CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION

The little of the present study is self-explanatory but the term 'Separatist Politics' needs to be explained at the very outset. For the purpose of the present study, 'Separatist Politics' would refer to the politics of separatism pursued in the development of what was called "Muslim Nationalism" as distinguished from the kind of nationalism advocated by the Indian National Congress. "Muslim Nationalism" was distinguished from the "Indian Nationalism" mainly by the fact that it was based on Pan-Islamic sentiment rather than Indian sentiment, and it demanded partition of the country and the creation of a separate state viz., Pakistan for Muslims of India.

The time-span selected for the study is 1874 to 1947. 1874 is opted as the starting point, because Assam was curved out of the Dacca Division of Bengal Presidency and was made a Chief Commissioner's Province in that year. It was in that year too, the Surma Valley districts of Sylhet and Cachar along with Goalpara were curved out of the Bengal Presidency and tagged to the newly constituted Chief Commissioner's Province of Assam, to make it a viable province. This led to a conspicuous increase in the Muslim population of the state. 1947 is selected as the closing date, because it was in that year that the "Muslim Separatist Politics" reached its culminating point resulting in the partition of India and the creation of a separate homeland for the Muslims of India. It was again in 1947 that Sylhet, a prosperous and prominent district of Assam, opted for Pakistan in a Referendum.

The origin and growth of 'Muslim Separatism' in India may be traced back to the second half of the 19th century. In fact, it was after the Revolt of 1857 that the 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 feelings 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 Muslims of India. The fear of Hindu-Rule inspired the demand for partition of India, and the feeling of separateness led to the development of separate nationalism. The feeling of separateness was perhaps older, but now it gained in significance in order to fortify the Muslim's resolve to remain as an entity to himself.¹

The fear of Hindu-Rule and the feeling of separateness was, however, not a sudden development but the work of many years, which was slowly but regularly fed a series of reforms which led India towards the final reckoning of majority-rule. The feeling of separateness was deepened by the march of political events, the alleged indifference, insularity and arrogance of the Indian National Congress, the opinions and ideas of the political thinkers, intellectuals, activists as well as religious leaders, and the policies and actions of the politicians. Finally, the coming of the 1935 constitution and its operation in the Congress-led provinces during 1937-1939, is said to have convinced the Muslims that their dread of a Hindu-rule was not an empty fear. It was this conviction that made them decide that the only practicable way out to this blind alley was nothing less than complete separation². Such a resolve on the part of the Muslims got reflected in the Lahore Resolution of the All India Muslim League adopted in 1940 which formally demanded partition of the country.

Such separatism among the Muslims had its manifestation among Assam Muslims too, which played a crucial role in shaping the history of the state during the years preceding independence. In overall, during the period of the present study i.e., 1874-1947, the Muslims in Assam were mainly influenced by a sense of

² Ibid., pp. 2-3.
communal consciousness and were inspired by a feeling of separatism in making political decisions, which has been analyzed in the following chapters with reference to certain vital issues.

1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The history of the Muslims in Assam may be traced back to Muhammad Bin Bakhtyar Khilji’s invasion of Kamrupa in 1206. This was followed by many such invasions, mainly by the Muhammadan Rulers (Sultans) of Bengal in the coming years and centuries. In course of such invasions, some invaders were able to conquer some portions of Assam and to rule temporarily. After the defeat of Turbak and Hussain Khan in their attempt to conquer Assam in 1533, Assam remained free from the Western Muslim menace for many years till the Mughals who became the Masters of Bengal by 1576, started their aggression by 1615 which continued up to 1682. The period between 1615-1682 was mainly marked by Ahom-Mughal conflicts. During this period, the best organized effort to conquer Assam was made by Mir Jumla, who was the General of Mughal Emperor Aurangjeb and who was appointed Governor of Bengal by the Emperor in 1660. It was Mir Jumla who invaded Assam in 1662 and was able to conquer vast territories. However, the Ahom king Gadadhar Singha (1681-96) wrested Assam from the Mughals in 1682 and restored its original frontiers in the West except Goalpara. Goalpara remained under Muslim dominion till 1765 when with the rest of Bengal it was ceded to the East India Company.

In course of such Muslim invasions from time to time, many soldiers were captured by the local kings and many of them settled permanently in Assam and in

3. For details on these invasions please see H.K. Barpujari (Ed) The Comprehensive History of Assam (Vol-II), Publication Board, Assam, 1992, pp. 35-48, 127-142.
4. Ibid., pp. 135-142.
course of time they got assimilated with the local population. Besides, many local Assamese converted into Islam under the influence of Saint-Preachers who entered Assam during the period of Muslim invasions. In addition to this, some Muslim professionals also came on the invitation of the Ahom Kings and settled permanently.\(^6\) In this way, the number of Muslims in Assam gradually increased during the medieval period though they could not establish permanent rule in Assam.\(^7\) However, despite their increase in number, their numerical strength in overall population of Assam was so negligible at that time that they could hardly influence the politics of the province.\(^8\) The Treaty of Yandaboo (1826) marked the beginning of the process of British annexation of Assam and by 1840 the whole of Brahmaputra Valley\(^9\) was annexed to the British empire\(^10\). For many years after its annexation, Assam formed part of the Dacca Division of Bengal Presidency. In 1874, Assam was carved out of the Bengal Presidency and made a Chief Commissioner's province. However, the province was considered too small from economic and administrative viewpoints\(^11\). Thus, in the same year the Surma Valley\(^12\) districts of Sylhet and Cachar along with Goalpara were carved out of the Bengal presidency and tagged to the province\(^13\). The formation of the new province brought a drastic change to the demography of the state. It resulted in the sudden increase of the numerical strength of the Muslim population of the state from 5.9% (till 1874) to about 29% of the total population\(^14\). Such increase in the numerical strength of Muslims was to play a vital role in the politics of Assam in the years to come and was to leave behind a legacy which was to influence the politics of the state even after independence.

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\(^7\) Ibid., p. 20.
\(^8\) M. Kar, Muslims in Assam Politics, New Delhi, Vikas, 1997, p. IX (Introduction).
\(^9\) Before the British Conquest, Assam consisted of the Brahmaputra Valley districts of Darrang, Kamrup, Lakhimpur, Nowgong and Sivsagar.
\(^10\) Kar op.cit., p. X.
\(^12\) Sylhet and Cachar districts together constituted Surma Valley before Independence.
\(^14\) Based on Census, 1871, cited in Kar, Loc.cit.
The amalgamation of the districts of Sylhet, Cachar and Goalpara was vehemently opposed by the people of these districts and in Sylhet there started a Sylhet-Bengal Reunion Movement 15. The movement, at the beginning, was supported by both the Hindus and Muslims of the district of Sylhet. However, divergence appeared in 1920s when a section of the Muslims began to drift apart from the common cause of Sylhet-Bengal Reunion and started to think in terms of their communal interests. In fact, "the prospect of Muslims outnumbering Hindus in the province and prevalent majority of the Muslims in Surma Valley placing them in a privileged position"16 might have influenced them to change their stand on the reunion question and gradually Muslims in increasing numbers began to oppose the Reunion Movement and support the retention of the district of Sylhet in Assam17. As a result, the Sylhet-Bengal Reunion Movement suffered a setback. Saadullah, the most prominent Muslim leader of the Brahmaputra Valley, took the lead in forging unity among the Muslims of both the valleys on the Sylhet transfer issue and appealed to the Surma Valley Muslims not to support separation of Sylhet from Assam as according to him, Sylhet's continuance in Assam was to the advantage of the Muslims of both the Valleys. As long as Sylhet remained in Assam, Saadullah viewed, the Muslims, who constituted one-third of the province's population would hold the balance of Assam's electoral politics 18.

The Assamese people, the Assamese Hindus to be specific, never welcomed Sylhet in Assam since the district was tagged to Assam in 1874, as they considered it to be a source of valley-conflict or valley-rivalry, and also an obstacle in the way of the progress of the province.19 That is why when Brojendra Narayan Choudhury of Sylhet moved a resoulation in the Assam Legislative Council, the Assamese Hindus in Assam supported the retention of Sylhet in Assam.16 As a result, the Sylhet-Bengal Reunion Movement suffered a setback. Saadullah, the most prominent Muslim leader of the Brahmaputra Valley, took the lead in forging unity among the Muslims of both the valleys on the Sylhet transfer issue and appealed to the Surma Valley Muslims not to support separation of Sylhet from Assam as according to him, Sylhet's continuance in Assam was to the advantage of the Muslims of both the Valleys. As long as Sylhet remained in Assam, Saadullah viewed, the Muslims, who constituted one-third of the province's population would hold the balance of Assam's electoral politics 18.

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15. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
Council recommending reunion of Sylhet with Bengal in 1924, it was unanimously supported by the Assamese Hindus. The Assamese Muslims, however, were divided with regard to their opinion on the question of transfer of Sylhet to Bengal. While some of them supported the transfer, others opposed the same. In 1926 again, when another resolution recommending transfer of Sylhet to Bengal was moved in the Council by Sadananda Dowerah, an Assamese Hindu member, it was unanimously supported by the Assamese Hindus and the Surma Valley Hindus except two Cachar Hindu members. The Muslim opinion was again divided. In between 1926 - 1928, however, there was a revulsion of the opinion of those Muslims who earlier supported the transfer of Sylhet and therefore, when in 1928, Muhammad Bakht Mazumdar, a Sylhet Muslim member, moved a resolution in the Council recommending retention of Sylhet in Assam, all the Muslim members of both the Valleys unanimously supported the resolution. This time also the Assamese Hindus, as earlier, unanimously supported the separation of Sylhet from Assam and opposed the move for retention of Sylhet in Assam. It is interesting to note that after 1928, while the Surma Valley veered more and more towards status quo, the demand for separation of Sylhet was raised more by the Assamese Hindus who continued their clamour for separation of the district from Assam and the urge for 'getting rid of Sylhet' continued to haunt the Assamese Hindu mind in many years to come.

The Reunion movement suffered further setback when there was a reversal of opinion of the Hindus as well as the Muslims of the Sylhet district on the question of Re-union after the Lahore Resolution demanding partition of the country was passed by the All India Muslim League in 1940. The Muslims who had for

20. Proceedings of the Assam Legislative Council (Debate on the Transfer of Sylhet), The Assam Gazette, Part-VI, 1924.
quite sometime opposed the district’s reunion with Bengal, now favoured its reunion with Eastern Bengal which was to form the eastern wing of the proposed Pakistan State\(^{24}\). Such reverse stand of the Muslims left the Hindus of the district in a miserable condition. The Hindus after fighting so long for the district's reunion with Bengal, now wanted its retention in Assam as they apprehended that Sylhet's reunion with Bengal might lead to its inclusion into the proposed state of Pakistan\(^{25}\).

As already stated, the increase in the numerical strength of the Muslims had much to do with changing the nature of politics in Assam. The Single-most important factor which contributed to the enormous rise and growth of the Muslim population in Assam in the 20th century is referred to as the phenomenon of 'immigration'. In fact, in the early years of the 20th century, vast plots of cultivable wastelands began to attract a large number of Muslim farm-labourers and cultivators from adjoining Bengal districts where plots of cultivable land were very scarce. They began to settle in increasing numbers in the Brahmaputra Valley districts of Darrang, Goalpara, Kamrup and Nowgong\(^{26}\). As a result, there was a conspicuous increase in the Muslim population of the state\(^{27}\) which caused apprehension among the Assamese Hindus of being numerically swamped by the new-comers. Such apprehension of the Assamese people made the issue of immigration which was basically an economic one, a general socio-political issue of the Assamese people\(^{28}\).

To restrict the indiscriminate settlement of the immigrants, the officials of Nowgong District devised an administrative measure known as the "Line System" in 1916 which was first put into action in 1920 in the Nowgong district and the Barpeta Sub-division of the Kamrup district. Under the "Line System", land was

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\(^{24}\) Kar. op.cit., p. 40.
\(^{25}\) Ibid.
\(^{26}\) Kar. op.cit., p. X.
\(^{27}\) Political History of Assam (Vol-III), A.C. Bhuyan and Sibopada Dey (eds), Gauhati, Govt of Assam, 1980, p. 262. (Hereinafter PHA-III).
\(^{28}\) Kar op.cit., pp. X-XI.
classified into three categories, viz., (i) those in which immigrants might settle freely; (ii) those in which they could not settle; and (iii) where a line was drawn, only they could settle on one side of it. Although the "Line System" succeeded in restricting large scale and indiscriminate occupation of land by the immigrants, it was not able to put a complete stop on the settlement of the immigrants in the Assamese land as the settlement officials were alleged to have not been sincere enough in the thorough discharge of their duties. 29

The Muslim leaders of the State opposed the anti-immigration move as demanded by the Assamese people. Sayidur Rahman, a member of the Assam Legislative Council from the Brahmaputra Valley termed the objections of the Assamese people against immigration as sentimental on 23rd July 1927. The Assamese Muslims in general welcomed immigrants with the hope that they would be assimilated in due course and would numerically strengthen the base of Muslim communal politics in the province. On 16th March, 1936, another Council member Nuruddin Ahmed even demanded abolition of the "Line System" in the Council as he felt that it had stood in the way of absorbing the immigrants into the Assamese Society. The Assamese public opinion, on the other hand, as voiced through the Council debates, Ryot Sabhas, the Asamiya Samrakshini Sabha and the Assamese press - were vocal enough in opposing the 'anti-Line' propaganda. 30

Thus, with regard to two major issues, viz., issue of retention of Sylhet in Assam and the Line System, the Muslims of both the valleys of the province expressed a more or less unanimous opinion. In fact, by the third decade of the 20th century, the progress of education and political awakening made the Muslims conscious of their numerical strength as a community and its importance in the politics of Assam and, therefore, they began to raise voices for their communal interests. They were almost unanimous in pressing for the demands like retention

29. PHA-II, p. 310.
30. Ibid., pp. 313-314.
of Sylhet in Assam, abolition of "Line System," separate representation in services and local bodies, communal representation etc. Besides, introduction of limited self-government since the first decade of the 20th century and pro-Muslim government sympathy allowed the Muslims to play an important role in Assam politics and to press for their communal issues. During the periods of Council Government, Dyarchy, as well as Provincial Autonomy, the Muslims, on account of Government sympathy, were said to have been more than adequately represented in the representative bodies, and were able to play a more than significant role in the politics of the province. In brief, conspicuous rise in Muslim population of Assam owing to immigration of Muslim farmers and peasants from East Bengal since the first decade of the 20th century, their growing political consciousness coupled with Government sympathy, enabled them to play an important role, and on occasions, even decisive role in the politics of the Province since then till independence in 1947.  

The formation of Muslim League in Assam was a landmark in the history of 'Muslim Separatist Politics' in Assam in the pre-independence period as it was this organization which played the most crucial role in the direction of inducting a 'communal consciousness' amongst majority of the Muslims and thereby giving birth to a separatist tendency among them on each and every question of political importance. In Surma Valley, a branch of the Muslim League was formed in 1928 and by 1930's the League began to emerge as a vital force in the valley under whose aegis the Muslims began to think more and more in terms of the communal interests. Despite the formation of its branch in Assam in 1928, the activities of the Muslim League were mainly restricted to the Surma Valley and the party could not influence the politics of the entire province till 1937. The party assumed truly
provincial character when Sir Muhammad Saadulla - the most prominent Muslim leader of the Brahmaputra Valley joined the League after the Lucknow Session of the All India Muslim League in 1937 and its organization in the Brahmaputra Valley came into being in 1938 in the district of Nowgong with Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani as its President, and the Muslim League politics in Assam actually began after that. The Assam Provincial Muslim League was reconstituted in 1939 with Saadulla as the President, Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani as the Vice-President and Abdul Matin Choudhury of Sylhet as its Secretary. Thus, the Muslim League in Assam became truly provincial with representations from both the Valleys of the province.

Meanwhile, the elections for the Assam Legislative Assembly were held in 1937, (under the provisions of the Govt. of India Act. 1935) and the Congress Party emerged as the single largest party in the Assam Assembly. But the party did not go ahead with the task of forming government as its Central leadership decided against acceptance of office. This opportunity brought into the picture an experienced administrator as well as a shrewd politician Sir Muhammad Saadulla, who formed the first Cabinet under the Act of 1935 and with short breaks over a period of two years, remained the Premier of Assam till the elections of 1946. During his tenure, Saadulla was criticized for allegedly adopting pro-Muslim, pro-Pakistan policies in matters of migration, land settlement etc.

Since late 1930's till 1947 the Muslim League commanded the support of an overwhelming majority of the Muslims of the State. However, a small section of the nationalist Muslims and Jamiat-Ulema-E-Hind - the premier organization of the nationalist Muslims, supported the Congress during that crucial phase. During

38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., p. XII.
40. Ibid., p. XIII.
that period, the Jamiat made sincere efforts towards bringing more and more Muslims within the fold of the nationalist ideology spearheaded by the Congress, but despite such efforts, as it has been observed, "during the entire decade of 1937-1947, not even 500 Muslims joined the Party as members."41 This may be because of the League's propaganda of early 1940s which was directed at convincing the Muslims that the Congress was primarily a "Hindu Organization." 42

By 1940, Muslim League activities in Assam were intensified 43. After the Lahore Session of All India Muslim League of 24th March, 1940, which formally demanded partition of the Country 44, the activities of the Muslim League in Assam mainly centred around the issue of including Assam into Eastern Zone of Pakistan. As stated earlier, after the Lahore Session of the League, the attitude of the Muslims on the question of Sylhet-Bengal Reunion underwent a reversal and they now desired inclusion of the district into the Eastern Wing of the proposed Pakistan State.

The elections of 1946 45 were mainly fought on the question of undivided India and Pakistan. 46 While the Muslim League resolved to fight it on the single issue of Pakistan, the Congress contested the same on the issue of the transfer of power to the Indians. 47 In the elections, all the general seats were won by the Congress Party, but 31 out of 34 seats reserved for Muslims, were won by the Muslim League. This success of the League in the reserved constituencies strengthened its position in its demand for including the whole of Assam into the proposed state of Pakistan. Subsequently, however, the party seemed to be not so much serious about the whole of Assam rather seemed to be satisfied with the

41. Ibid., p. XII.
42. PHA-III.p. 259.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid. p. 258.
45. The elections of 1946 were on the basis of limited franchise and separate (communal) electorate.
46. Kar. op.cit., p. XIII.
47. PHA-III.p. 271.
result of the famous "Sylhet Referendum" of 1947 which resulted in the inclusion of the prosperous district of Sylhet (barring three & a half Thanas constituting the present Karimganj district of Assam) into East Pakistan.\(^{48}\) Partition of the country along with the result of the Sylhet Referendum marked the close of the chapter of the Muslim Separatist Politics spearheaded by the Muslim League in Assam in the pre-independence period.

It is thus evident from the foregoing account that majority of the Muslims during the period 1874 to 1947 were mainly influenced by a spirit of 'separatism' or a sense of 'communal consciousness' in making their political decisions. But why did the Muslims in majority adopt the separatist path and what was the impact of this separatism on the politics of Assam? The present study has been conducted to find an answer to this question.

1.2. REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES:

Although very few studies have been made on the role of Muslims in Assam politics, a large number of works are available on the role of Muslims in Indian politics. Some important studies are reviewed below:

N. Hasnain in his work "Hindu-Muslim Relations"\(^{49}\) provided an analysis of the relation between the Hindus and the Muslims from the viewpoint of a psychologist. The author tried to identify the key-factors affecting the relation between the two communities and argued that the factor of inequality, discrimination etc. play a vital role in the development of bitter relationship between the two. Even though the work is pioneering and important, it is too simplistic an explanation of the complicated subject of Hindu-Muslim relations.

S.C. Bhatt's work "The Great Divide - Muslim Separatism and Partition"\(^{50}\)

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\(^{48}\) Kar. Loc.cit.

\(^{49}\) N. Hasnain, Hindu-Muslim Relations, New Delhi, APH Publishing Concern, 1997.

\(^{50}\) S.C. Bhatt., The Great Divide - Muslim Separatism & Partition, New Delhi, Gyan Publishing House, 1998.
is an attempt at analyzing the factors that promoted the growth of "Muslim Separatism" which ultimately led to the partition of the country. The author holds Muhammad Ali Jinnah and his followers to be responsible for the partition of the country and strongly reacts to the apologists of Jinnah, who tried to shift the blame on others. To him, Jinnah and his followers created a condition in which partition became inevitable. He also held poet Muhammad Iqbal no less responsible for the partition of the country for his open advocacy of a separate Muslim State.

In brief, the author showed that the Muslim League's justification of Hindus and Muslims forming two separate nations worked so effectively in the minds of the common Muslims that gradually an overwhelming majority of them began to support the cause of a separate state for the Muslims. It is a work that seems to be more a reaction against the apologists of Jinnah than an attempt at analyzing the factors which contributed to the growth of separatism and partition of the country.

S.M. Ikram's work "Indian Muslims and Partition of India" provides a valuable insight on the lives and activities of some of the leaders of the Muslims who spearheaded the movement for a separate state for the Muslims of India. It is a good biographical sketch containing valuable information, but it lacks scholarly analysis in theoretical perspective.

Peter Hardy's "The Muslims of British India" is a widely referred work on the subject under discussion. It attempts a general history of the Muslims of British India and shows how the inter-play of the memoirs of the past Muslim supremacy, Islamic religious aspirations and modern Muslims social and economic anxieties coupled with the political needs of the alien power gradually fostered a separate Muslim politics. The author stresses the force of religion in the growth of Muslim political unity. The work is invaluable as it provides a scholarly account of the sensitive issue of Muslim separatist politics.

Moin Shakir's work "Islam in Indian Politics" is a very interesting one as it looks into the "Muslim Situation" and the "Muslim Question" not only from socio-political but also from the economic perspective. The author at the very outset, cautions the readers about the expressions like "Muslim politics", "Muslim Problems", or "Muslim Mind" etc., which are misleading as they do not reflect the view of the whole community. In the introductory, the author opines that the term "Muslim Politics" need not signify the politics of the entire community, rather it is the politics of a small segment - rich, neo-rich and well-born. He further stresses that the Muslim situation cannot be understood unless one takes into account the nature of democracy, democratic politics and class character of the Indian State. The book is interesting as it looks upon the "Muslim Question" from an angle which is quite different from other authors on the subject.

"Muslim Politics in India" by S.K. Ghosh nicely presents some of the contemporary issues concerning the Muslims Community and covers the topics such as Muslims Politics in India, Muslim Communal Organizations, Politics of Muslim Personal Law etc. The main focus of the book is on the role of so-called Muslim communal organizations and the fundamentalist leaders in the politics of the country. Though a good attempt at analyzing some of the hard realities of contemporary Indian politics, the book lacks proper conceptual framework and nowhere analyses what does the term "Muslim Politics" mean? Besides, ignoring the role of non-Muslim communal organizations, the author solely blames the so-called Muslim communal organizations and some Muslim politicians for dividing the society along religious and communal lines.

In "Indian National Congress and the Muslims", Padmasha nicely analyses the relation between the Congress and the Muslims and its impact on the freedom
movement. The book tries to address some of the vital questions such as - why did the Congress fail to achieve communal harmony in India? what was the turning point which ultimately led to the partition of the country and the creation of a separate state for the Muslims?, and the like. It also provides a detailed historical analysis of some of the important events leading to the partition of the country.

K.K. Aziz's History of partition of India - Origin and Development of the Idea of Pakistan\(^56\) (in 4 Vols) contains a very comprehensive analysis of the origin and development of the idea of Pakistan. Although many of the observations made in the book may not be acceptable to those subscribing to the Indian nationalist viewpoint, it is interesting to know the view of a Pakistani author on the subject. The work is important as it analyses the subject from a viewpoint different from the ones traditionally held by the authors having an Indian Nationalist point of view.

Mushirul Hasan's work "Nationalism and Communal Politics in India (1885 - 1930)"\(^57\) is a very important work on the subject under discussion. The book offers an analysis of some important themes relating to Indian nationalism and the growth of community-oriented formations which are described as 'communal' and 'separatist'. The main concern of the author is to analyze the relationship of the Muslims with nationalist forces, spearheaded by the Indian National Congress. The book also attempts to answer the important historical question - why did secular nationalism fail to create a united nation, drawing equally upon the participation of major communities? The work is scholarly and important one. It contains valuable information about the most crucial phase during which the separatist politics took its shape.

\(^{57}\) Murshirul Hasan, Nationalism and Communal Politics in India (1885-1930), New Delhi, Manohar Publishers, 2000 (Reprint).
Mushirul Hasan's another work "Islam in the Sub-continent : Muslims in a Plural Society"58 presents an account of the ideas and movements of the Indian Muslims during last two centuries. The book focuses attention on the relationship between the Congress and the Muslims during the crucial decade of 1930s and also analyses the rise of "Muslim Nationalism", and tries to provide a genesis of the communal divisions between Hindus and Muslims in India in the post-independence period.

M. Kar's "Muslim in Assam politics"59 is a pioneering effort in the direction of an analysis of the history of the Muslims in Assam politics. The author tries to explain how the Muslims, who constitute a third of the State's population, influenced and on occasions, even determined the direction of politics in the state of Assam. The study begins with a brief outline of the history of Muslims in Assam from 1205 - 1947, and this is important from the view point of the present study. The author explains how the Muslims as a community emerged as a dominant political force. The work also contains a detailed discussion on the immigration Policy up to 1991. The book, although an important one, is more descriptive than analytical. Besides, some of the observations made in the book were not properly analyzed.

H.N. Rafiabadi's work "Assam - From Agitation to Accord"60 contains a chapter titled "Muslims in Assam - A Brief Introduction" in which the author seeks to answer some vital questions such as - What were the factors that led to the spread of Islam in Assam? What were the reasons for the large-scale immigration of Muslims to Assam and what has been their contribution to the economy of Assam? How did the alienation process start for the Muslims? What were the factors which separated Assamese Muslims from Bengal Muslims, and Bengali Muslims

and Bengali Hindus of Assam? Though the main focus of the work is on the Assam Agitation of late 1970s and early 1980s, yet the book contains some valuable information on the topic of Muslim Politics in Assam.

"Assam Muslims : Politics and Cohesion"\footnote{61} by B.J. Dev and D.K. Lahiri, is an attempt at analyzing some of the areas of the Muslim Politics in Assam which remained hitherto unexplored. The book seeks to analyze the cross-currents of Muslims politics in Assam which generated dynamism in state's politics. The work also intends to unfold the dimensions of political developments led by Muslims and those concerning their fate. The book deals with the social setting and sentiments of Assam Muslims and touches upon some vital issues like Muslim League Politics and its impact on Assam in the pre-independence period and the important issue of immigration.

In "Muslims in Assam (1200 - 2000)\footnote{62} , S.U. Ahmed elaborately deals with the history of settlement of Muslims in Assam, their socio-economic conditions and their political position throughout the historical periods. The book also touches upon some of the important topics like Line System and Mass Eviction (1946 - 47), Riot of 1950, Nehru -Liyaqat Agreement (1950), Census of 1951 and National Register of Citizens(NRC). Besides, the author tries to project how badly the Muslims suffered during the Assam Agitation (1979 - 85) and how the genuine Indian citizens were harassed in the name of deporting the foreigners. Though the book contains important historical information and covers a very long period, at times, it lacks scholarly analysis.

M. Kar's another book with the same title viz., Muslims in Assam Politics\footnote{63} is a pioneering and indepth study of Assam politics in the pre-independence period with special reference to the role of Muslims. The author presents a

63. M.Kar, Muslims in Assam, New Delhi, Omsons, 1977.}
systematic and chronological analysis of the coming of the Muslims in Assam since earliest times, their role in the politics of the province with special reference to the vital issues such as Sylhet-Bengal Reunion, Immigration, Partition Politics etc., on the basis of original archival records. The book contains 16 chapters dealing with different dimensions of the role of Muslims in the politics of Assam in the pre-independence period. The last five chapters of the book throw light on the vital issues like 'Muslims in Freedom Struggle', 'Assam in Muslim Geo-politics', 'Role of Assam Provincial Muslim League', and 'Sylhet Referendum'. The book with its exhaustive analysis on various crucial themes concerning the Muslims of Assam in the pre-independence period, can certainly serve the purpose of a base-book for preliminary study for any researcher on the subject.

Jinnah: India-Partition-Independence by Jaswant Singh is perhaps the first attempt by an Indian to draw an analytical political biography of Jinnah. The main thirst of the book is to answer the vital question- why and how did the transformation in Jinnah from "The Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity" (as he was earlier described), to the 'Creator of Pakistan' take place? The author also touches upon the issue of 'Muslim Nationalism' which ultimately led to the partition of the country. The book contains eleven chapters dealing with the major political developments of the country starting from the beginning of Jinnah's political carrier till independence, creation of Pakistan, and his final journey as the Governor General of Pakistan, till his death on 11 September, 1948. The book has been enriched with an exhaustive list of 12 Appendices containing many important documents such as Shimla Delegation and the Formation of the Muslim League, Lucknow Pact, Cabinet Mission Plan (1946), Partition (Mountbatten) Plan (Statement of 3 June, 1947), etc. The book deserves a thorough reading by any researcher on the subject as it contains valuable information based on certain rare archival records.

It is thus apparent that though there are a number of scholarly works on what is called 'Muslim Politics' in India, there are not many works on the role of Muslims in the politics of Assam. Whatever studies on this subject are there, they are descriptive and historical accounts without an attempt to identify the factors responsible for making a great section of the Muslims to adopt a separatist path. In view of these limitations of the available works, the present study acquires significance.

1.3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The main objectives with which the present study has been conducted are:

(i) To identify the circumstances under which separatist tendency developed amongst a section of the Muslims in Assam; and

(ii) To understand the impact of this tendency on the politics of Assam.

1.4. HYPOTHESIS:

The study has been conducted with a view to examine the hypothesis that majority of the Muslims in Assam during 1874-1947 have been influenced by their communal interest and the consideration of pan-Islamic fraternity rather than nationalist aspirations, and this has mainly been responsible for the birth of Muslim Separatist Politics in Assam.

1.5. SOURCES OF DATA & METHODOLOGY:

The nature of the study makes it imperative that the method of historical analysis of relevant information has been employed to test the veracity of the
hypothesis proposed. The main information required, has been collected from primary sources as far as possible. Secondary sources have been used where primary sources were not available. In brief, books, gazettes, memoirs, newspapers, assembly proceedings, government and other archival records etc., have been used to derive conclusions.

1.6. ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT:

The report of the investigation has been organized into the following chapters:

Chapter -I : Introduction.

Chapter -II : Sylhet-Bengal Reunion Movement and Assam Muslims.

Chapter -III : Politics of Immigrants and Line System- Role of Muslims.

Chapter -IV : Saadulla Ministries (1937-1946) and the Issue of Immigration.

Chapter -V : Bardoloi Government and the Politics of Eviction of Immigrants.

Chapter -VI : All India Partition Politics and Assam Muslims.

Chapter - VII : Conclusion.