CHAPTER V

POLITICAL MOBILIZATION OF MUSLIMS IN ASSAM

There has been a remarkable socio-economic and political transformation taking place in India since its independence in 1947. These changes are not only peripheral to social phenomenon but also cover whole infrastructural transformation of the society including the penetration to the periphery to the society. Therefore, political changes in the country do not mean only a change in voting behaviours and party preferences but also refers a fundamental transformation in the public orientations towards politics.

As the facts and discussions in the earlier chapter testify these changes have permeated in full measures (like other Indian states) among the Muslims in the state of Assam. Exposure to new political institutions, people’s direct contact with political parties, involvement in elections and campaigning have by and large been responsible for new political perceptions which in Weiner’s terminology is the “emerging mass political culture” as distinguished from the elite culture of India. In this chapter the nature and magnitude of political mobilisation of Muslims in Assam has been discussed. Special importance has been given to analysing the role of political parties in the process of mobilization.

Political parties perform a crucial functions particularly in a society like India where open and competitive politics is relatively a new phenomenon. In such a
society they play active role in the institutionalization of political system and in the process of national integration. As a result of their internal competitions for holding power, every community or group at the "periphery" of the social system is mobilized into the centre of organized politics. These political parties provide foci to durable political identification among the large mass of voters who are still apolitical. Thus, they make people's participation in the political decision making meaningful and relevant.

It is seemed that along with parties at the national level, regional parties also perform important functions in espousing a transitory interest or a temporary cause. In a culturally plural and socially diversified society like India it is often observed that national parties due to their ideological or structural constraints do not relate themselves to a variety of local and regional issues of highly pluralistic nature (especially a variety of ethnic and religious interest) which normally arise at local levels. In such a vent political parties having regional support base and projecting specific ethnic group interest become instruments of politically left out peripheral groups in the society. In fact, given India's social, cultural, and historical diversity, it is only natural that regional parties play an important role in the country's political life. Because of India's federal system, state assembly votes are held in an electoral arena that often enables regional parties to obtain power by espousing issues of regional concern. Simultaneously, the single-member district, first-past-the-post electoral system has given the advantage to national parties, such as the Congress, which possess a realistic chance of gaining or retaining
power at the national level and the opportunity to use central government
resources to reward their supporters. However, as India's party system becomes
more fragmented with the decline of the Congress (I), the regional parties are
likely to play an important role in mobilizing popular support at the national
level. Therefore, it was not only expected to emerge these regional parties but
indeed an ardent need of these mushrooming political parties at the regional
levels. The functional aspects of this development are:

(1)- Realisation of democratic ideals through power sharing or
decentralisation of authority in this highly diverse society.
(2)- Easy translation of local issues into political terms.
(3)- Easy weaving of diverse parochial sentiments into the
mainstream of national politics and finally.
(4)- Bringing up of numerous primordial groups into the framework
of a common political discourse.

Here, our study is intended to examine the extent of the performance of
political parties regarding their functions of mobilizing people in the real sense. It
has been expected that political parties are structural units of the political system.
They perform the functions of drawing in over more strata of the population from
the periphery of the society towards the centre of organized politics. Regardless of
their organization and ideological boundaries political parties tend to increase and
diversify their support base both by promoting and reducing channels to
previously mobilized voters and attracting new groups of citizens into the central
political area from one election to another. In this process of political socialisation
the citizens come to develop political identifications and interest perceptions. Moreover, they even can take positions on larger issues all of which inform their preferences in elections as well as their general behaviour in politics.

The aforesaid functions of political parties are crucial for the survival and stability of political system. The persistence of political systems depends on whether a large proportion of voter population is within the political system or outside it; whether an overgrowing number of population feels a stake in the system, or are alienated from the system. It will be possible to establish a consensus on the legitimacy of the representative system and the rules of the game only when a large segment of population has developed a secular collective identification with political parties which cut across primordial group identification. Whether the acute problems of economic development, gross disparities in income and regional imbalances will work themselves out within the framework of democratic institutions or undermine the institutional arrangements of democracy. This would be ultimately dependent on how permeable and adaptive party structures are in absorbing vast peripheries of the population into their support structures and communicating their interest to the decision making centers of the society.

**COMPAIGN EXPOSURE AND POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT**

*With the rise of muslim population* in the State of Assam, their political activism has also been increasing. A significantly large number of Muslims are now not only registered voters, but they also have been taking part in local and
national elections. The Muslim lobby in Assam had become dramatically more active, often influencing MLAs and MPs to vote on particular issues in a particular manner. More Muslims are turning out for local and national rallies and traveling great distances at often great expenses.

We have made an attempt to observe the relevance of party exposure for Muslim community’s interest in politics and attitudes revealing political system support. This can be seen if we divide our sample by extent of each respondent’s exposure to the parties in the campaign of 2004. We have used a device namely “Campaign Exposure Index” in order to determine the campaign exposure of the respondents. The device is simply a summation of dichotomized responses to the following:

(1) Followed politics in the media of mass communication.
(2) Attended election meetings, rallies etc.
(3) Contacted by party canvassers or met party candidates.

We have found four types of extracts as a result of analyzing these quarries which has a scoring of all three (i.e., Index-3) to non-positive (Index-0) response.

TABLE 5-1 CAMPAIGN EXPOSURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Different Levels of Exposure</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Index-0</td>
<td>Completely Out of Contact</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index-1</td>
<td>Minimally Exposed</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index-2</td>
<td>Considerably Exposed.</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index-3</td>
<td>Highly Exposed.</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A general analysis of the table 5-1 shows that Muslims in Assam have a satisfactory response to election campaign efforts of political parties. At the same time, political parties in the state are becoming very much sophisticated in their campaign techniques. The data of the campaign exposure index indicates merely 9% of the respondents is completely out of contact, while about 38% of our sample is minimally exposed to the election campaign process. It also gives us pleasure to find out 29% respondents as considerably exposed on the one hand and remaining 24% constitute the high exposure on the other hand in the elections. Here it is worth mentioning that though data is the culmination of combining exposure levels of all the three types of elections, yet regarding the local election campaigns the figure is more impressive than the exposure level of the Parliamentary or Assembly election. There may be multiple reasons for that difference. Most probable among these reasons are-

(1) People have generally more expectation on candidates at the local levels as those candidates are mostly known to them.

(2) It is easier to join in election meetings, rallies etc. at the local level elections as these small meetings are held near the villages. (i.e., Tea estates, village markets, school grounds etc.)

(3) Local level rallies were arranged by some political parties through using priests (IMAM) of locality (Mohallas). These religious leaders could easily mobilize the Muslim community at Mhalla level that was not possible for a wide area as the scope of Mahallas do not cover a whole MLA or MP constituency.
(4) Electoral malpractices like booth capturing, picketing, use of money and muscle powers etc. are less found at the local level elections. Therefore, people can safely participate in the electoral process.

However, there is no doubt that political parties have to a large extent succeeded during the recent years in penetrating into this religious community of the society that constitutes our sample. At the same time, our survey does not find any notable distinction among the inhabitant Muslims of Assam in both the rural and urban areas. Therefore, we did not feel it necessary to discuss rural and urban issues with some specific column. Yet, the exposure level of Muslims in the state is not negligible in comparison with modern democratic world. The political activity of this group has increased dramatically within the past twenty five years as a result of relentless efforts of United Minority Front (UMF) formed after facing tangible prejudice and bigotry during 1983 Agitation. Of course, it was in the 1985 campaign and immediately afterwards that Muslims became significantly and dramatically more active.

The data reveals a specific co-relation between the level of political involvement and the level of exposure to the campaign and party as a result of matching the two. We have chosen three factors to highlight the over-all political involvement of the respondents. These factors are-

(1) Interest in politics (both some as well as great deal of interest)
(2) Voting in elections (of all types)
(3) Active beyond voting (including participation in various political activities)
Respondents having exposure index “0” constitute even less than one tenth (9%) of total sample in the last election in which a good percentage of six (6) take interest in politics, while about seventeen percent (17) voted in the last election. The data also shows that even among this category almost two percent (2%) respondents are active beyond voting. This percentage indicate, that even among those Muslims who are not touched upon by the comparing of political parties or candidates are to an extent involved in the political process of the system. This category people of Muslim citizen of Assam were generally found in the Mongaldoi constituency of Darrang district in the state. The chief reason behind
this development is that Muslims of that constituency have been fed up by the process of illegal evictions, deportations and being the prey of communal attacks. The Nellie Massacre of 1983 was the worst brutal such event aimed at annihilating Muslims by mass killing in the area was also interpreted by certain scholars as a political move. In the words of Hiren Barguhain “one can not escape the naked truth that it was calculated and premeditated genocide of the Muslims by a united front of the government, the local administration, the political parties the press and the RSS led agitators.”. In order to escape from this type of harassment and genocide Muslims began taking interest and tried to participate in the political life.

According to several newspapers (like The Sentinel, The Pioneer and India Today) these people, before 1983 could not participate in the political process due to the thug fear of ASSU and RSS in their mind, which leveled them as Bangladeshi. They were not approached by political parties as there were as many as 70,000 cases registered against these alleged foreigners. Until the establishment of Congress regime in the state they could not fearlessly participate in the electoral process. In fact, according to some local magazine these people were blocked to participate in the electoral process by some political parties and student organizations.

Turning towards minimally exposed category (i.e. respondents having campaign exposure index-1) which is a little less than two fifth (38%) of the total sample, we can notice that an impressive score of more than one third (i.e., 35%)
are interested in politics, while a similarly admirable percentage of little less than two third (i.e., 64%) voted in the elections. At the same time as usual in all societies modern or primitive the percentage is found small as regard to the activeness of people beyond voting in the political process. Thus, our survey shows a relatively minimal number of twenty one percent (21%) Muslim population who are active beyond voting in this category. Majority of this category of the sample are undoubtedly, dormant participants or active intermittently in politics.

Coming to the considerably exposed category (i.e., 29% of the sample) the data shows sixty two percent (62%) interested in politics, while a good percentage of sixty six (66%) are reported to turned up for voting in the last elections. A comparatively fair percentage of (36%) thirty six of our sample is found active beyond voting during the recent held elections. This type of admirable percentage is recorded by several newspapers, dailies, weeklies or monthlies as the first record breaking history of political participation in Assam.

All these reports, articles or editorials have a common assessment that this development has taken place due to the emergence of the comprehensive political party namely A U D F. Muslims in Assam, realizing their growing political potential, and the opportunity to affect change in their community a coalition of eight Assamese Muslim groups have launched an effort to register Muslim voters in anticipation of the year-2000 election. This process was culminated with formation of AUDF prior to the 2006 Assembly election. For the first time in the
history of Assam a party has been formed in which all minorities, mostly the Muslims of the state could get a forum for their political activities. Due to their being alleged as illegal Bangladeshis Muslims could not become active members of any political party in the state since 1983 agitation.

Finally, we turn the focus towards the highly exposed category, respondents who constitute a little less than one-fourth (24%) of our total sample. After having a glance on Table; 5-2, we can safely come into the conclusion that higher exposure leads to higher percentage of active participation in politics. Our survey reports that in the recent election, seventy seven (77%) respondents were interested in politics, while more than four-fifth (83%) are voted in the election. Simultaneously, the report proves extra-ordinary democratic development by showing two third (66%) sample are active beyond voting.

The aforesaid discussion brings-out a distinct pattern of analysis regarding the co-relation between the campaign exposure and political participation. The exposure to the party and campaign is concomitant with the frequency of participation in political activity. Both march hand-in-hand and exposure leading to frequent participation activities and vice-versa. Thus, table 5-1 shows that those “0” exposure category takes much less interest in politics (6%) than that of “1” exposure category (who followed politics in the media of mass communication) who constitute 35%. Similarly the exposure level further increases in “2” exposure category (i.e., who attended election meeting rallies etc.) constituting sixty two percent (62%) interested in politics. This reaches to its peak with “3”
(highest) exposure level scoring seventy seven (77%) interested in politics. The trend is similar in other indices taken for showing political involvement in the table 5-1.

Therefore, we can undoubtedly assess that with the development of political infrastructure in the state, political parties also have achieved astonishing success in reviving suppressed Muslims political culture in the state over the span of twenty five years. They have succeeded in penetrating to the overwhelmingly traditional outfits and mostly suspected and neglected community of Indian society. This is a major contribution to the process of nation building and efforts for promoting national integration of nascent Indian state thereby bringing this marginalized section of the society to the main-stream of the nation.

**Orientation of Different Mobilized Sub-Groups:**

The result of above analysis set the stage for further analysis. By themselves they prove something and may be tautological- interested people are the ones exposed and vice-versa. Although this is too glib a reaction to even these data, further analysis is necessary to demonstrate the importance of the party system and the campaign for socializing the public to acceptance of politics and party institutions. It is instructive in this connection to look carefully at the selected orientation of different mobilized sub groups of Muslim community in the state of Assam. For the sake of convenience our study is concentrated on voting behaviours as the criterion in order to analyse participatory activities of
different mobilized sub-groups. The respondents were divided into the following mobilized categories:

(1) **New Entrants**: This category includes those Muslim respondents in the state (a) who became eligible voters for the first time in the last held elections and those (b) who were eligible to vote before but not participated in previous elections or could not participate due to some external reason and voted for the first time in the last held election. Here, our special focus is on those respondents who have been eligible to vote since 1983 as our purpose is to highlight the changes which have emerged among the Muslims of the state during this period.

(2) **Regular Voters**: This category voters are constituted of those who uninterruptedly voted in the last three consecutive elections or more than that.

(3) **Irregular Voters**: Irregular voters are those who were dropouts in the last held election but participated in the earlier elections.

(4) **Perennial Non-Voters**: This sub-group is consisted of those eligible Muslim citizen who never turned up for voting.

Here the community’s orientation has been observed through following some indices as our special focus is on to know about their attitudes towards political parties and political system since 1984. These indices are-- (a) Interest in political matters. (b) Attitudes towards party system. This is determined by the question like “Do you believe that political parties are necessary for making the government responsive to people’s needs or pay attention to their problems?’ and (c) Attitude towards ‘local self-government system’ which was determined by
questions like, “Do you feel that ‘local self-governance’ system is more effective for securing citizen’s interest from government?

**TABLE; 5-3**

**POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF DIFFERENT SUB-GROUPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Orientations</th>
<th>New Enters</th>
<th>Regular Voters</th>
<th>Irregular Voters</th>
<th>Non-Voters</th>
<th>Perennial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interested in politics</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe that parties are necessary and make the government responsive.</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe that local self-government as effective instruments for securing citizen’s interest</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A glance on the table 5-3 reveals the support to the political system comes from new entrants or newly mobilized (most of whom are youths) voters in greater proportion than other sub-categories. There is some distance found between the new entrants in political participation and other categories of voters as sketched in the table 5-3. The data shows that sixty three percent (63%) of these newly mobilized voters are interested in politics, while a greater percentage of seventy four (74%) are supportive of the party system. Similarly an amazing percentage of (76%) seventy six of such newly mobilized Muslim voters are supportive of the local-self-government system.

Higher interest in politics can be noticed among the regular voters than the new entrants in politics. However there is an inconsiderable difference between
the two groups regarding the support for party system. The data shows seventy one percent (71%) respondents support among the regular voters which is little less (i.e., 3%) than the newly mobilized voters. As far as support for local self governance system is concerned there is consistent difference between the two sub-categories of the respondents. Among the regular voters fifty nine percent (59%) respondents support has been recorded which is seventeen percent (17%) less than that of new entrants in political process.

A very important and interesting fact in the form of overwhelming support for the local self-governance-system among the newly mobilized sub-groups amply signifies that political development process is socializing the Muslim population of the state to a greater support for the democratic system. It also reveals the relevance of political parties for expansion of popular support for the system. This percentage is impressive considering the backwardness of the community of the state under study.

If we now turn towards the extent of support that the irregular voters have for the system we find twenty percent (20%) are interested in politics; thirteen percent (13%) believe in the relevance of the party system in a positive way and some eleven percent (11%) hold supportive view on gross-root democratic system. Thus, we find a good majority of the total sample are supportive of political sub-systems. At the same time we should not ignore the efforts of the political parties for playing a very important role in mobilizing even the irregular Muslim voters in the state. It is very encouraging information for Indian
democracy that even those Muslims of Assam who, instead of having eligibility never turn up for voting also shows eight percent (8%) interest in politics and expresses six (6%) and five percent (5%) support for party system and gross-root democratic system respectively.

This relevance of parties in mobilizing Muslims towards system support is dramatically evident when we determine the exposure to the parties during the campaign for each sub-groups and then look at the respondents’ orientation by exposure level. Our data in the table 5-4 indicates that highly mobilized and supportive sub-groups (i.e., new entrants in politics and regulars) are highly exposed to campaign efforts of parties. An inconsiderably small percentage of seven (7%) are not exposed at all among the newly mobilized Muslim respondents of our sample. Similarly, only five percent (5%) among the regular voters are unexposed. It means that an overwhelming percentage of ninety three (93%) are exposed in the newly mobilized category and a greater percentage of ninety five (95%) among the regular Muslim voters category are exposed to election campaign.

Table 5-4: Mobilized Sub-groups by the Degree of Campaign Exposure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEXES</th>
<th>New Entrants %</th>
<th>Regular Voters %</th>
<th>Irregular Voters %</th>
<th>Perennial Non-voters %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INDEX-0</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDEX-1</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDEX-2</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDEX-3</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, the low exposure category constitutes thirty nine percent (39%) among the newly mobilized category and forty one percent (41%) of the regular voter category of our total sample. The survey also shows fourteen percent (14%) exposure of newly mobilized category and forty percent (40%) as considerably exposed category of Muslims under study. Here one thing is worth mentioning that these new entrants are mostly youth students of schools as well as Madrassas and it is well known fact in the state that Madrassa students were not much involved in politics before the emergence of minority based AUDF party in the state following the recent election. We find forty percent (40%) newly mobilized voters as highly exposed and at the same time a little less than that number (i.e., 34%) are among the regular voters category.

The exposure percentages in irregulars (67%) and perennial non-voters (50%) categories are not that dismal, but their voting turnout and other participatory activities do not conform to their campaign exposure (Table 5-4). The best way to explain this phenomenon is, during the election periods most of the people in those categories got themselves involved and are exposed at the height of feverish campaign activities by political parties. They are just spectators and mostly disinterested and unprepared for a deliberate-involvement-type of participation. During the field work it was also observed that in villages many people come only to have a glimpse of the leaders during the election meetings or house to house canvassing or to see how it all goes. These people are never interested in politics rather than spectators and rarely turn up for voting.
Exposure to Leadership

The role of leadership is of crucial importance in mobilizing popular participation in a country. As our study is about a religious minority, it would have special importance as the minority politics has become the heart of Indian politics in recent years. Moreover, in a state where about one-third population belongs to Muslim community, their exposure to leadership obviously would have a great relevance in the process of political participation. In the Table 5-5 we have exhibited different forms of exposure to leadership. Then efforts have been made to establishing links of those exposed with three forms of participatory activities, i.e., interest in politics, voting turn-out and activities beyond voting.

Table – 5-5: Leadership Exposure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Types of Exposure to Leadership:</th>
<th>In% age</th>
<th>Exposure Category.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Knows no leader and never came in contact with any leader.</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>=Not Exposed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Knows none personally but at least once came in contact with any leader.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>=Marginally Exposed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Knows none personally but contact with two leaders.</td>
<td>09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Knows one leader but not contact with him.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>=Fairly Exposed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Knows one leader and contact with him.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>=Considerably Exposed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Knows one or two leaders and contact with one or two of them.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>= Highly Exposed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Knows leaders personally and receives helps from them.</td>
<td>06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A glance on the Table 5-5 leads us to comprehend that Muslims in Assam are excellently exposed to the leadership. We find only a minute percentage of seven (7%) are not exposed at all to the leadership. Thus, an excellent percentage of ninety three (93%) is exposed which ranges from marginal exposure (i.e., knows none but contacted with one) to high exposure (i.e., knows leaders personally and receives helps from them) category. Marginally exposed group (i.e., category no. 2 and 3) constitutes twenty percent (20%) of the total sample some of these people come in contact with leaders unintentionally but only by chance they happened to meet. Some of these people meet with leaders unpurposefully while they go somewhere like markets, towns or in the houses of relatives and leaders were already there in some meetings. Similarly, during the house to house poll campaigning they meet some of the leaders.

The really exposed to leadership category in the Table 5-5 (i.e., composed of 4, 5, 6 & 7 categories) are actually come under the participant category. This category is constituted of seventy three percent (73%) of the total sample among whom twenty six percent (26%) are considerably exposed and amazingly, the same percentage of respondents is also observed in highly exposed category. This impressive percentage of leadership exposure is a recent development found among the Muslims of Assam. Although it can not be denied that Muslim community in Assam was considerably exposed to leadership even before the attainment of Indian Independence as there were a number of influencial leaders from their own community. From the very beginning leadership has been
represented by *Ulema*, yet Muslim activism in politics in the past few years has risen dramatically. The last five Assembly elections in the state witnessed a sharp rise in Muslim voter turnout which we will discuss in some subsequent paragraphs. But as described by Asghar Ali Engineer “since the Assam Agitation of 1983 the community has been an important vote bank for every political leader”. The importance of Muslim votes were further felt after the collapse of AGP regime that proved to be the end of racial politics in 1999, now it is felt that Muslim vote bank is the deciding factor in the wining of elections in Assam as the community represent about one third population in the state.

**TABLE: 5-6 LEADERSHIP EXPOSURE & POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Exposed</th>
<th>Marginally Exposed</th>
<th>Highly Exposed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interest in Politics</td>
<td>01%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted in the Election</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Beyond Voting</td>
<td>.50%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LEADERSHIP EXPOSURE & POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**
Such a high level of citizen's exposure to the leadership has a great importance for the modern democracies (table 5-6). Respondents who were isolated from party or community leadership were relatively non-participants. We find one percent (1%) as interested in politics, while one and quarter percent (1.25%) voted in the election and zero-point fifty percent (50%) comes in the active beyond voting category. It means only the small percentage of respondents which is not exposed to leadership (07%) of the total sample is the least participant one. This is because in a society heavily dependent on ideology where many people think that politics is too complicated a matter for them to comprehend. People often see their leaders for purposeful direction in political matters. Moreover, the state is badly affected by terrorist activities in which government officials are believed to be involved. In this fear-psychosis situation Muslims in some places as discussed earlier, hesitate to participate in the political matters as they believe that they would be illegally deported at any time with declaring as Bangladeshi.

In contrast with non-exposed category the respondents who knew leaders personally involved in politics in a far better degree. Table 5-6 shows that among the marginally exposed category the sixty four percent (64%) respondents are interested in politics, seventy three percent (73%) voted in the election and one third sample (33%) are found as active beyond voting. Amazingly, in the highly exposed category the corresponding figures are seventy eight percent (78%)
interested in politics, eighty two percent (82%) voted in the election and ninety five percent (95%) are active beyond voting. Thus, there is a steep increase in the participation with the increase in the leadership exposure.

A conscious analysis of leadership exposure reveals that Assamese Muslims who are active in contracting or “knowing leaders” are also active in politics and campaigns. It suggests but does not demonstrate convincingly or theoretically that leadership exposure preceded political participation and indeed the relationship might be very well reversed. Some leaders generally religious ones may prevail upon their obedient people to abstain themselves from participating in political activities. (for instance, many a time some charismatic community or religious leader’s advice resulted in total or partial boycott of elections by the community or in a particular segment of the constituency. However, we find an exemplary number of Muslims in Assam are in contact with political and community leaders. Moreover, with the increase in the frequency of interaction one also finds increase in political activities.

Summary:
After analyzing these data on the role of political parties in mobilizing Muslims in the state of Assam we have arrived at the following major decisive remarks. Firstly, political parties have been gratefully successful in penetrating the largest minority groups in the state since 1984. In fact Muslims in the state like in other parts of India were not much active in the politics before 1984. When Assamese Muslims faced severe Neilly massacre in 1984 and its subsequent
illegal evictions and deportations to neighboring Bangladesh through misusing IMDT act by the govt. officials, they found no room to escape from these problem and started leaning towards politics. So there activeness in politics is nothing rather than a demand of the situation where they have been adapted.

Secondly, we find a fundamental change in the outlook toward political phenomenon within this community. Their exposure to the parties and campaign are laudably high and they have profound impact on participatory activities. Democratic ideas and values to them are some weapons used to escape from being harassed by violent groups like ULFA, AASU, BODO, NFBD and the like. They also have loosed faith in govt. officials due to its unequal and partial treatment. For instance, Samujjal Chokrabarty, the AASU Chief Advisor often used to say “If Hindus come from Bangladesh; it is legal because they are harassed in that country but if Muslims come it is illegal because they have no right to live in India after the partition\textsuperscript{15}.” Similarly during the AGP regime thousands of Muslims were deported to illegally alleging them as Bangladeshi immigrants in order to satisfy the party supporters and AASU leaders. Therefore the community always tries to be loyal to those political parties who are even against them.

Thirdly, a similar case has been observed with leadership exposure. Affiliating to the parties is only possible through coming in contact in with leaders. During the survey almost every respondent answered similarly that without having a contact with an influential political leader his/her liberty is not secure in Indian soil and at least he or she would not avail any opportunity (like govt. job, higher
education facility, electricity and water supply in their village, flood and natural calamity relief packages etc. from government). In several places, during the campaign period we found the community members were fighting among themselves by alleging each other as illegal migrants in order to come under the umbrella of political leaders and to show greater loyalty and support to him or her. This phenomenon is more common among those Muslims who are living in Assamese speaking region of Brahmaputra valley where ASSU is more active.

Fourthly, regarding the activities beyond voting of Muslims the score is very high. It is interesting to find that new mobilized or new entrants are found more active than all other groups. The chief reason is that most of the new entrants are students who generally believe that without having a proper recognition to a political leader it is not possible to settle down with a government job in a least industrialised state of India where one can not think of a job in companies. Moreover, political leaders also can exploit these younger generation of students by luring for jobs to work for them as volunteers, picketers during elections. However, from this observation we find that political socialization of this segment of population has been dramatically developing from the period after Agitation of 1984.

Here, it is worth mentioning that if political development implies the acquisition of new cultural orientations, new awareness and beliefs in new institutions and process such as parties, periodical elections, gross root democratic institutions then such development has amazingly taken place within the Muslim
community in the Indian state of Assam. Although this development is comparatively a new phenomenon and took place as a result of some incidental suppression, yet it is an achievement of Indian democracy.

A Case Study; On 13th November 2006, when students of AMU Aligarh were returning from their home Mr. Ali Haider, the Principal of Hailakandi S.S. College called them to his resident in Guwahati and on looking their Marksheet tears came on his eyes that with having such a good percentage they must struggle for a job and illegally serve a leader. "Oh! Such brains are going to the dustbin". Lastly he advised the students to show their loyalty to those leaders whoever is in a power. (Reported by Alimuddin an ex student of A.M.U., and presently in Michigan University USA. "Students Corner", Annual Magazine The Study of Developing Societies, 158th Addition Michigan University Press, USA P-12
REFERENCES


4. Ibid. p- 116

5. Sushila Kaushik “Career and Competition Times” July 1986 p-14


8. Neda-E-Deen. ‘Muslims Compared to Others,’ Published from Hailakandi, Assam. 13th Addition; Oct. 1986. P-33, 34


11. Minimally exposed category constitute respondents from exposure type No. 2 to 5 {i.e., (ii) Knows none personally but at least once came in contact with any leader.(iii) Knows none personally but contact with two leaders. (iv). Knows one leader but not contact with him. (v) Knows one leader and contact with him.

12. High exposure category contains respondents from exposure type No. 6 to 7 {i.e., (6). Knows one or two leaders and contact with one or two of them, and (7) Knows leaders personally and receives helps from them.

13. See., Eldersveld. S. J. and Ahmad. B. op. cit. p- 129
