic political activities in Assam marked by the immigration politics, alienation further and further of the two communities - the Hindus and the Muslims, and also due to the impact of All India Partition Politics which was gradually reaching its culminating point towards achieving the partition of the country on the eve of independence in 1947.

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to analyse the impact of All India Partition Politics on Assam with special focus on points or issues like growth of Muslim Separatism and birth of the idea of Pakistan; Muslim League's Demand for including Assam in Pakistan; Cabinet Mission Plan and Anti-grouping Agitation in Assam; and finally the Sylhet Referendum and its aftermath.
6.1. Growth of Muslim Separatism in India and Birth of the Idea of Pakistan: A brief overview:

The origin and growth of 'Muslim Separatism' in modern India is generally traced back to the 2nd half of the 19th century, and more specifically after the end of the Revolt of 1857. It was after the Revolt of 1857, it is observed, that two ideas began to strike roots in the minds of the Muslims - First, a feeling of separateness from other Indians and Second, a fear of Hindu-domination. Such a feeling grew out of the loss of power over India and the emergence of an alien power under whose aegis the principle of majority-rule was to be applied. The play of these two factors upon each other was destined to give birth to the demand for a separate homeland for the Muslim of India. It is observed further that the "feeling of separateness" led to the growth of separate nationalism or separatism and the "fear of Hindu rule" inspired the demand for partition of India.¹

It is to be remembered at the very outset that the fear of 'Hindu-rule' and the growth of the feeling of separatism or "separateness" was not a sudden development but the work of many years. The "fear of Hindu-rule" is said to have fed a series of reforms which led India towards the final reckoning of majority-rule, and the "feeling of separateness" was deepened by the march of political events, the opinions and ideas of political thinkers, and the policies and decisions of politicians. Consequently, the coming of the 1935 constitution and its operation in the congress-led provinces from 1937-1939 is said to have convinced the Muslims that their fear of "Hindu-rule" was not an "empty fear", and that the only practicable solution to this was no less than a complete separation.²

Though the birth of Muslim separatism in modern India is generally attributed to the Post-Mutiny (1857) period, Hindu-Muslim conflict existed even before the

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2. Ibid.
British period, and despite contact, co-operation and mutual influence which are said to have reached their height during reign of Akbar (1542-1605), who attempted a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam, the two communities maintained distinct social as well as religious identities. Side by side, there were Hindu attempts to revive from the Muslim dominance, and after Auranzeb's death in 1707 when Muslim power started disintegrating and alarmed by the growing power of the Hindus under Maratha leadership, the fear of a future Hindu-domination began to haunt the Muslims. It was under such circumstances that the British arrived and slowly but gradually took over reign of the country. Much before the Sepoy Mutiny, in 1838 the orthodox Hindu masses started Hindu Revivalist movements and an organization called Dharma Sabha was founded in order to protect Hindu social customs and religious practices. On the other hand, the Muslims were said to have been equally keen to start strong revivalist movement.3

The Mutiny of 1857 is considered to be a landmark in the history of modern India for many reasons. It was not merely the "First War of Indian Independence", but also a landmark in respect of Hindu-Muslim relations and birth of separatism among the Muslims, as already stated. The British in order to serve their purpose of domination in India after the Mutiny, started to suppress the Muslim rulers of India as during the Mutiny the Muslims were said to have done the more commendable work to overthrow the British Government. For some decades after the Mutiny, the Muslims were the villain and Hindus, the pampered subjects. It was at this juncture that the Indian National Congress took birth in 1885, which did not begin as an organization in opposition to the British-rule, but was founded by Allan Octavian Hume to serve the purpose of a "safety valve" to the colonial administration and consolidation of the union between England and

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3. For details on Hindu-Muslim situation during the period please see Padmasha, Indian National Congress and the Muslims (1928-1947), New Delhi, Rajesh Publications, 1980, pp. 1-3.
India. In brief, for some decades after the revolt, the Muslims were suppressed and the Hindus were the pampered but when the Hindus under the aegis the Congress, began to raise their legitimate demands, "they became suspect and Muslim loyalties were cultivated as a counterpoise." 

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, one of the chief Muslim leaders of the day, is regarded as the pioneer in the direction of giving an organized form to 'Muslim Separatism' in modern India. Though in the beginning, he was a liberal man and stressed on Hindu-Muslim Unity, but subsequently reacting to certain developments, became an ardent advocate of Muslim separatism, and after 1885, frankly appealed to the Muslims to keep away from the congress as he was not convinced with the sincerity of the congress in safeguarding the interests of his co-religionists. The birth of separatism in Syed Ahmed Khan, according to Altaf Hussain Hali, his biographer, may be traced back to the early 1860s when some Hindus of the United Provinces, and particularly of Benares, were demanding replacement of Urdu and Persian script by Hindi and Devnagri script in all courts and government offices. This shocked Syed Ahmed which was considered to be a disregard of Muslim sentiment by the Hindus, according to Hali, and convinced him that it was no longer possible for the Hindus and Muslims to live together as one nation or to join hands together in promoting the interests of their own country. This is referred to as the beginning of his separatist thinking. In 1867, in course of his conversation with Shakespeare, the Commissioner of Benares, Syed Ahmed, prophesied that though there was no acute hostility between the Hindus and the Muslims at that point of time but it would increase immediately. In 1870, he reiterated that in view of the Hindi-Urdu controversy, the two communities would be

4. Ibid., pp. 9-10.
5. Ibid., p. 9.
6. Ibid., pp. 11-14
7. Ibid., p.14; Aziz, op.cit., p.13
8. Aziz, Loc.cit; For details on the conversation also see S.M. Ikram, Indian Muslims and Partition of India, New Delhi, Atlantic Publishers, 1992, p. 32
Once convinced that the Hindus and Muslims had different interests and that more things separated them than joined them, Syed Ahmed never veered round from his course and reiterated this viewpoint in several of his pronouncements. As an ardent advocate of the Muslim interests since late 1860s, Syed Ahmed strongly objected to two main points- First, introduction of competitive examinations for filling up higher posts; and Second, to the introduction of unadulterated democracy. His first objection centered round the fact that if higher services were filled after competitive examinations, the community which had the early start in education would be the gainer and the Muslims would be the greatest losers. His objection to the representative institutions was based on the fact that as the Hindu population was four times as numerous than the Muslims, it would not be possible for the Muslims to safeguard their interests if the principle of number was applied.

Later on, perturbed by certain new developments after the Bombay Riots of 1893, such as insistence of playing of Music before mosques, organization of cow-protection societies etc. which he thought to be a part of the anti-Muslim movement intentionally started by a section of the Hindus, Syed Ahmad's separatist viewpoint got hardened further. He became more deeply perturbed about the future of his co-religionists and began to turn more and more towards Anglo-Muslim alliance to save his community from completely going under. Such state of affairs intensified his fears and he began to wonder "if under the British rule, the Hindus wished to exercise so much pressure against normal civic rights of the Muslims, what would be the state of affairs if the British left India!"

With Sayed Ahmed Khan began the period of Muslim-awakening. Choudhury

10. For details please see Ibid., 43-45.
11. Ibid., p. 47.
12. Quoted in Ibid., p.48.
Khaliqurzzaman called him, the "Father of modern Muslim India" as he gave the Indian Muslims a new cohesion, a new political policy, a new educational programme, and also became "the first prophet of their nationhood." Though Jinnah’s part in the struggle for Pakistan was decisive, but the foundation was laid by Syed Ahmed who of course could not foresee the vision of a separate independent state for the Muslims as it was too early for him to think about the withdrawal of the British rule from India. In the words of Dr. Percival Spear, "In his (Syed Ahmed Khan's) whole attitude was implicit the concept of Pakistan. It only needed the prospect the concept of British withdrawal, something which in his day still seemed remote, to bring it to the surface."

Side by side, at that time there was a different section of the educated and so-called nationalist Muslims, who advocated the Hindu-Muslim unity, and were with the Congress. Badruddin Tyabji was one of them, who was elected President of the Madras Session of the Congress held in 1887. Briefly speaking, there were two schools of Muslim Political thought till 1905. One school, influenced by the ideas of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, and the other, the school of Deobond and the 'Ulema' represented by the nationalist Muslims which supported the view of the congress.

The year 1905 became famous for the Partition of Bengal and the nation-wide anti-partition movement that followed. Although the nationalists believed it to be an attempt to divide the Bengali-speaking people, a section of the Muslims are said to have felt that the creation of the Muslim Majority Eastern Bengal and Assam province would benefit the Muslims. Some Muslim writers also opined that the Anti-Partition Movement took a clear anti-Muslim turn at the hand

14. Quoted in Ibid., p. 60.
15. Quoted in Ibid., (Introduction p.xiii).
of some leaders, and was run and organized on Hindu lines. 17

By that time the Muslims had realized that something should be done to draw the attention of the government towards the grievances of the community. On 30th December'1906, a meeting of the Muslim leaders were held in which on the motion of Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, it was decided to form the All India Muslim League with the main object to protect and advance the political rights and interests of the Muslims of India, and also to cultivate feeling of loyalty to the British government among the Muslims. 18 The year 1906 was a very significant one in the political history of India as in that year the congress for the first time set forth the demand for "Swaraj" (Home-rule). Besides, along with the Muslim League, All India Hindu Mahasabha was also formed in that year. Subsequently, the Muslims were also granted a Separate Electorate on Representation by Lord Minto in 1906. 19

In fact, Aga Khan, a leading figure of the community at that time, made an appeal to Lord Minto for granting separate Electorate. 20 The Muslim League also submitted a memorandum to the Viceroy and demanded adequate representation by means of class-representation for the Muslims in the legislative bodies to be formed. 21 Accordingly, the separate electorates were given constitutional recognition in Indian council Act of 1909 under which the Muslims were accorded not only the right to elect their representatives by separate electorates, but also the right to vote in the general constituencies. Besides, the Muslims were also given the weightage in representation. 22 A.B. Rajput opined that the securing of separate electorates was a great triumph for the Muslims as it meant an extremely important political concession to the Indian Muslims. 23 Most significantly, it had greatly offended the Hindus and brought

17. Ibid., p. 17.
18. For details please see Ibid., p. 18.
22. Ibid.
the two communities into open rivalry. The congress although opposed to it, was not powerful enough to secure its withdrawal. The granting of separate electorates was one of the important factors responsible for the ultimate partition of the country in 1947 as it is said to have "betokened a separatist tendency" among the Muslim who were never ready to compromise on such an important political concession once achieved, and this tendency came in the way of attempts towards solution of communal problems based on Hindu-Muslim lines in the years to come". 

However, as the course of events took a different turn and the Muslim belief in British rule got hurt mainly by two developments, mainly - First, by the revocation of the Partition of Bengal, which shocked at least a section of the Muslims as already stated; and second, by the worsening British-Turk relations which created a general a Anti-British sentiment among the Muslims throughout the world including the Indian Muslims. These circumstances are said to have offered an opportunity to the so-called liberal wing of the Muslim League led by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who tried to bring the League closer to the Congress and to try for working out a compromise formula and was the main architect of the Lucknow Pact of 1916, for which Jinnah was hailed at that point of time as the "Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity". Since then till late 1920s, till 1928 to be specific, Jinnah is said to have made a series of efforts towards bringing the League and the Congress nearer and to bring about a friendly understanding between the Hindus and Muslims on crucial political issues. All his attempts however, were said to have been frustrated by the Hindu Mahasabha leaders who had tremendous influence over the Congress party during that period of time. On the other hand, a section of the Muslim League members were not very happy with the attempts of Jinnah. This became clear when Jinnah joined hands with the Congress to boycott the Simon

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24. For details please see Padmasha, op.cit., p. 21.
25. For details please see Ibid., pp. 21-24.
Commission in 1927, a faction of the League led by Sir Mohd. Shafi and his supporters decided to co-operate with the Simon Commission.  

Besides, the failure for Hindu-Muslim rapprochement attempted by Jinnah, had another background in the province of Punjab where the communal situation was worsened by the Hindu opposition of granting a certain share in services and educational institutions to the Muslims by Fazl-i-Hussain, a prominent Muslim leader of the province, when he became a Minister after the introduction of Dyarchy in the province in 1921. About the same time, there were serious communal riots at Multan, Malabar and other places. Besides, Swami Shradhanand, started a well-organised movement for converting the Muslims to Hinduism, which was resented by the Muslims. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya also started his Hindu Sangthan (Hindu Consolidation) movement which further increased Muslim apprehension.

At the national level, differences arose between Gandhi and the Khilafat leaders (Ali brothers) for Kohat riots. Gandhi and Shaukat Ali enquiring into the riots issued separate statements giving different versions of the same. Besides, the All India Hindu Mahasabha held two sessions at Calcutta and Kanpur on 11th April, 1923 and 29th September 1925 respectively. Lala Lajpat Rai presided over the first session and is said to have condemned the "Lucknow Pact" and declared it to be a mistake on the part of the Congress. He also opposed the scheme of communal representation. Such attitude of the Hindu leadership was strongly condemned by the Muslim League meeting at Aligarh on the 30th December, 1925, under the chairmanship of Abdur Rahman, a former judge of the Madras High Court. To make the situation worse, Swami Shradhanand was assassinated by a young Muslim fanatic.

27. Ikram, op.cit., p. 367; Padmasha, op.cit., p.27.
All these created an atmosphere of ill-will and distrust, which came in the way of Jinnah's communal rapprochement attempts. However, he persisted with his attempts, and on 20th March in a conference of Muslim leaders under his Presidentship the Delhi proposals were formulated.\(^{30}\) It was proposed that the Muslims would agree to come to a compromise on the issue of separate electorates, if certain other crucial demands of the community such as creation of separate Sind Province, giving North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan the same status as other provinces, and adequate representation to Muslims on the proportion of population in Bengal and Punjab, were seriously considered.\(^{31}\) But the Delhi proposals were not accepted by Dr. Moonje, and other Hindu Mahasabha leaders. On the other hand, the Punjab Muslims were not ready to come to a compromise and insisted on separate electorate. In this way, this attempt also met with failure.\(^{32}\)

The year 1928 has its own significance in the study of Muslim separatism in India. It was on 19th May, 1928 that the Nehru Committee under the chairmanship of Pandit Motilal Nehru was appointed to respond to the challenge of Lord Birkinhead to the Indians to formulate a constitution by the Indians, that would be acceptable to all. The Nehru Committee, which submitted its report on 10 August 1928, rejected the most important political concession granted to the Muslims till date i.e, the separate electorates and also the demand of separating Sind from Bombay.\(^{33}\) Jinnah was unhappy with the Nehru Report as it repudiated two of his favourite schemes - the Lucknow Pact and Delhi proposals. He, however, proposed certain amendments to the Nehru Report, and went to Calcutta in December, 1928, where a National convention had been called to finally consider the Nehru report. Here Jinnah again had to face frustration as his proposals were strongly opposed by

\(^{30}\) Ibid., pp. 34-35; Ikram, op.cit., p. 364.
\(^{32}\) Ikram, Loc.cit.
\(^{33}\) Padmasha, op.cit., pp. 40-45.
Hindu Mahasabha delegates led by M.R. Jayakar and also the Sikh delegates, under whose pressure the convention is said to have rejected Jinnah's amendments. Some observers consider the year 1928 as the year of the "parting of ways" between the congress and the Muslim leaders. Specifically, the Nehru Report (1928) and rejection of Jinnah's amendments at the Calcutta Convention is considered to be the "parting of the ways" for Jinnah in the direction of his attempt to bring about a "communal rapprochement" between the Hindus and the Muslims. However, Mushirul Hasan argues that "Calcutta Convention" did not mark the "parting of the ways" as Jinnah continued with his task of bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity till 1929-30. In any way, in May'1929, Jinnah issued his famous "Fourteen Points" which included almost all the major Muslim demands of the day, the basic motive behind it was to gather unanimity among all sections of the Muslims on the basic demands.

In this way, the two communities got alienated further and further and realizing the impracticability of a possible solution of the Communal problem, some suggestions for bringing about a permanent solution to the Hindu-Muslim problem through a division of the territories began to appear in the 1920s, and such proposals and schemes of partition of the country continued to appear in the 1930s as well, which ultimately got culminated in the demand for partition of India and creation of a separate State of Pakistan for the Muslims of India in the way of formal recognition of the same by the All India Muslim League in its Lahore Session of 1940.

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34. For details please see Mushirul Hasan, Nationalism and Communal Politics in India (1885-1930), New Delhi, Manohar Publishers, 2000, pp. 272-74.
35. Please see Padmasha, op.cit p.30; Ikram, op.cit., p. 367.
37. Please see the "Fourteen Points" as reproduced in Padmasha, op.cit., pp. 57-58.
6.2. **Schemes and Proposals for Partition of India and Origin of the Demand for Pakistan:**

The first Indian Muslim proposal for solving the Hindu-Muslim problem by some kind of territorial re-arrangement, is said to have come from Abdul Halim Sharar, a well known Muslim novelist, in 1890. In a journal titled "Muhazzib" (edited from Lucknow) dated 23rd August'1890, he proposed a "partition of India into Hindu and Muslim provinces" and exchange of population. 38 In 1899, Theodre Morrison, an Englishman, a close friend of Syed Ahmed Khan, who later on became the Principal of Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College at Aligarh, contemplated future of Indian Muslims on separatist lines. 39

In 1920s, the communal situation deteriorated and many such proposals began to arrive into the forefront. In fact, after the fading away of the "Khilafat zeal", those Hindus who had criticized the congress for allyng with the Khilafat conference and for being associated with a purely Muslim agitation, who are also referred to as the revivalists, now came out with "Shuddhi" and "Sangthan" movements which aimed at converting the Muslims who had once been the Hindus, to their old faith and at strengthening Hindu social and Political structure. The Muslims retaliated with "Tabligh" and "Tanzim" movements which aimed at preaching of Islam and consolidation of Muslim unity respectively. 40

As a result, the communal situation deteriorated further which got reflected in the aggressive statements from both sides. For instance, Swami Birajik is said to have stated on 1st May'1924 - "The struggle for Swaraj is mainly a struggle of Hindus" 41 Again, on 26th March'1925, Lala Har Dayal, another Hindu revivalist is said to have stated - "In the Punjab and Hindustan, the two communities cannot

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38. For details please see Aziz, op.cit., pp. 42-43.
39. For details please see Ibid., pp. 47-48; Also Padmasha, op.cit., p. 29.
41. Swami Sat Deo Pari Birjik, in 'Tej' of Delhi, 1st May, 1924, quoted in Ibid., p. 106.
live together. Either all Hindus should accept Islam, or all the Muhammadans should be made Hindus by conversion".\footnote{Lala Har Dayal, in 'Tej' (Delhi), 26 March, 1925, quoted in Ibid., p. 107.} Again, in June, 1925, he stated, "If India ever gets liberty, we will have Hindu Raj here".\footnote{Lala Har Dayal, in 'Milap' (Lahore), 23 June, 1925, quoted in Ibid p. 108.} Then in the same year, he is said to have declared that the future of India would rest on the pillars such as- Hindu Sanghathan, Hindu Raj, Shuddhi of Muslims, and conquest and Shuddhi of Afghanistan.\footnote{The Times of India, 25 July, 1925, quoted in Ibid., pp. 108-09.} The Muslims on the other hand, went on strongly reacting against such statements from time to time. In this Presidential Address to the Aligarh Session of the All India Muslim League, Sir Abdur Rahim bitterly complained against the Hindu threats and warned that the "Mussalmans would be too big a mouthful for their Hindu friends to swallow."\footnote{Quoted in Aziz, op.cit., p. 110.} Such statements and counter-statements from both sides continued to reproduce the atmosphere in which current and later separatist plans were thought of and publicized.

In the March and April, 1920 issues of an Urdu Journal called "Zulquarnain" published from Badayun, United provinces, an open letter to Mahatma Gandhi from a Muslim who called himself Abdul Qadir Bilgrami, was published, in which the author advocated a partition of India.\footnote{Ibid pp. 99-100; In another source the letter is dated as April, 1921, please see Padmasha Loc.cit.} The letter was later on published in December'1925 which contained a detailed scheme of partition of India on the basis of majority principle. His scheme proposed mainly the areas of the North-Western India, Sind (as separated from Bombay), and Eastern Bengal to be included in a Separate State for the Muslims.\footnote{For details on the scheme please see Aziz op.cit., pp. 100-103.} Some teachers and students of the Aligarh Muslim University prepared a scheme of partition on the same lines in 1925 which is called the First Aligarh Scheme (1925).\footnote{Ibid., p. 150.} In his Presidential address to the Ahmedabad Session of the All India Muslim League in December'1921,
Hasrat Mohani also spoke in terms of separation of Muslims from Hindus and proposed that the Muslim fear of Hindu majority after the British withdrawal could be removed by the creation of an Indian Republic with formally demarcated Hindu Majority and Muslim majority provinces so that one group would act as balance against the other. Mohani, however, did not visualize the scheme of complete separation and partition of India.

From the other side, Bhai Paramand, who belonged to the so-called orthodox school and the right wing of Hindu politics and one of the founders of the All India Hindu Mahasabha, wrote a book titled "Arya Samaj aur Hindu Sangathan" published in 1923 from Lahore, in which he stated that Hindu-Muslim Unity was unthinkable. He, therefore, proposed that India could be "partitioned in such a manner as to secure the supremacy of Islam in one Zone and that of Hinduism in the other." This is referred to as the first clear proposal for a partition of India on religious lines, put forward by a Hindu. After him, Lala Lajpat Rai, one of the leading lights in the history of freedom struggle in India, is said to have proposed a partition of India on Hindu-Muslim lines on the basis of the majority principle. His proposal is considered to be a landmark in the evolution of the idea of Pakistan, as he clearly proposed a Muslim zone that would include North West Frontier Province, Western Punjab, Sind and Eastern Bengal. All these areas subsequently became components of the Muslim League's demand for a separate Muslim state called Pakistan which was actually created in 1947 as a result of partition of India.

49. Ibid., pp. 112-13, Padmasha Loc.cit.
50. Aziz, op.cit., p. 79; Also see Padmasha, Loc.cit.
52. Aziz, op.cit., p. 80.
53. Ibid., p. 145; Lala Lajpat Rai, like Bhai Paramanand is said to have propounded that the Hindu-Muslim unity was an unthinkable plan. Please see Padmasha Loc.cit.
54. The details of the partition Scheme of Lala Lajpat Rai is published in an article in the Tribune (Lahore) dated 14 December, 1924, cited in Aziz, op.cit., pp.145-146. Please see the speeches as quoted in Ibid., pp. 138-141, 159-61.
The second half of 1920s witnessed sharper communal rivalries and as a result, more and more separatist plans appeared as the decade drew to its close. To make the situation worse, the so-called right wing Hindus continued with their Shuddhi and Sangathan campaigns and the provocative speeches. The Muslim response in the systematic form came from Fazal Karim Khan Durani, an Ahmadi Missionary, and a journalist, who wrote a book titled "The Future of Islam in India" published in February'1929, in which he put forward in a straight forward manner that "Hindu-Muslim Unity" was impossible, and seeing the events that took place in last ten years and worsening communal situations, came to the conclusion that the dream of a "Muslim India" was the only alternative left to the Muslims of India. It is observed that Durani's ideas might have influenced the contents of Iqbal's Allahabad Address in December'1930, and later on Rahmat Ali's formulations of separate Muslim State in 1933, 1935 and afterwards.

The Allahabad Session of the All India Muslim League in December'1930 is a landmark in the history of India in general and in the history of partition of India and creation of Pakistan in particular. It was in that session on 29 December'1930 that Iqbal delivered his historic presidential address which was definitely to give a new direction to the history of the sub-continent. In his address, he gave call for the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State. In course of the address he stated: "I would like to see the Punjab, NWFP, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state. Self-government with the British Empire, or without the British empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims at least of North West India".

55. Please see the speeches as quoted in Ibid., pp. 138-141, 159-61.
57. Ibid., pp. 165-66. The view is based, as admitted, only on the circumstantial evidence.
A controversy persists among the historians as to whether Iqbal suggested the Muslim State within Indian federation, or an independent sovereign Muslim State. In fact, the above statement has been differently interpreted by different historians. Whatever it may be, in the years to follow, his statement was publicized in such a manner that it created a momentum, a force which could be gradually utilized towards demanding an independent and sovereign homeland for the Muslims of the country.

From 1930 to 1940, many other schemes and proposals were planned by thinkers, intellectuals and politicians, mainly Muslims, which include - A Punjabi’s Scheme, Aligarh Professors' Scheme, Choudhury Rahmat Ali's Scheme, S.A. Latif’s Scheme, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan's Scheme, etc. Of all these, Rahmat Ali’s name deserves special mention as he occupies a very important place in the struggle for an independent homeland for the Muslims of India, and also in the development of the idea of Pakistan. Some writers even go to the extent of describing him as the author and the originator of the idea of Pakistan. When he was a law student at Cambridge, he issued a pamphlet titled "Now or Never: Are we to live or perish for Ever?" on 28 January, 1933, addressed to the world on behalf of the 30 Million Muslims of North-West India, in which he put forward a scheme for a fully independent sovereign Muslim State. The homeland of these Muslims was defined in the first sentence as "PAKSTAN", by which it was meant, "the five Northern Units of India, viz, Punjab, North-West Frontier Province (Afghan Province), Kashmir, Sind and Baluchistan." Although this scheme is said to have been dismissed initially by the Muslim delegates in the First Round Table conference at London as a "Students' Scheme", Rahmat Ali and his friends at

59. For details on the controversy, please see the chapter titled "The Allahabad Myth: 1930" in Ibid., pp. 224-281.
60. Padmasha, op.cit., p. 62. For details on all these schemes (1930-40), please see Aziz, op.cit., (Vol-II) pp. 328-609.
London continued with their sincere efforts throughout the years from 1933-1940, to convince the Muslim leadership to fight for the realization of an independent homeland for the Muslims.\textsuperscript{62} Though there is a controversy as to whether Rahmat Ali was actually the originator or author of Pakistan, it is generally accepted that he was the life and soul of the original efforts for popularisation of the demand for Pakistan.\textsuperscript{63}

In the Indian political scenario on the other hand, after the failure of Jinnah's mission of Hindu- Muslim Unity, as already stated, he was broken by heart though he is said to have continued with his efforts till 1930 when he went to London to attend the First Round Table conference in 1930, and perhaps from then and there his journey as Muslim separatist started. He stayed in London for some years and returned to India in October'1935. Before his return, he was elected permanent President of the All India Muslim League in 1934. During 1935-36 Jinnah began the process of reorganizing the League organization in view of the elections of 1937 under the Government of India Act'1935. In the elections however, the League failed to make any headway against firmly entrenched provincial parties.\textsuperscript{64} The result of the elections of 1937 revealed that neither the League nor the congress could claim to represent the Muslims and that Muslim Politics till that time remained obstinately provincial. The League won only 109 of 482 seats reserved for the Muslims. However, the results did reveal the strength of the congress as an All India movement in general constituencies by winning 716 out of 1161 general constituencies it contested. Besides, of the 11 provinces of British India, congress secured a clear majority in six and emerged as the single largest party in three others.\textsuperscript{65} Thus, success of the Congress and failure of the League in the reserved constituencies changed the attitude of the Congress leadership in relation to the

\textsuperscript{62} For details please see Ibid pp. 343-372.
\textsuperscript{63} For details please see Aziz op.cit., (Vol-II) pp. 345, 372, 380; Also Ikram, op.cit pp. 176-79.
\textsuperscript{64} Ikram, op.cit., pp. 373-76.
League. The Congress seemed nowhere near to recognizing League as an organization representing the interest of the Muslims of the country after the election result. The congress leadership is also alleged to have badly treated the League leadership in the United Provinces by imposing harsh conditions in course of the Ministry formation after Elections, when some members of the league wanted to join the Ministry by forming coalition.66

All these developments led to further bitterness in the relationship between the Hindus and Muslims, and ultimately the Muslim League decided to set its agenda straight on 23rd March'1940 at the historic Lahore Session of the All India Muslim League, in which the famous "Lahore Resolution" or "Pakistan Resolution" was adopted which formally demanded a separate homeland for the Muslims of India by means of partition of the country on the basis of the two-nation theory, as the Muslims were, as Jinnah asserted in his Presidential address, a nation by any definition of the term.67 The Resolution moved by Fazlul Haque, the Chief Minister of Bengal and supported by principal Muslim leaders from all provinces, became the guiding star of the Muslim India in the years to come.68 The years following the Lahore Resolution saw a steady consolidation of the Muslim League's power and of Jinnah's personal position, who was gradually attaining the position of a 'rallying post' around which the Muslim leadership as well as masses, were to revolve in the coming years. The League was able to bring within its fold not only the Muslim provincial politicians but also many hitherto non-political Muslims.69 After the passing of the Lahore Resolution, Jinnah's course became quite clear. He strove for the achievement of an independent separate State for the Muslims of India, with the same tenacity of purpose with which some years earlier, he had

68. Ikram, op.cit., p.384.
69. For details please see Hardy op.cit., pp. 233-35.
pursued his dream of Hindu-Muslim Unity. In short, after 23rd March’1940, all his efforts, interviews, speeches, negotiations and strategic moves were inspired by one idea i.e., to achieve a separate state for the Muslims. 70

The first indication that the Indian Muslims were nearing their goal of a separate homeland, came in March’1942, when the British government, alarmed by the war situation, sent Sir Stafford Cripps, with a set of proposals, called Cripps Offer, which provided for Indian independence after the War and conceded the right of self-determination to the provincial units. As under the proposals, the provinces were free to remain within India or opt out of the Indian union, the Muslim majority provinces could presumably form their own federation in due course. 71 Although the Cripps proposals were rejected by both the congress and the League, it was considered to be a milestone on the road to Pakistan as V.P. Menon observed that the British government's declaration of 1942 (Cripps offer) "was really a death-blow to Indian unity". 72 After the failure of the Cripps Mission, the Congress launched the Quit India Movement which was followed by the arrest of many important leaders including Gandhi. This was followed by a lull in the constitutional activities till the end of the Second World War. 73

After the war, the Labour Party came to power in Britain in July, 1945. Determined to seek a settlement of the Indian question, the Labour government decided to first test the Indian opinion by holding general elections in India. While the congress claimed that it had the support of all sections of the Indian public, the Muslim League claimed that it represented an overwhelming majority of the Muslim community. The League fought the elections on the single issue of achievement of Pakistan. The result of the elections held at the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946, was a single victory for the All India Muslim League in the Muslim

70. Ikram, op.cit., p. 385.
71. Ibid., pp. 385-86.
73. Ikram, Loc.cit.
constituencies. It won all the thirty seats reserved for Muslims in the Central Legislative Assembly, and 469 out of 494 seats reserved for the Muslims in the Provincial Assemblies under separate electorate system. Although the congress scored an equally overwhelming victory in the general constituencies, yet by its election results the League made good its claim to represents the Muslims. 74

After the elections, the newly elected Muslim Legislators met at a convention on 8, 9, 10 April'1946 at Delhi and the main resolution moved by Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy marked the final crystallisation of the Muslim demand, and indicated the lines on which Pakistan actually came into being in 1947, thereby removing the confusion regarding the ultimate destination or homeland for the Muslims of the Country, which was not made fully clear in the Lahore Resolution of 1940.75 It was resolved that "the zone comprising Bengal and Assam in the North-East, and the Punjab, North-West-Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan in the North-West of India, namely, Pakistan Zones, where the Muslims are in a dominant majority, be constituted into a sovereign independent State."76

In order to seek a solution of the Indian Problem, the Labour government in Britain, sent a Cabinet Mission to India on 23rd March'1946, consisting of three senior Ministers, viz A.V. Alexander, Sirs Stafford Cripps and Lord Pathick Lawrence. Both the congress and the League placed their cases before the Cabinet Mission. The Cabinet Mission published its scheme on 16 May'1946, and under the formula suggested, India was not be partitioned and there was to be one Central Government to deal with Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications. However, the Muslim League's demand was partially met by the formation of provincial groups through a grouping scheme, and by providing that the group governments could deal with such subjects as were delegated to them by the

74. For details please see Ibid., pp. 386-87 ; Hardy, op.cit., pp. 234-336.
75. For details please see Ikram, op.cit., p. 388.
76. Quoted in Ibid.
Provinces. The Mission also accepted that majority of the subjects would be treated at the provincial level and therefore, the Muslims in the majority provinces would thus exercise almost complete autonomy. The Cabinet Mission, thus, thought that the arrangement would give complete assurance to the Muslim minority, and satisfy all legitimate fears of the League.\footnote{Ibid., p. 389; For details please see Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, India Wins Freedom, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1988 (1993 reprint) pp. 145-158; Also see for details on the Cabinet Mission Plan, 'Statement by the Cabinet Delegation and His Excellency the Viceroy' as reproduced in Political History of Assam, (Vol-III), A.C. Bhuyan and Sibapada Dey (eds), Gauhati, Govt. of Assam, 1980, pp. 371-385 (Appendix-I).}

Initially Jinnah was completely opposed to the plan but later on he realised that as the partition was totally unacceptable to the Mission, the scheme presented by the Mission, was the maximum that the League could secure at that point of time. Ultimately he was able to convince the League Council to accept the plan. The congress also accepted the same on 26th June'1946.\footnote{For details please see Azad, op.cit, pp. 157-58.} The acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan by both the Congress and the League was according to Manlma Abul Kalam Azad, "a glorious event in the in the history of the freedom movement in India."\footnote{Ibid., p. 158.} After a few days, however, "happened one of those unfortunate events which changed the course of history" according to Azad. On 10th July'1946 at a Press Conference, Jawaharlal Nehru as the President of the Congress, declared "that the Congress had agreed only to participate in the Constituent Assembly and regarded itself free to change or modify the Cabinet Mission Plan as it thought best."\footnote{Please see Ibid., pp. 164-65.} Thus, the Congress though accepted the Plan but tried to put forward its own interpretation on the terms of the Plan.\footnote{Ikram, op.cit., p. 389.} This naturally came as a shock to the League which had accepted the Plan only under duress. Accordingly, the League Council met at Bombay on 27th July'1946 under the Presidentship of Jinnah and after a long discussion of three days passed a resolution rejecting the Cabinet Plan.\footnote{Ibid., p. 158.}
Mission Plan and deciding to resort to "Direct Action" for the achievement of Pakistan.\footnote{Azad, op.cit., pp. 166-67.} Jinnah also accused the Viceroy of double standard and on 31st July'1946, rejected the latter's offer's to join the Executive Council.\footnote{Ikram, Loc.cit.}

The Viceroy was, however, permitted to form the government with the Congress alone in case the Muslim League refused to join the government, and on 12th August a communiqué was issued to the effect that Nehru had accepted the Viceroy's invitation to join the government. This greatly heightened the mounting communal tension but the "Direct Action Day" which the League had fixed for 16th August'1946, passed off peacefully throughout the Country except in Calcutta where Hindus objected to the 'hartal' organised by the League and clashes led to serious Hindu-Muslim riots which were followed by a chain reaction in Noakhali and some other districts of East Bengal. On 2nd September' 1946, the Interim government was formed with the Congress's participation alone, and Nehru became the Vice President in the Viceroy's Executive Council.\footnote{Ibid., p. 390.} The League was not only disappointed but enraged and felt that it had been let down by the British Government. There was further bitterness and trouble throughout the country and Viceroy Wavell felt that the troubles would not stop and his program for carrying out the Cabinet Mission plan would not succeed unless the League joined the government. He, therefore, made several attempts to persuade Jinnah and ultimately succeeded in his attempts. As a result, on 15th October'1946, the League decided to join the Interim government. Accordingly, the Interim government was reconstituted with the inclusion of five Muslim League nominees.\footnote{For details please see Azad, op.cit., pp. 175-77.}

However, the way the congress is said to have behaved in course of the reconstitution of the Interim government and allocation of portfolios, increased
further bitterness and distrust. As per the suggestion of the Viceroy, one of the major portfolios was to go the League nominees. As Nehru and Patel were not ready to leave the External Affairs and Home Departments, ultimately "Finance" was offered to the League with the belief "that the League would not be able to manage Finance and would have to decline the offer" 86 To the surprise of the congress, the League accepted the offer on getting strong words of encouragement from some Muslim officers of the Finance Department, and Liyakat Ali Khan whom Jinnah nominated as the Chief League Representative in the Government, became the Finance Member. Being the Finance Member he obtained possession of the key to the government and his persistent interference made it difficult for any congress Member to function effectively. As a result, internal dissension broke out within the Government, and went on increasing. This was bound to happen as the reconstituted Interim Government was born in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust between the congress and the League. 87

Despite the fact that the congress and the League had joined the Interim government, the issue of the full acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan by the Congress was not yet settled. To work out a final settlement, the British Prime Minister Attlee made one more attempt and invited the Viceroy and the Congress and League representatives to meet in London. Accordingly, Nehru, on behalf of the Congress, Jinnah and Liyakat Ali Khan on behalf of the Muslim League, and Baldev Singh representing the Sikhs, went to London and discussions were held from 3 to 6 December but did not yield any result. The major point of disagreement was about the interpretation of the clauses relating to "grouping" in the Cabinet Mission Plan. Jinnah asserted that the Constituent Assembly had no right to change the structure of the plan. He also held that "Grouping" was an essential part of the

86. Ibid., p.178.
87. For details please see Ibid., pp. 79.
Plan and any change regarding grouping would alter the basis of the agreement. But the Congress was not ready to accept this viewpoint. 88

After that the British Prime Minister Attlee was convinced that a stage had been reached where it was necessary to take a clear cut decision. He, therefore, made a statement on 20 February'1947 in the House of Commons, in which it was made clear that the British would quit India by June,1948 and at that time would decide whether to handover power to one Central Government or more, or to individual provinces in certain areas. This was, in fact, the hint at the partition of India, and was virtually the end of the Cabinet Mission Plan. Lord Wavell, however, was opposed to the declaration of a date and wished to persist with the Cabinet Mission Plan unless the Communal question was settled. Failing to convince the Prime Minister Attlee on this point, he had to offer resignation. 89

Soon after the declaration of the Prime Minister in the House of Commons, Lord Mountbatten was appointed Viceroy and Governor General of India, who came to India on 22nd March'1947 and was sworn in as the Viceroy and Governor General on 24th March'1947. He came with the instructions from the Prime Minister that power must be transferred before 30th June'1948 and accordingly in a speech immediately after the Swearing-in-ceremony, he hinted at the need of reaching a solution within coming few months. On taking over the charge, he started consultations with the leaders of different political parties. Their proposals, suggestions and viewpoints were being thoroughly discussed by him with his advisers. Ultimately, he was able to evolve a plan which was finally accepted by all the parties, which led to the Partition of India. 90

In moving ahead with his scheme of partition, Mounbatten was aided by certain factors, mainly the deteriorating communal situation throughout the country

89. Azad, op.cit., p. 190; Also see for details Ikram, op.cit pp. 396-97.
and the deadlock between the Congress and the League Members within the Executive Council. Taking advantage of the situation, he gradually gave a new turn to the political problem and tried to impress on both the Congress and the League the inevitability of partition. He pleaded in favour of Pakistan and sowed the seeds of the idea in the minds of the Congress members of the Executive Council, who were, till his arrival, openly opposed to the idea. With immense power of persuasive skill, he was able to persuade Patel, Nehru, and with the help of both even Gandhi to accept his scheme of partition.91

Finally, as a result of the agreement to which Nehru on behalf of the congress, Jinnah on behalf of the League and Sardar Baldev Singh on behalf of the Sikhs, gave public expression through broadcasts on All India Radio, the Mountbatten Plan was announced on 3 June’1947. Under the plan, steps were to be taken to ascertain the wishes of the representatives of Sind, West Punjab, NWFP, East Bengal and the district of Sylhet in Assam, and as they all declared themselves in favour of a separate federation i.e. Pakistan, the task of Division of assets of the Government of undivided India and determination of exact boundaries of the two dominions was taken in hand.92 Shortly after this, it was decided that the Indian dominion would come into existence on 15th August’1947 and the Muslim League decided that Pakistan should be constituted a day earlier on 14th August’1947. Accordingly, on 14th August Lord Mountbatten went to Karachi to formally inaugurate the dominion of Pakistan and returned the next day and at Twelve midnight on 15th August, the Indian dominion was born.93

In this way, the partition of India into two self-governing dominions viz. India and Pakistan finally became a reality.

The above analysis of the growth of Muslim Separatism in India and its

91. Maulana Azad presents a very nice account of how Mountbatten persuaded Patel, Nehru and the even Gandhi to accept his Plan of Partition. For details please see Azad, op.cit., pp. 197-204.
92. Ikram, op.cit., p. 403.
93. Ibid; For details please see Azad, op.cit., pp. 223-224.
impact on Indian Politics in the pre-independence period, reveals that the fear of Hindu-rule and the feeling of separateness, as already referred to, at the very outset, were the main factors that gradually worked so deeply in the minds of the Muslims that they began to demand partition and a separate homeland. However, such feeling and fear were the work of many years which were being systematically projected for the first time by Syed Ahmed Khan since 1867 and were deepened as has been shown as the days passed, with the march of political events, the alleged insularility, indifference and arrogance of the Congress on occasions, the opinion and ideas of political thinkers, and the policies and decisions of the politicians. Finally, the operation of 1935 constitution (i.e. Government of India Act, 1935) in India from 1937 to 1939, and even after that till 1947, proved that it was no longer possible for the so-called "two nations" to work together under a common polity and also convinced the Muslims that the only practicable way out of the Hindu-Muslim problem was nothing short than that of complete separation, and ultimate result was the creation of Pakistan, as a separate independent state for the Muslims of India.

In the next section an attempt has been made to analyse the impact of All India Partition politics on Assam with special reference to Muslim League's demand for Including Assam in Pakistan.

6.3. Assam in Muslim Geopolitics - An Analysis of the Muslim League Demand of Including Assam in Pakistan:

Since its creation, the province of Assam has never been a Muslim majority area, still it became a part of Muslim Geopolitics in the pre-independence period and on the eve of independence and partition of the country constituted one of major components of the proposed State of Pakistan, as demanded by the All India Muslim League. Perhaps, the Geographical location of the province having close connections with the Muslim-majority Eastern Bengal, and large scale
immigration of the East-Bengal farmers in the Brahmaputra Valley districts, as discussed in earlier chapters, might have prompted the prospect of Assam's inclusion in the Muslim zone of Eastern Bengal. The first official recognition of such a proposal came in the form of partition of Bengal (1905) and the creation of the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. In a statement made at Dacca on 18 February, 1904, Lord Curzon, claimed that he was carving out a Muslim Province through the partition of Bengal. Of course, the significance of the statement, it is observed, "was little understood except among a few educated men of the community" at that point of time. Subsequently, after having the taste of majority in Eastern Bengal and Assam, the creation of which was very enthusiastically hailed by large section of educated Muslims, the annulment of partition dissatisfied many of them. It is quite understandable, therefore, that many prominent Muslims of both Eastern Bengal and Assam worked hard for the achievement of Pakistan, and also for the inclusion of Assam in the proposed state of Pakistan when Assam was formally declared by the All India Muslim League to be a component part of the proposed Muslim State of Pakistan.

The schemes for the solution of the Hindu-Muslim communal tangle through a division of the country, the most serious and systematic of which mainly appeared in the 1920s and 1930s till the passing of the Lahore Resolution by the All India Muslim League, have already been discussed in the last section of this chapter. Here it is pertinent to have a brief look at some of those proposals which have projected Assam as a part of the Muslim zone with Eastern Bengal, long before the Muslim League formally declared Assam to be the part of All India Muslim geo-politics. Lord Curzon had shown the way long back in 1905, how a Muslim majority zone can be constituted in Eastern and North-East India by

95. Kar, Loc.cit.
tagging Assam with the Muslim majority zone of Eastern Bengal, for which he is described, in the context of Eastern Bengal and Assam, as the first voice of "Muslim Separatism". Although, the partition of Bengal was annulled in 1911, the prospect of a Muslim zone consisting Eastern Bengal and Assam began to get reflected in the writings of political thinkers, scholars and intellectuals and later on the views of political leaders, mainly of the proponents of the idea of a separate state for the Muslims of the country.

In between 1930 and 1940, many schemes were formulated, as already stated, to solve the communal tangle between the Hindus and the Muslims through a division of the country into Hindu and Muslims zones, and in many such schemes Assam was included in the Muslim zone of North-Eastern India along with Bengal.

One such scheme which deserves special mention was formulated by Rahmat Ali (who has already been referred to as one of the founders of Pakistan Movement in the last section) in 1937 in which he divided India into several zones envisaging three independent Muslim states-Pakistan (North-West Muslim zone); Bang-i-Islam (Bengal and Assam); and Usmanistan (Hyderabad-Deccan). Some other schemes envisaging Assam in the Muslim zone included First Latif Schemes (1938) formulated by Dr. Sayyid Abdul Latif of Hyderabad, Aligarh Professors' Scheme (1939) which included Sylhet district of Assam in the Muslim zone, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan's Scheme (1939), Nawab of Mamdot's scheme (1939); etc.

During the same period 1930-40, some other plans and schemes having due reference of a North-Eastern Muslim zone with Assam as a component part came out. Some of these include Choudhury Khaliquzzaman's Scheme, B.R. Ambedkar's scheme, Malik Feroz Khan Noon's Scheme, Chakravarty Raja Gopalachari's formula, the scheme framed by Jamiluddin, the scheme framed by Professor Nafis Ahmed of

96. Choudhury Khaliquzzaman, Pathway to Pakistan, p. 238, cited in Ibid.
97. For details please see Aziz op.cit., (Vol-II), pp. 361-372.
98. For details on such schemes please see Ibid., pp. 431-612.
As already discussed in the last section, after the Lahore Resolution of the All India Muslim League, passed on 23rd March, 1940, partition of India became the official objective of the League. However, the Resolution had outlined only the basic principles of division and did not specifically define and demarcate the limits of Pakistan Provinces. Further, the clarification regarding Assam's inclusion in the Eastern zone of Pakistan was given much later. According to one author, the goal of an independent and sovereign state for the Muslims, was not made specifically clear in the Lahore Resolution and such a confusion was removed at a convention of the newly elected Muslim legislators after the 1946 elections, who met at Delhi on 8, 9, and 10 April, 1946. The convention resolved that "the zones comprising Bengal and Assam in the North-East, and Panjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan in the North-West of India, namely, Pakistan zones, where the Muslims are in a dominant majority, be constituted into a sovereign independent state".

A confusion persists as to the exact date and year when the Muslim League specifically came forward with its demand to include Assam in the proposed state of Pakistan, as there is no agreement among writers and historians on this point. According to one author, in 1940, before the adoption of the Lahore Resolution, Jinnah claimed Assam to be a Muslim Province. Another writer observed that till the end of 1942, Jinnah was not an advocate for the inclusion of entire Assam in Pakistan. Still there is another writer who claimed that by 1944, there was no doubt that Jinnah had decided to demand the province of Assam as a whole as would be revealed by his correspondence with Gandhiji. It was also claimed that

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99. Please see Kar, op.cit., pp. 297-301.
100. Ikram, op.cit., p. 388.
101. Quoted in Ibid.
103. Ibid.
Gandhiji had conceded that the North-Western and Eastern zones of Pakistan would consist of the six provinces including Assam, as claimed by Jinnah\(^\text{104}\). But this view can be refuted as Jinnah seemed to be a little bit confused with regard to claim over the whole of Assam till the close of 1945, as he had said on 25 December, 1945, in the preface to a book:

"There is one difficulty in including Assam as a whole. The proportion of the minority population will be raised from 30 to 38% or more if the Eastern Pakistan included the whole of Assam. Moreover, it will not be possible to defend the inclusion of Assam in this stage on the principle of self-determination"\(^\text{105}\).

However, his visit to Assam in March, 1946, is said to have removed his half-heartedness and confusion on the issue of Assam's inclusion in Pakistan. He was perhaps impressed by the enthusiasm and success of the League in the election to the Provincial Assembly, which won all but three seats reserved for the Muslims. In overall, it is suggested that the enthusiasm of the Muslims of Sylhet and Brahmaputra valley shown during Jinnah's visit in March, 1946, must have influenced the Resolution in clearly including Assam in the proposed 'Pakistan' state, passed in the Muslim League Legislators' Convention in 1946.\(^\text{106}\)

Thus, it may be derived that though the demand for Assam's inclusion in the Muslim India or Muslim zone, was continuously made from time to time, since 1930s, the specific clarification regarding Muslim League's demand of including the whole of the Province of Assam, came in the Muslim League Legislators' Convention held in Delhi in April, 1946.

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105. Quoted in Kar, op.cit.,p.302; Also see B.J.Dev and D.K.Lahiri, Assam Muslims: Politics and Cohesion, New Delhi, Mittal,1985,p.21 (foot note-12).
106. For details please see Ibid., pp. 301-304.
6.4. Why Muslim League Demanded Assam? - An analysis of the basis for the demand:

    Whatever may be the controversy with regard to the exact date or year of the Muslim League's recognition of Assam as a part of Pakistan, the fact of the matter is that the demand was being raised, at least since late 1930s, by the authors, writers, activists, politicians and also the League supporters, as already discussed. The vital question which arises is - What was the basis on which the demand for Assam's inclusion in the proposed state of Pakistan was made?

    Though the Lahore Resolution did not specify the areas to be included in the future Muslim state, it did claim that the Muslims were numerically in a majority in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India. In answering the question raised above, the view of an English author who advanced three reasons for the Muslim League's demand for Assam's inclusion in Pakistan may be referred to.

    First, Assam was claimed because of its geographical situation, of having close links with the Muslim Majority Eastern Bengal;

    2nd, the problem of Muslim immigrants and eviction policy of the Congress Government in the Province made the whole question a part of the battle cry for Pakistan; and

    3rd, it was also necessary to include substantial areas in which Muslims were in the minority in order to make Pakistan administratively and economically viable.\(^\text{107}\)

    Besides the above, some other reasons are also traceable from the views of Jinnah who is said to have stated:

    "True independence can only come by Pakistan with separate Muslim state or states in North Western and Eastern sections where Muslims are 75% of the population".\(^\text{108}\) He is said to have stated further in October, 1943 that the majority

^{108}\) Quoted in Rajendra Prasad, India Divided, P. 221, cited in Ibid.
of the non-Muslim population in Assam were tribal people\textsuperscript{109}. Again, in the preface of a book, he observed:

"Some persons say that the Eastern Pakistan state should comprise the whole of Assam as it will provide in this way abundant scope for the absorption of its surplus population. Eastern Bengal is gradually expanding and if no restrictions are placed on future immigration into Assam, in due course the Bengalee element in its population will entirely dominate the native Assamese. Even now the Bengalees form a majority of population in Assam"\textsuperscript{110}.

All the above reasons got well reflected in the arguments put forward in support of Assam's inclusion in the Eastern Wing of Pakistan by a Muslim organization styled as East Pakistan Renaissance society, formed at Calcutta on 30 August, 1942, with the aim of preaching, encouraging and promoting the idea of Pakistan and its future realisation\textsuperscript{111}. The East Pakistan Renaissance Society demanded Assam for the Eastern Wing of Pakistan, and advanced the following arguments in justification of their demand -

First, Assam was within the zone where Muslims were in a majority.

Second, majority of the non-Muslims in Assam where Tribal people.

Third, Eastern Bengal districts were literally expanding to Assam due to migration of the agriculturists, mainly Muslims, from the bordering Bengal districts to uncultivated parts of Assam.

Fourth, Muslims constituted 51\% of the total population, and minus tribals, they constituted more than sixty five percent of the population.

Fifth, East Pakistan must have sufficient land for its huge population and Assam would give it sufficient scope for expansion.

Sixth, The Eastern Pakistan needed Assam to be financially and economically

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110. Quoted in Ibid.
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111. Morning News, 1 September, 1942, cited in Ibid., pp. 305-06.
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strong as Assam had abundant forest and mineral resources like coal, petroleum etc.

Finally, in Assam, majority of the people were Bengali-speaking.\textsuperscript{112}

The factual accuracy of some of the above arguments may be debated, but the League was able to muster the support of the majority of the Muslims in its demand of including Assam in the Eastern Wing of Pakistan. So far as the Assam Provincial Muslim League and its efforts for Assam's inclusion in Pakistan were concerned, it is asserted that no arguments were advanced by it, and Assam being a Muslim minority province had no reason of its own justification of the claim for its inclusion in Pakistan. Though the Provincial League had little role in framing the demand, but once it was made by the parent body, it worked whole-heartedly and tried to the best of its capacity to achieve Pakistan as well as Assam's inclusion in the same. It was able to channelize the support of the League-supporters on the issue, who acted in unison with their Muslim brethren elsewhere for achieving Pakistan\textsuperscript{113}. This and other developments leading to the partition of the country and Assam Provincial League's role in the same, has been discussed in the next section.

\subsection*{6.5. Muslim League Politics in Assam (1938-1947) And the Issue of Assam's Inclusion in Pakistan:}

The beginning of the Muslim League Politics in Assam is generally traced to the year 1937, as prior to that the Muslim League is said have had no influence in the politics of the province. Although a branch of the Muslim League was formed in Assam on 28 January, 1928 at Sylhet by the followers of the Shafi faction\textsuperscript{114} of the All India Muslim League, with Manawwar Ali of Sylhet as the President, the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{112} Maibur Rahman Khan, Eastern Pakistan - its Population, Delimitation and Economics, cited in Kar, op.cit., p. 306.
\item\textsuperscript{113} For details please see Ibid., pp. 307, 313-318.
\item\textsuperscript{114} On the question whether to co-operate or not to co-operate with the Simon Commission, the All India Muslim League got divided into two factions in 1928. While Muhammod Shafi and his followers, decided to co-operate with the Commission, the other group led by Jinnah decided to boycott the same on the lines of the Congress.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
organization could not make any headway in the politics of the province. This is because prior to 1937, the Assam Muslim opinion was guided by the small organizations like Assam Islam Mission Society, Anjuman-i-Islamia, etc. and was also divided politically on linguistic and valley-lines which gave birth to political parties such as Assam Valley Muslim Party, and Surma Valley Muslim Party, which served as pressure groups to obtain concession from the Government. By the time of elections of 1937 (under Govt. of India Act, 1935), the Muslim League was yet to emerge as an organized force, and the election results clearly reflected sharp division of Muslim votes among not less than five parties such as Assam Valley Muslim Party, Surma Valley Muslim Party, Muslim League, Independent Muslims and Muslim Praja Party.

In fact, the League politics began in Assam following the All India Muslim League Session at Lucknow in October, 1937, and particularly after the establishment of the League in the Brahmaputra Valley in December, 1938 at a village called Ali Tangri in the district of Nowgong, at the imitative of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani who became its first President. Saadulla, the most prominent Assamese Muslim leader of the period also became its member. Initially, however, Saadulla was not willing to join the League and was leading a coalition Government formed after the Elections of 1937, being the leader of a party called United Muslim Party. Later on, however, under the compulsion of parliamentary politics, as discussed in the fourth chapter, compelled him, and he decided to join the League and to show his allegiance to the Party he attended the All India Muslim League Conference in October, 1937. After that he is said to have

115. For details please see Kar, op.cit., p. 310; Also see Bhyan and Dey, op.cit., pp. 250-53.
116. Bhayan and Dey, Loc.cit; Please see Election Results of the Muslim parties in Ibid., p. 253.
117. Ibid., p. 254.
119. Bhuyan and Dey, Loc.cit.
joined the party and in 1940, he admitted himself that he had been the member of the Provincial League since its inception in December, 1938.\textsuperscript{120} The Assam Provincial Muslim League was reconstituted in 1939 with Saadulla as the President and Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani as the Vice President\textsuperscript{121} Abdul Matin Choudhury of Sylhet, became its Secretary and thus the Assam Muslim League assumed truly provincial character with representation of both the valleys of the province. It got affiliation of the All India Muslim League in 1940 and for the first time, the League supporters of the Province were represented in their All India organization. Earlier, as back as 1936, Assam was represented by only two Surma Valley Muslims in the Muslim League Central Parliamentary Board.\textsuperscript{122} In this way, by 1939, the splinter groups of Assam Muslims practically sank their differences and in the years to come presented a United Front against the Congress under the banner of the Assam Provincial Muslim League which gradually raised in stature to become the sole representative body of the overwhelming majority of the Muslim of the Province.

By 1940, the Muslim League activities in Assam are said to have been intensified. As already stated, in that year Lahore Resolution of the All India Muslim League was passed which demanded a separate State for the Muslims of the country. However, in the early 1940s, the demand for Assam's inclusion in Pakistan did not become a serious matter of concern for the League. The League Propaganda in Assam in early 1940's was directed at convincing the Muslims that the Congress was primarily a Hindu Organization and that the rights of the Muslims were not safe in the hands of the Congress. The League is also said to have persistently tried to divert the minds of the Muslims from the Congress led Quit India (August) Movement of 1942.\textsuperscript{123} It is to be noted that this period in Assam was the period of Saadulla Ministries (1937-46) and as discussed in the chapter on Immigration,

\textsuperscript{120} Kar, Loc.cit.
\textsuperscript{121} The Assam Tribune, 9 December, 1939, cited in Bhuyan and Dey, op.cit., p.261.
\textsuperscript{122} Kar, op.cit., pp. 310-11.
\textsuperscript{123} Bhuyan and Dey op.cit., 259.
Saadulla was accused of adopting a pro-Muslim, pro-Pakistan approach in matters of Immigration and land settlement, although his Ministries consisted of renowned non-Muslim figures of the Province and also on one occasion enjoyed support of the Assam Congress led by Bardoloi. By 1946 when the Pakistan demand gathered momentum, the divergence between Government and opposition took a purely political character on every matter of public interest, and the many actions of Saadulla Governments were seen allegedly as a concerted plan of furthering the cause of inclusion of Assam in Pakistan, and Saadulla was considered as the main architect of the League's demand of including Assam in East Pakistan.

However, this is a fact that neither Saadulla nor the Assam Provincial League had any significant role in the origin of the idea of including Assam in Pakistan and as already discussed, the provincial League, mainly performed the role assigned by its central body in this regard. It is already stated that a North-Eastern Muslim zone with Assam as component part was conceived and specifically mentioned in many schemes of partition of India, even before the Lahore Resolution was adopted in 1940. So far as the role of the Assam Provincial Muslim League in this regard is concerned, the issue is said to have been seriously considered, as late as in 1944 as a writer on the subject asserted: "Indeed the demand for inclusion of the entire province of Assam in an Eastern Pakistan has come to be seriously discussed by the few Muslim Leaguers of note only after the immigrants-ridden Third Session of the Assam Provincial Muslim League held at Barpeta in April, 1944 under the Presidentship of Choudhury Khaliquzzaman of U.P." It was after this conference that Saadulla associated publicly with the League's claim on Assam, and the Provincial League is said to have fallen in line with the All India Muslim League in the matter. The conference only reaffirmed its faith in Pakistan and resolved that

124. For details please see Kar, op.cit., pp. 311-314.
125. Quoted in Ibid., p. 307.
the provinces of Bengal and Assam should be formed into an independent political Unit as East Pakistan. It was attended by all the important Leaders of the Assam Provincial Muslim League including Saadulla. In the Conference, Choudhury Khaliquzzaman declared that Pakistan was the only safeguard for the protection of the political, cultural and economic rights of the Muslims, and launched the campaign for Pakistan.126

As stated earlier, the long spell of Saadulla Ministries came to an end on 1 October, 1945 when the Assam Assembly was dissolved in view of the Assembly Elections to be held in January, 1946, although Saadulla was allowed to continue as the head of a care-taker government till the elections were held. In both the Camps, the Muslim League and the Congress, the political activities were hectic during the elections to the Central and Provincial Legislatures. It was a trial of strength for the two political antagonists, and while the Muslim League resolved to fight the election on the single issue of Pakistan, the Congress decided to fight the same on the issue of immediate transfer of power to the Indians.127 The League began its election campaign in Assam in the last week of December, 1945, and for the purpose the Assam Provincial Muslim League invited leaders of All India repute like Khwaja Nazimuddin, Liyaqat Ali Khan and H.S. Subhrawardy who were well aware of the importance of Assam in the proposed East Pakistan zone.128 Addressing a meeting at Gauhati on 5 January, 1946 Liyaqat Ali Khan categorically stated that he had come to Assam to put forward the demand for Pakistan. He also pointed out that in view of the elections, the Muslims had two important issues before them-One was Pakistan, and the other was to assert the claim of the Muslim League as the sole representative organization of the Indian Muslims.129

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126.Ibid., p. 313.
129.Ibid.
the issue of Pakistan and Assam was also highlighted by H.S. Suhrawardy in a meeting held at Calcutta, in which he stated that "the Muslims of Bengal have awakened from their slumber and are determined to achieve Pakistan in alliance with our brothers in Assam."130

During the election campaign, the Congress, with the support of the Jamat-Ul-Ulema-E-Hind, the premier organization of the nationalist Muslims, tried to influence the Muslim voters and divert their attention from the cause of the Muslim League. Although the Jamiat started an independent Campaign, with the arrival of its supreme leader Hussain Ahmed Madani at Sylhet on 29 December, 1945, it was branded by the League as purely a "Congress-backed" organization. Such campaigns of the Jamiat however, had little impact on the election results in the Muslim Constituencies as out of 34 seats reserved for Muslims, the League secured 31 seats, the Jamiat only three seats and the Congress none. Of course, in the general constituencies, the Congress swept the polls by securing as many as 55 seats thereby gaining majority in the Assembly. After the elections, a Congress Ministry headed by Gopinath Bardoloi was formed on 11 February, 1946. However, the election results in the Muslim constituencies was indicative of the Leagues' firm hold over the Muslim constituencies and also concurrence of their electorates to its demand for Pakistan. It also established the claim of the League as the sole representative of majority of the Muslims of the Province131.

On assuming power, the Congress Government went on to evict the Immigrants unprotected by the All Party Agreement of 1945, which invoked strong reaction from the Provincial League which later on organized a Civil Disobedience Movement against the eviction policy of the Government, that has already been discussed in the last chapter. In March, 1946 Jinnah visited Assam for the first time

130.Star of India, 4 January, 1946, quoted in Ibid.
131.For details please see Ibid., pp. 273-75.
and in a meeting at Gauhati on 6 March, 1946, he claimed Pakistan as consisting six "Muslim Provinces", Assam being one of them. Saadulla also spoke in the meeting and clearly supported Assam's merger in the Eastern Wing of the proposed State of "Pakistan". Jinnah congratulated the Assam Provincial Muslim League headed by Saadulla for having captured 92% of the Muslim seats in the elections to the Assam Assembly held in January, 1946. The Working Committee of Assam Provincial Muslim League met at Gauhati on 8 March, 1946, in the presence of both Jinnah and Saadulla and adopted a resolution in view of the eviction policy of the Congress-Government, calling upon immigrants to spread out to all available lands and cultivate them for increased food crops. This resolution created a very critical situation in the days to come symbolized by the Muslim League's Civil Disobedience Movement, which has also been discussed in the last chapter.

The Executive Committee of the Assam Provincial Muslim League was reconstituted on 23rd March, 1946, with Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani becoming its President and Mahmud Ali, the Secretary. However, Saadulla continued in other important positions of the Party such as Member of the League Action Committee to deal with the issue of Eviction, spokesman of the League in its negotiations with the Government, and most importantly, continued to lead the Parliamentary Wing of the party. In April, 1946, Saadulla attended the Muslim League Legislators' Convention held in Delhi which for the first time clearly demanded Assam for Eastern Pakistan. There he is said to have stated openly for the first time that the Muslims were the largest community in Assam. He is also said to have asserted that apart from being a poor province, Assam's physical situation is such that it leaves no alternative to Assam but to join Pakistan.

133.Ibid., P. 314.
135.Quoted in Ibid., p. 314.
Apart from Saadulla, Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, was another eminent Muslim Leaguer to have carried forward the Pakistan Movement, especially among the Immigrant belts. He is said to have a much longer record of mass contact than Saadulla. That is why when in 1946 the propaganda for Pakistan reached its zenith, he was able to rise to the position of the Provincial League President, on account of his firm held over the grass-roots of immigrant-dominated Party Organization at that point of time. He was able to channelize immense support of the Muslim masses for the Civil Disobedience Movement against the eviction policy of the Bardoloi Government which he could systematically utilize in favour of the demand for Pakistan. It is observed, "From March, 1946 when he was elected President till his arrest in February, 1947, Bhasani was the supreme leader of the pro-Pakistan Muslim masses whom he had consolidated through the Civil Disobedience Movement against the Congress Government under Bardoloi."136

Abdul Matin Choudhury of Sylhet was another leading figure in the Muslim League Politics, who contributed significantly in the Pakistan Movement in Assam. He also participated in the Muslim League Legislators' Conference in Delhi in 1946 which demanded the creation of Eastern Pakistan with Bengal and Assam137. Besides, in the budget session of the Assam Assembly in 1946, the League Members of both the valleys like Syed Abdur Rouf, Abdul Mazid Ziaosshams, Muhammad Moyeenuddin Ahmed Choudhury, and Abdur Rab Choudhury openly came forward in support of the demand for Pakistan as well as inclusion of Assam in the Eastern Wing of the same138.

Thus, the Assam Provincial League although had little role in framing the demand for Pakistan, but once it was advanced by its parent body, its supporters

136. Ibid., p. 315.
137. Ibid., p. 316.
acted in unison with their brethren elsewhere for achieving the same. Since 1944 onwards, the Provincial League leadership openly came forward in support of the demand for inclusion of Assam in Pakistan although the issue of Assam becoming a part of Eastern Pakistan was made clear, as already stated, in a convention of the newly elected Muslim League Legislators held at Delhi, after the elections of 1946. In the meantime, the Government of Britain decided to send a Cabinet Mission in India to explore the possibilities of drafting a future Constitution of India, setting up of a constitution-making body and establishing self-Government in India. The Cabinet Mission arrived in India on 23rd March, 1946 and subsequently formulated a plan under which the idea of partition and Pakistan was rejected but there was the main provision of grouping of provinces within an Indian Union which placed Assam in Group-C along with Bengal, which generated a province-wise protest and also an Anti-Grouping Agitation in Assam, mainly by the Assamese people. This and other political developments and role of Muslims therein, have been discussed in the next section.

6.6. **Cabinet Mission, Anti-Grouping Agitation in Assam and Assam Muslims:**

The Government of Britain's decision to send a Cabinet Mission to India in early 1946 has already been stated. It was on 18 January, 1946, that viceroy Lord Wavell made an announcement with regard to forming a new Executive Council and a constitution making body. On 19 February, 1946, the Government of Great Britain announced the sending of a Cabinet Mission to India, the purpose of which, as declared by the Government of Britain and the viceroy, was to arrange the framing of a future constitution of India in consultation with viceroy and the Indian leaders, setting up of a constitution-making body and to establish full self-Government in India. The Cabinet Mission arrived in India on 23 March, 1946 and conducted a series of discussion with the leaders of various political parties, associations,
Heads of Governments, spokesmen of the states etc., and took their views. In Assam, the Governor of Assam, Gopinath Bardoloi, the Premier, and Saadulla, the leader of opposition in the Assam Assembly, were among the leading figures and officials consulted by the Cabinet Mission. The views of Bardoloi and Saadulla deserve special attention for the purpose of the present study. It was on 1 April, 1946 that Gopinath Bardoloi appeared before the Mission and while stressing on provincial autonomy he pointed out that Assam had always a separate and distinctive identity and this must be allowed to continue in the future constitution of India in the form of full provincial status. On Jinnah's claim to include Assam in Pakistan, Bardoloi told the Mission that it was absolutely impossible, although interestingly, he pleaded for separation of Sylhet from Assam. On the next day i.e., 2 April, 1946, Saadulla was consulted, who tried to convince the Cabinet Delegation that the Muslims constituted the majority of the population in the province, but this fact did not get reflected in the Census Reports due to classification of many tribals as Hindus. Saadulla also opposed the idea of transferring only Sylhet district of Assam as Muslim percentage of the province would fall from forty percent to twenty. In stead, he suggested that the whole province of Assam might be attached to Bengal.

After completing its discussion with different parties, persons or officials concerned and considering their suggestions, the Cabinet Mission prepared a plan to serve as the basis of agreement between the Indian political parties for the future constitution of India, which was declared in its statement on 16 May, 1946. The most important features of the plan were that it rejected the idea of Pakistan and recommended a union of India, a three tier constitution with the Centre, Groups

140. Bordoloi's Note to APCC, APCC Papers, 1946, Gauhati, cited in Ibid., p. 338.
and Provinces; and an Interim Government with the support of the major political parties till the constitution was complete. Under the grouping scheme of the Cabinet Mission Plan, the whole country was to be divided into three zones or sections. Group-A was to comprise of Madras, Bombay, U.P., Bihar, the Central Provinces and Orissa, while Group-B was to comprise the Panjab, Sind, NWFP and British Baluchistan; and Bengal and Assam was placed in Group-C. Group-B would constitute a Muslim majority area and in Group-C which included Bengal and Assam, the Muslims would have a small majority over the rest. In this way, the Cabinet Mission is said to have thought that the grouping scheme would give complete assurance to the Muslim minority, and address all legitimate fears expressed by the League. However, the Mission's proposal to group Assam with Bengal, it is observed, was intended to create a predominantly Muslim zone in Eastern India like the one proposed to be set up in the Western India. Under the Cabinet Mission Plan, each section was to decide upon its own provincial and group matters. A province was free to opt out of its allotted section only after the first elections under the new constitution were over. In other words, a Province was given the option to withdraw from the group provided that the decision regarding this was taken by the new legislative assembly of the province after the first general election under the new constitution. In brief, according to the plan, the Assam representatives to the Constituent Assembly would have to sit in a section with the Bengal representatives to determine the provincial constitution by

142. For details on the Cabinet Mission's recommendations, please see "Statement by the Cabinet Delegation and His Excellency the Viceroy" dated New Delhi, 16 May, 1946, as reproduced in Ibid., pp. 471-485.
143. Maulana Azad, op.cit., p. 156.
146. Bhuyan and Dey, op.cit., p. 344.
a simple majority of votes147.

The cabinet Mission's proposal to group Assam with Bengal presumably for creating a Muslim zone in Eastern India was vehemently protested by the Assamese people. There was a storm of protest throughout the province except the supporters of the Muslim League. On the very day of announcement of the proposal on 16th May, the Assam Provincial Congress Committee (APCC), then in session at Gauhati, lodged an emphatic protest with the All India Congress Working Committee against the Cabinet Mission's proposal to group Assam with Bengal. There began a feverish agitation in Assam against the grouping scheme and in a series of public meetings held throughout the province by the people themselves and by various organizations, resolutions were adopted demanding withdrawal of the Cabinet Mission Plan so far as it is related to Assam148. The Assamese opposition to the grouping scheme was based on the fear that "once Assam was grouped with Muslim majority Bengal to the interests mainly of the Muslim community, her fate was sealed. She would lose her identity and individuality in the political whirlpool of Muslim India, although she was not, and had never been a Muslim majority province".149 Premier Bardoloi who was in Delhi at the time of the announcement of the cabinet Mission scheme, met the All India Congress Working Committee members in Delhi on May, 1946 as per the instruction of the APCC, and submitted a memorandum opposing the grouping of Assam with Bengal150. Throughout May, June and July, hundreds of meetings were held

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147. Dutt, Loc.cit; As per the Cabinet Mission Plan, the Composition of Section-C (Bengal and Assam), with the members elected by the Legislative Assemblies to sit in the Constituent Assembly, were to be as under-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>70</strong></td>
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(Source: "Statement of the Cabinet Delegation and His Excellency the Viceroy" dated- 16th May, 1946, New Delhi, as reproduced in Bhyuan and Dey, op.cit., (Appendix-I) p. 480.)


149. Dutt,op.cit.

150. Bhuyan and Dey, op.cit., p. 347; Guha, op.cit., p. 311.
all over Assam to record vehement protest against the grouping scheme. In June, 1946, a nine-member Congress delegation went to Delhi to register Assam's stand before the Congress leaders including Gandhi and Nehru and placed Assam's case before them. On 10th June, the delegation appeared before the Congress Working Committee (CWC) which while supporting the Assam's case, suggested the passing of a Resolution in the Assam Assembly to that effect.

The Governor of Assam summoned the Assam Legislative Assembly on 16 July 1946 to elect the ten representatives from Assam to the constituent Assembly as per provision of the Cabinet Mission's scheme. Gopinath Bardoloi, the premier, moved a resolution expressing strong disapproval of the plan and directing the ten representatives of Assam to the Constituent Assembly to be elected by the Assam Assembly, not to sit in section with any other province for devising the constitution of Assam, or any group constitution could be framed only by Assam's own representatives to the constituent Assembly and that it would be detrimental to the interests of the province, if they joined others in a section for that purpose. The Resolution, therefore directed the ten representatives of Assam to sit in the constituent Assembly for the purpose of framing only the Union Constitution and to sit in an exclusive meeting or meetings to frame the Provincial Constitution.

From among the Muslim League members, only Saadulla made a speech upholding the grouping with Bengal. He asserted that Bardoloi's claim to Assam's right to frame her constitution was entirely against the directives or suggestions made in the Cabinet Mission scheme. In support of grouping, he advanced certain agreements - First, if Assam stood out of Group-C, her geographical position as a

151. Guha, Loc.cit; For details please see Bhuyan and Dey, op.cit., pp. 351-371.
152. Please see Bhuyan and Dey, op.cit., p. 351; The delegation was formed with Tayyebulla, Omeo Kumar Das, Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati, Hareswar Goswami, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Nilmoni Phukan, Harendranath Baruah, Kamakhya Prasad Tripathi and Pushpalata Das.
153. For details please see Ibid., pp. 351-366.
154. Ibid., p. 366.
north-eastern frontier with Bengal interposed between her and the rest of the country would make it unsuitable and impracticable to join any other section; 2nd, financially, Assam would suffer as her main income came from the European planters stationed in Calcutta or London; third, for law and order Assam would have to maintain a huge force of her own. Again, in respect of all types of higher and technical education, judiciary and health services, Assam was dependent on Bengal and so refusal of Assam to join the section with Bengal would alienate the latter's feelings. He was also of the opinion that grouping and the subjects which the group constitution would take over, would be a matter of mutual understanding between the two provinces. As regards the Muslim majority in Group-C, Saadulla stated that the Muslims had a margin of only three percent over the Hindus and the representatives of Assam had no reason to fear of being swamped by the majority of the Muslim votes. He questioned the competence of the House to transact any business in excess of the specific purpose for which it was summoned. According to him, the House was precluded from giving any such directive as contained in the resolution, as the members were elected by separate voting of Muslims and the non-Muslim groups. He further observed that the motion was not a 'free voice of the people of Assam' but it had been 'ordained' by the Congress High Command for a specific purpose and asserted: "The Muslims sitting on this side of the House following the guidance of the All India Muslim League, can have nothing to do with this motion to curtail our own rights". He also declared that his side would not take any further part in discussion or voting.

As Saadulla on behalf of the Muslim League refused to participate either in the discussion or in the voting, the motion moved by Bardoloi was carried without division. After adopting Bardoloi's resolution the election of the members of the

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constituent Assembly was held. The Muslim part of the Assembly elected Saadulla, Abdul Hamid and Abdul Matin Choudhury while general part elected Gopinath Bardoloi, Rohini Kumar Choudhury, Basanta Kumar Das, J.J.M. Nichols Roy, Omeo Kumar Das, Dharanidhar Basumatari and Akshay Kumar Das.\footnote{Assam Legislative Assembly Proceedings, 16 July 1946, pp. 803-04, cited in Bhuyan and Dey, op.cit., p. 371.}

It is observed that the mandate by the Assam Legislative Assembly was not sufficient enough to scotch the danger inherent in the Cabinet Mission Plan, and the APCC and the Assam Premier were constantly observing the political developments at the national level.\footnote{Ibid.} As already discussed in the first section of this chapter, both the Congress and the League had at one stage accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan and for a while, a solution of the Communal question without a partition of the country was in sight. But Jawaharlal Nehru's statement in a press conference on 10 July as the Congress President, in which he emphatically stated that the Congress had agreed only to participate in the Constituent Assembly and regarded itself free to change or modify the Cabinet Mission Plan, unsettled the whole issue. Reacting to this, the Muslim League Council met at Bombay on 27 July and after a discussion of three days, passed a resolution rejecting the Cabinet Mission Plan and deciding to resort to "Direct Action" for the achievement of Pakistan. It also authorized Jinnah to take any action he thought best in pursuance of the Programme. Jinnah, accordingly declared 16 August to be observed as the "Direct Action Day."\footnote{Maulana Azad, op.cit., pp. 164-65, 168.} Apart from Nehru's statement as stated above, Assam's determined opposition to its grouping with Bengal is considered to be another important factor for the failure of the Cabinet Mission Plan, as it is said to have provided the League with an opportunity to repudiate its earlier acceptance.\footnote{Guha, op.cit., p. 315; Kar, op.cit., p. 324.}

So far as the Assam Provincial Muslim League was concerned, it was busy during the Anti-Grouping Agitation in Assam, preparing for the Civil
Disobedience Movement against the Congress Government's Immigrant Policy, it seemed to have left the entire matter of grouping to the parliamentary wing of the Party led by Saadulla as well as the All India Muslim League. Saadulla claimed that the overwhelming majority of Assam's population excepting the 'caste Hindus' supported the Grouping Plan. The basis of this calculation was the same as that on which All India Muslim League had been demanding inclusion of Assam in Eastern Pakistan. The rejection of the Cabinet Mission scheme and the subsequent formation of the interim Government and reconstituting the same with the addition of League members, and the atmosphere of ill-will, mistrust and animosity in which the interim Government was reconstituted and functioned, as already discussed, convinced all concerned that it was no longer possible for the Congress and the League to work together in a common polity and that nothing short of partition could bring a permanent solution to the Hindu-Muslim issue. The political developments in Assam since Muslim League's rejection of the Cabinet Mission Plan till the announcement of the Scheme of partition along with the role of Muslims, have been discussed in the next section.

6.7. Prelude to Partition: Muslim League's "Direct Action" and Assam:

As already stated, on 27 July, the All India Muslim League Council met at Bombay and after three days' discussion, passed a resolution rejecting the Cabinet Mission Plan, and deciding to resort to "Direct Action" for achieving Pakistan. At the instance of Jinnah, it was also resolved to observe 16th August, 1946 as the "Direct Action Day". The Muslim League Council of Action as well as the Muslim National Guards, as referred earlier, played a significant role in making the "Direct Action Day" a success. The 16 August, 1946, which had been fixed to be

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161 Kar, op.cit., p. 323.
162 Bhuyan and Dey op.cit., p. 279.
observed as the "Direct Action Day" passed of peacefully except in Calcutta where the observance of the same led to serious Hindu-Muslim riots which were followed by chain reaction in Noakhali and some other districts of Eastern Bengal. The communal disturbances were also spread to Bihar where Muslims are said to have been killed by the Hindus, and in Noakhali district of Eastern Bengal, there was retaliation by the Muslims.

The Hindu-Muslim communal estrangement made its impact felt in Assam as well. The "Direct Action Day" was observed in Nowgong, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Tezpur, Sibsagar and Shillong but no untoward incident was reported from these places though tension existed. In Sylhet, the supporters of the Muslim League brought out a 'Prabhat Phery' procession. The slogans of "Muslim League Zindabad", "Up Up Muslim League Flag", "Down Down Union Jack" etc. were heard and incidents of communal clashes in certain places were also reported from there. Along with the other parts of the province, the 'Direct Action Day' was observed on 16 August, 1946 in the immigrant dominated areas with full enthusiasm. In his message on the eve of the 'Direct Action Day', Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, the undisputed leader of the immigrants, and the Provincial League President, exhorted the Muslims of Assam to remain vigilant and declared: "Let 'do or die' be the motto of our life; Let us be prepared for any suffering or sacrifice; Let us be prepared to give up our lives if necessary to reach the goal of Pakistan". In a leaflet entitled "Achieve Pakistan or Perish" it was declared that Muslims constitute a 'Nation' and not a minority and Pakistan was declared to be the "only demand". This view was reflected in the words of Bhasani who declared further: "Pakistan is our only demand, History justifies it, Numbers confirm it, Justice claims it, Destiny demands it, Posterity awaits it, Plebiscite verdicts it."

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164. Bhuyan and Dey op.cit., pp. 277-78.
165. Ibid., p. 278.
166. Star of India, 5 August, 1946, quoted in Dev and Lahiri, op.cit., p. 86.
167. A leaflet titled - "Achieve Pakistan or Perish" published by Bhasani.
It is observed that during the observance of the "Direct Action Day" there was no communal outburst in the Brahmaputra Valley although tension prevailed in different parts of the valley and certain minor occurrences were reported from Sylhet. Significantly, however, the League influence over the Muslims of the Province is said to have registered a perceptible increase in course of the same. The impact of 'Direct Action Day' could be felt in the Muslim-dominated areas of the Cachar District of the Surma Valley as well, where the League supporters raised the slogans in favour of Pakistan. Abdul Hamid of Sylhet, a strong advocate of Pakistan, was key to League's activities in Cachar and Sylhet at that point of time.

However, the impact of the Muslim League with regard to "Direct Action", was not widespread throughout the province. Of course, the League succeeded in establishing tremendous influence on the Muslim population of Assam by opposing the eviction policy of the Congress Government headed by Gopinath Bardoloi which came to power on 11 February. The enthusiasm which was generated during the popular upsurge among the Muslims in Assam in view of the Civil Disobedience Movement launched by Assam Provincial Muslim League against the policy of eviction of the Bardoloi Government, was successfully channelized by the League leaders towards the achievement of Pakistan in Assam. Although the 'Pakistan Movement' in Assam was gaining in momentum since 1944, it received spontaneity when freedom was at sight. It was reported that in the meetings of the League held at Dhubri and Barbanda in Mankachar in February and March, 1947, it was resolved to recruit as many as 1Lakh volunteers who were to act under the direct instruction of the Muslim League Council of Action for the achievement of Pakistan. It was also announced that the 'League Flag' was to be hoisted on all Government

premises in Mankachar and thereby to establish Pakistan within a day in Goalpara and it was believed that similarly the entire Assam would come under the Pakistan scheme within a week. The 'Pakistan Day' was observed in most of the districts of Assam on 23 March, 1947 as it was done in other parts of the country by the League. On the day the slogans like "cholo cholo Jele cholo, Pakistan Kaem Karo", "Larke Lenge Pakistan" etc. were voiced and this was most conspicuous in Sylhet, Nowgong, Goalpara and Barpeta sub-division 170

Meanwhile, on Jinnah's rejection to join the Interim Government, the Viceroy, with the permission of the Government of Britain, went ahead with the formation of the Interim Government with the Congress alone and accordingly the Government was formed on 2nd September, 1946 with Nehru becoming Vice President in the Viceroy's Executive Council. But the formation of the Government with the Congress alone disappointed the League which felt that it had been let down by the British. There was bitterness and communal troubles throughout the country and the viceroy felt that the same would continue till the League joined the Government. Ultimately, he was able to persuade Jinnah to join the Government. On 15th October, 1946 the League decided to join the Government but announced that it would not join the constituent Assembly. However in the atmosphere of distrust, suspicion and animosity in which the Interim Government was reconstituted after the joining of the League, made the Government virtually ineffective. Internal dissension broke out within the Government which went on increasing. Besides, the issue regarding the full acceptance of the cabinet Mission scheme by the Congress was not yet settled as confusion persisted with regard to clauses relating to 'Grouping'. Therefore, on 26th Nov, 1946 the representatives of the Congress, League and the Sikhs were invited to meet at London by the British Prime Minister Attlee to sort out the issue. The discussions were held from 3 to 6

December, 1946 but did not yield any result as Jinnah held that the Constituent Assembly had no right to change the structure of the Plan, mainly the ‘grouping’ which formed the basis of the Agreement, while the Congress was not agreeable to that 171.

Under the circumstances, the Government of Britain was bound to adopt a fresh approach to the whole issue and the Prime Minister felt that a stage had reached where it was necessary to take a clear-cut-decision on the matter. Accordingly, the Labour Government of Britain decided to fix a date for transfer of power. To this the viceroy Wavell did not agree and tried to persist with the Cabinet Mission Scheme, but failing to convince the Prime Minister, he had to offer resignation. On 20 February, 1947, the British Prime Minister announced in the House of Commons that the British would quit India by June, 1948. Soon thereafter, Lord Mountbatten was appointed Viceroy and Governor General of India, who came to India on 22nd March, 1947 and was sworn in as the Governor General and Viceroy on 24th March, 1947. He was, in fact, sent to India with the specific instruction of bringing speedy solution to the Indian problem and also that the power must be transferred before 30 June, 1948. Lord Mountbatten subsequently formulated a scheme of partition and as discussed in the first section, persuaded the Congress Leadership as well as the League to accept the same and thereby partition of India became a reality 172.

The Mountbatten Plan and its impact on Assam has been discussed in the next section.

6.8. **Mountbatten (Partition) Plan, Sylhet Referendum and Aftermath:**  

While Assam was passing her days amidst uncertainties with regard to the fate of the province, political events in the country took a new course which compelled the British Government to adopt a fresh approach to the Indian problem. This happened mainly due to the refusal of the Muslim League to join the Constituent Assembly, animosity between the League and Congress Members in the Interim Government and subsequent demand for the resignation of the League Members by the Congress. After that the British Prime Minister's Statement of Transfer of Power to Indians by June, 1948, replacement of Lord Wavell by Lord Mountbatten as Viceroy and Governor General of India to bring about a speedy solution of the Indian problem, has already been referred in the last section.

Immediately after taking charge on 24th March, 1947, Lord Mountbatten stressed the need for reaching the solution of the Indian Problem within a few months. He started consultations with leaders of different political parties and after assessing their views and proposals, and with the advice of his advisers; he was able to evolve a plan of partition of India, which was ultimately accepted by all the parties, which led to the partition of the country. It is interesting how he was able to persuade the Congress leadership - Patel, Nehru and Gandhiji, as already referred in the first section, who were all along opposing the partition. Anyway, the Mountbatten Plan which got approval of all the parties and of the Government of Britain was announced on 3rd June, 1947. Under the plan the steps were to be taken to ascertain the views of the representatives of Sind, West Panjab, NWEP, East Bengal, and the district of Sylhet in Assam and as they all declared themselves in favour of a separate federation called Pakistan, the task of the division of assets of the Government of undivided India and determination

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175.For details please see Azad,op.cit.,pp.190-97.
of exact boundaries of the two dominions was taken in hand. In this way, the partition of the Indian sub-continent into two self-Governing dominions called India and Pakistan finally became a reality.

The Mountbatten Plan proposed for the division of Panjab and Bengal but in case of Assam, a referendum was to be held in Sylhet district to obtain the people's verdict whether it would remain in Assam or opt for the Eastern Wing of Pakistan. With regard to Assam's position the plan stated:

"Though Assam is pre-dominantly a non-Muslim province, the district of Sylhet which is contiguous to Bengal is predominantly Muslim. There has been a demand that, in the event of the partition of Bengal Sylhet should be amalgamated with the Muslim part of Bengal. Accordingly if it is decided that Bengal should be partitioned, a referendum will be held in Sylhet District under the aegis of the Governor General and in consultation with the Assam Provincial Government to decide whether the district of Sylhet should continue to form part of Assam Province or should be amalgamated with the new province of Eastern Bengal, a boundary commission with terms of reference similar to those for the Panjab and Bengal will be set up to demarcate the Muslim majority areas of adjoining districts, which will then be transferred to East Bengal".

It is obvious that the referendum was prescribed to satisfy the Hindus of the district of Sylhet who constituted about forty five percent of the district's population. With the announcement of the Mountbatten Plan, the anti-grouping Movement formally came to an end and thereafter the focus of political activity was shifted to the Sylhet Referendum to be held on 6th and 7th July, 1947.

176. Ikram, op.cit., p. 403.
6.9. **Sylhet Referendum - An Analysis:**

The history of Sylhet's amalgamation with Assam in 1974 followed by the Sylhet-Bengal Reunion Movement, has already been discussed in the Chapter on the Sylhet-Bengal Reunion Movement. To put it briefly, Sylhet's amalgamation with Assam was opposed by the people of the district and there started a Sylhet-Bengal Reunion movement. The movement, at the beginning, was supported by both the Hindus and Muslims of the district. However, divergence appeared in 1920s when a section of the Muslims began to think on communal lines and oppose the transfer of Sylhet and support its retention in Assam as the Muslim-majority Sylhet district significantly added to the numerical strength of the Muslims of the province, which also added to their political significance as a community. After the passing of the historic Lahore Resolution by the All India Muslim League in 1940, there was further reversal of opinion of the Hindus and Muslims on the question Sylhet Transfer. Since then the Muslims in majority supported the transfer of the district to Eastern Bengal so as to form part of the proposed state of Pakistan, while Hindus supported the retention of the district in Assam as its transfer would mean becoming part of Pakistan. The Assamese people, the Assamese Hindus in particular, never welcomed Sylhet in Assam and considering it to be source of valley-rivalry and obstacle in the way of the progress of the province, consistently supported its transfer to Bengal since 1874 to 1947\(^{180}\). The final situation was offered by the Mountbatten Plan according to which in the event of partition of Bengal, a Referendum would be held in Sylhet to decide whether it would continue in Assam or would be amalgamated with Eastern Bengal which was to form the Eastern Wing of the proposed state of Pakistan. The Plan further stated that in the case of Sylhet opting for Pakistan, a Boundary Commission was to be set up to

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\(^{180}\) For details please see the chapter titled "Sylhet-Bengal Reunion Movement- Role of Muslims."
demarcate the Muslim-majority areas of Sylhet and adjoining districts, which would, then be transferred to Eastern Bengal\(^{181}\).

On the Sylhet transfer issue in view of the Referendum, the Assamese public opinion remained consistent with its earlier stand which has been maintained for quite a long time i.e., getting rid of Sylhet. Such a view got reflected in many of the representative voices of the Assamese society on the eve of the Sylhet Referendum. A glimpse into the Assamese Hindu mind on the issue was provided by Jagadish Chandra Medhi, an advocate of Gauhati and an ex-member of AICC. He considered the Referendum unnecessary as he justified the inclusion of the whole of the district of Sylhet in Pakistan being a Muslim-majority one, and advocated a policy of non-interference by the Assamese on the question of Referendum in Sylhet\(^{182}\). The Assam Tribune, considered to be a semi-official organ of the Provincial Congress and the Assamese Hindus, also expressed the desire to be free of Sylhet as "nobody believed that she could remain in Assam on congenial terms"\(^{183}\). Gopinath Bardoloi’s position was perhaps the most difficult. As premier of the Province, the Sylhet Hindus looked up to him for help and guidance but the general feeling in the Assam valley was for getting rid of Sylhet and he could not afford to "ignore the sentiments running so high in the valley"\(^{184}\).

The Sylhet Referendum scheduled to be held on 6th and 7th July, 1947, was virtually a vote on the twin issues of re-organization of India on a communal, and of the province of Assam on a linguistic basis. The Sylhet Muslims, who were, on political considerations, consistently opposed to the move of a re-union with Bengal since 1928, now reversed their position. In fact, it was a logical anticipation that the Muslims constituting the majority in the district would vote for Pakistan. But

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183. Quoted in Ibid., p. 326.
184. Quoted in Ibid.
the most helpless participants in the situation were the Sylhet Hindus who had for decades agitated for a re-union with Bengal, now clung to Assam, as Sylhet's re-union with Bengal would mean its inclusion in Pakistan. However, a small section of the Muslims under the banner of Jamiat-ul-ulema-i-Hind led by Hussain Ahmed Madani, remained consistently opposed to the idea of Pakistan and advised all Muslims of Sylhet to vote for an undivided Assam. However, they failed to make any impact on the Muslim voters, the great majority of whom had already come under the influence of the League which conducted a vigorous campaign for Sylhet's transfer to East Bengal\textsuperscript{185}.

As the date of the referendum drew closer, communal tension rose and political trouble seemed imminent. Thousands of Hindus and Muslims of the district who resided outside rushed to Sylhet to cast their votes. The Hindus tried to woo the Muslim voters through the Jamiat- but due to absence of its leader Hussain Ahmed Madani who was out of the field, the Jamiat could do little to help the Sylhet Hindus. On the other hand, from Bengal, the Muslim League leader Suhrawardy entered Sylhet with a large number of Muslim League National Guards to mobilize support in favour of Sylhet's inclusion in Pakistan. Groups of students from Dacca University also came to Sylhet and moved from house to house in the villages campaigning in support of Sylhet's inclusion in Pakistan. Under the circumstances, the Hindus felt alienated as the campaign was against their interest. To make the situation worse for them, the League leaders were successful in getting the support of the Hindu Scheduled Caste Community of Sylhet. Compared to the League campaign, it is observed, the Congress activities in Sylhet on the eve of the Referendum, was extremely limited\textsuperscript{186}.

The Referendum was held on 6th and 7th July, 1947. Though the Muslim

\textsuperscript{185} Guha, op.cit., p. 319; Bhuyan and Dey, Loc.cit.

\textsuperscript{186} Sajal Nag, Roots of Ethnic Conflict- Nationality Question in North-East India, New Delhi, Manohar, 1990, pp. 154-155.
votes outnumbered that of the Hindus, the latter did not lag much behind and that sustained the excitement in the referendum. The process of the poll did not pass off peacefully. It was reported that the police had to fire on a Muslim mob who tried to prevent the Hindus from voting at Amtail near Maulavibazar resulting in one death and two injuries. On 7th July 1947, another Muslim mob was reported to have attacked the Congress workers at Gopsaar near Sylhet town and caused injuries to twelve persons. Such incidents were reported from several other places. In spite of this, nearly 77% of the people cast their votes.

Of the valid votes cast in the referendum, 2,39,619 (56.6%) were in favour of sylhet's inclusion in Pakistan and only 1,84,041 (43.4%) for an undivided Assam i.e., retention of Sylhet in Assam in the Indian Union. Thus, verdict was in favour of Sylhet's inclusion in Pakistan by a margin of 55,778 votes. It is observed that "the verdict was not unexpected, and it almost reflected the population composition of the district" which was "60 percent Muslim."

The result of the Referendum is said to have been celebrated both by the Muslims and the Assamese. Although the news of the referendum was quietly received in Sylhet proper, the League victory was celebrated through public gatherings at Maulavibazar, Kulaura, Sunamganj, Habiganj, Karimganj and even Badarpur. On the other hand, the result shocked the Hindus of the district who criticized the Government of Assam for permitting the entry of hundreds of Muslim League National Guards in the district, who allegedly endangered the safety and security of the Hindu population. The Congress leadership was also criticized.

189. Nirode Kumar Gupta, Swadhinata Sangramer Smriti (Bengali) Silchar, 1974, p. 251, cited in Ibid.
190.  Ibid.
191. Guha, op.cit., p. 320
192. Ibid.
for abstaining from Sylhet during the crucial days. The state of mind and views of the Sylhet Hindus immediately after the declaration of the result of the Referendum was well reflected in the view of Rabindra Nath Aditya, a Congress leader from Sylhet, who said:

"The Assam leadership, too eager to get rid of Sylhet with a view to curve out a homogenous province, arranged little protection for the minorities of Sylhet in the free exercise of their united franchise. When the result of the Referendum was declared, there was a subdued sense of relief in the Assam valley as the majority of the votes cast were in favour of Pakistan."

This view was shared by a majority of Bengali Hindus after the result of the Referendum was declared.

6.10. **Aftermath of the Sylhet Referendum**

After the Referendum, the attention was shifted to the Boundary Commission under the chairmanship of Sir Cyril Radcliffe, which was appointed to demarcate the Muslim-majority areas of the district of Sylhet and contiguous Muslim majority areas of the adjoining districts for their transfer to East Pakistan. The Muslim League submitted a memorandum to the Boundary Commission with the claim of large areas from the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Cachar and Goalpara. The basis of such a demand was contained in the Mountbatten Plan itself wherein it was mentioned that the Boundary Commission would demarcate, in addition to the district of Sylhet, the "contiguous Muslim majority areas of adjoining districts." Although at that point of time, the League's earlier demand of including the whole of Assam became a lost cause, it tried its best to include as many Muslim-majority areas bordering Bengal as possible with East Bengal as to make them parts of

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196. Rabindra Nath Aditya, From the Corridors of Memory, Karimganj, 1970, p. 31, quoted in Ibid.
197. Ibid; Bhuyan and Dey, op.cit., p. 392.
Pakistan. Therefore, when the Boundary Commission came, the Assam Muslim League and its Unit in Goalpara district in separate representations demanded the inclusion of Goalpara district in Pakistan on 2 August, 1947\(^{198}\). There was also a suggestion that the Bengali-speaking portion of Cachar district, at the least, its Hailakandi sub-division, and also the four Bengali-speaking Thanas of the Dhubri sub-division should have been transferred to Pakistan\(^{199}\).

On the other hand, there remained a confusion with regard to Karimganj and south Sylhet sub-division, Ratabari, Patharkandi, Barlekha, Kulaura, Karimganj and Srimangal were in fact Hindu-majority areas. Besides, on the extreme West of the Sylhet district, two Hindu majority Thanas of Ajmiriganj and Sulla and Maulavibazar sub-division were also claimed to fall within Hindu-majority areas. That is why in a memorandum submitted to the Boundary Commission on behalf of the Assam Government, a scheme of division of the Sylhet district on the lines of "Hindu-majority and Muslim-majority" areas was presented in which the river Kushiara was chosen as a natural boundary of the two parts of the divided Sylhet and the Assam Government claimed the portions of Karimganj and Maulavibazar sub-divisions up to the river Kushiara in the North for India, leaving the rest of the Sylhet district to Pakistan. As the confusion and apprehension persisted with regard to the areas as already mentioned, interestingly on 14th August 1947, the League flag was hoisted in Karimganj and a tense situation prevailed till the Boundary Commission Award or Radcliffe Award was published\(^{200}\).

In this context, the role played by some of the nationalist Muslims of the Cachar district deserves special mention, who posed a mighty challenge before the League in its campaign of including certain areas of the district of Cachar, mainly the Hailakapanandi sub-division and some other adjoining areas of the district.

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198. Bhuyan and Dey, op. cit, pp. 291, 393.
of Sylhet in Pakistan. Earlier, the Nationalist Muslims of Cachar constituting of intellectuals, 'Ulemas' as well as political leaders had already posed a serious challenge to the League's "Pakistan Campaign" in the district. On 20 February, 1947, Assam Nationalist Muslims' Convention was held at Silchar, Cachar, mainly under the initiative of the Nationalist Muslims of Cachar. The convention was inaugurated by Abdul Matlib Mazumder of Hailakandi, and was presided over by Maulana Ibrahim Ali Chautali of Jaintia. In the convention the demand for Pakistan by a section of the Muslims was strongly criticized and a resolution was adopted condemning the partition proposal and demanding the independence of undivided India. The convention was attended by about 15,000 Muslims who paraded the major streets of Silchar with nationalist slogans 201. They had been subjected to immense harassment by the League supporters. First, they had been attacked by the League supporters in front of the Oriental Cinema Hall at Central Road, Silchar and second, the water-base arranged for supply of drinking water to the delegates from various parts of the province, was also allegedly destroyed 202. Besides, it is also observed that there was pandemonium in the meeting as Muslim League members created trouble and the delegates could not get food and tea in the Muslim hotels which usually served food to the Muslims in the streets at that point of time. 203 Under such challenges the Nationalist Muslims of Cachar went ahead with their task of convincing the people not to support partition of the country.

In the context of the Radcliffe Commission Award and the political activities which preceded the same in Cachar, the name of Abdul Matlib Mazumder of Hailakandi, then a Minister in the Bardoloi Cabinet, also deserves special mention.

This is because the Muslim League laid special stress for including Hailakandi sub-division in Pakistan as Hailakandi was a Muslim-majority area. Even during the elections of 1946, the League carried out a vigorous campaign at Hailakandi as it was thought that the League victory in that constituency would strengthen the case of including the same in Pakistan. Sensing the significance of Hailakandi, the League stalwarts like Liyaqat Ali Khan, H.S. Suhrwary, Saadulla and Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, are said to have attended the election campaign\textsuperscript{204}. All the hopes of the League, however, were shattered by the efforts of Abdul Matlib Mazumder, a nationalist Muslim leader, who relieved the Hailakandi Assembly seat from the clutches of the League in the 1946 elections by winning the same as the Congress supported Jamiat candidate\textsuperscript{205}. Earlier, sensing Matlib Mazumder to be the stumbling block on the way of the League, Saadulla as well as Bhasani tried to pursue him to leave the Jamiat and join the League but failed\textsuperscript{206}. Along with the Congress leaders of Cachar, he organized public meetings in different parts of Sylhet on the eve of the Referendum, and urged upon the people of Sylhet to vote for retention of the district in Assam\textsuperscript{207}. When the result of the referendum was announced, and the attention was shifted to the Boundary Commission, he again organized a vigorous campaign in Hailakandi against League's demand of including the sub-division in Pakistan, and is said to have ably argued for retaining Hailakandi as well as some of the adjoining areas of the district of Sylhet in the Indian Union. As an elected representative of the area whose fate was to be decided, his views definitely carried considerable weight in the matter. Ultimately when Hailakandi was retained...

\textsuperscript{204} Lili Majindar Baruah, Khuradeo Matlib Madumderor Smritit" (in Assamese), in Ibid., p. 20.
\textsuperscript{206} Please see the article by Abdul Muhib Mazumder titled "Remembrance by a Son Down the Memory Lane" in A.U. Choudhury (ed) op.cit. (n.202), p. 11 ; Also article by Nitish Bhattacharjee titled "Hailakandite Netaji" (in Bengali) in "Hailakandi Smarnika" Published by Hailakandi district Administration as part of celebration of 50th years of Independence, in 1998.
\textsuperscript{207} J.B. Bhattacharjee, op.cit., p. 291
in India as per the Radcliff Award, he had to face immense harassment and social boycott from the side of the League supporters.\footnote{208}

The Radcliff (Boundary) Commission declared its Award only after three days of Independence. According to the Award, three Thanas of the district of Sylhet viz. Ratabari, Patharkandi and Badarpur, and half of Karimganj - were to be retained in Assam while the rest went for amalgamation with East Bengal. The declaration of the Award caused a gloom in the League camp especially in Dhubri, Karimganj and Hailakandi.\footnote{209} The Award also cast a shadow of profound disappointment amongst the non-Muslim residents of four non-Muslim majority Thanas of the Sylhet district, transferred to Pakistan viz. Sreemangal, Kamalganj, Kulaura and Barlekha. A memorandum was submitted on behalf of the inhabitants of these areas to the Boundary sub-committee, Government of India on 24 September, 1947, demanding the awarding of these four Thanas to make them parts of Assam and the Indian Union.\footnote{210} With the announcement of the Radcliff Award, the long era of the 'separatist politics' pursued by the Muslim League in India and Assam in the pre-independence period, came to an end.

Before closing the chapter, it is imperative to throw light on one of the vital questions dealt with in the chapter viz. why the League's design of the whole Province of Assam in the Eastern Zone of Pakistan failed? The simple most answer to the question may be that it was never a practicable suggestion as whatever argument might have been advanced by the League with regard to the population composition of the Province declaring the Muslims to be the majority group in

\footnote{208. Please see Mahitosh Purkayastha, op.cit., in A.U. Choudhury (ed) op.cit., pp. 29-30; Aslo see Santosh Kumar Roy, "Jononeta Abdul Matlib Mazumder" (in Bengali) in Ibid., p. 26.}
\footnote{209. Bhuyan and Dey, op.cit, pp. 291-92.}
\footnote{210. Memorandum on Sylhet Boundary Award (Redcliff Award) submitted on behalf of the non-Muslim inhabitants of the four non-Muslim majority Thanas viz., Srimangal, Kamalganj, Kulaura and Barlekha of the district of Sylhet, placed in Pakistan, on 24th September, 1947, to the Boundary sub-committee, Government of India, New Delhi as reproduced in M.Kar, Muslims in Assam politics, New Delhi, Vikas, 1997, (Annexure-A) chapter-2, pp. 76-77.}
Assam, the fact of the matter is that Assam as whole, had never been a Muslim-majority Province. That is why at one point of time even Jinnah expressed difficulty of including the whole of the Province of Assam, as already referred to elsewhere. It may be because of this that the response of the senior League leaders led by Saadulla was said to be "Lukewarm" towards the idea of Pakistan. Besides, the Congress Government tried its best to counter the Pakistan Movement. Further, division in the Muslim League Camp between Bhasani and Saadulla was no less important a factor. The lack of Muslim solidarity in the movement was another factor, as the movement was mainly conducted from the Bengal borders and the volunteers were said to be mainly from Bengal. The movement, in fact, remained concentrated mainly in the border areas though the Muslims in other parts of Assam also supported the movement and contributed towards it financially and otherwise 211. Another vital factor was that the demand for inclusion of the whole of Assam in Pakistan was an imposed one on the Assam Muslim League from the High Command, and was not a demand coming out from the grass-roots. In brief, due to these factors and lack of unity within the provincial League are considered to be the reasons for the failure of the League to achieve its demand for including Assam in Eastern Zone of Pakistan. In any way, the result of the Sylhet Referendum and the Radcliff Award rang the curtain on the long chapter of 'separatist politics' in Assam pursued by the Muslim League in the pre-independence period.

211. Bhuyan and Dey, op.cit., p. 292.