CHAPTER- VI
BASES AND DIMENSIONS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

India has successfully passed six decades as a free democratic society. Its process of modernization or development as a whole is still passing through a transitory period. Although the credit of being the largest democracy of the world is allotted to present India, yet public participation in the political process is comparatively a recent phenomenon. Its political infrastructure is not as matured as the United States of America or other western democracies. About four decades back in 1968 Edward Shills concluded that “India is not a political society as it lacks a degree of interest in public affairs sufficient to impel most adults to participate in the political process.”

Therefore, the increasing level of public participation in the political process has a great significance not only for the country but also for the other developing societies of the global political system. Moreover, when the country is experiencing large scale socio-economic transformation, political involvement of the citizens especially of various socio-religious segment of the country has an impetus role in supporting the existing political institutions. Thus, it conserves the uniqueness of Indian culture by affecting the entire fabric of social system. Here it will be appropriate to quote Eldersveld and Ahmad who stated while analyzing Indian participation process, in 1972, “it is an involvement by ‘traditionals’ who are ‘modern’ while they remain ‘traditional’.”
Democratic norms and values are in the process of being imbibed among the citizens of India for over six decades of its independence. Since Even during the struggle for independence they have been instructed in politics, exhorted to participate in politics and to support the system. This process of massive socialization has persuaded them to be conscientious actors in the political process of the country. Consequently, their involvement in the political process has been surprisingly increased and thus they are considerably developing their political understanding. This mature image of mass mobilisation in politics in such a short span of time is almost incomprehensible, but it is a reality which can not be ignored. This unique reality must be understood in the context of Indian socio-cultural values and political norms. The performance and achievements of this overwhelming political involvement, its meaning & relevance for both Indian citizens and elite are some critical questions which gets priority over all other in the analysis and interpretation of Indian political system.

The extent and meaning of public participation in the political process have become a deep concern among the scholars dealing with Indian politics. For certain scholars, indeed this is a critical test of the process of Indian political development. According to Gopal Krishna “the contemporary political system in India has at its centre the system of free elections based on adult franchise.” Compared to most of the Afro-Asian nations particularly its neighbouring countries which were freed from foreign yoke during the same historical era (i.e., on the mid- 20th century) Indian political system has developed amazingly. The
electoral system of India, its electoral politics and public involvement in politics reveal the extent of its democratic development. This feeling has been echoed by many scholars dealing with Indian political system both in India and abroad. * Ref

In a systematic functional term, scholarly reflections on electoral participation and public involvement in politics in India have emphasized at least three major theoretical area of interest. It argues that;

i. Public involvement is central to the achievement of political integration, legitimizing authority and building national consensus. Rajni Kothari theorizes that 'elections' not only determine the nature of the party system under which the deliberative, competitive and representational elements of the polity function and change but also give rise to convergence of values, styles and behaviors of different levels of the political structure, lead to integrative or divergent outcomes, and determine the strength and content of political consensus\(^4\).

ii. Public involvement is central to the articulation of a democratic mass-elite relationship, to developing a more responsible leadership and the effective functioning of the competitive party system; and

iii. Public involvement is central to the redistribution of political power of social group, to altering the hierarchy of influence to achieving more social equality and presumably more beneficial policy related to social change.

The last point is of special importance for our research work as it is mainly concerned with the peripheral group of a society who are largely undermined and underprivileged. Gopal Krishna writes that the electoral system was conceived as a way of loosening the rigid hierarchical structure of status and power in the
traditional social order. He further asserts that "the struggle for power through elections has proved to a force for bringing about major social changes and realignment of social groups and ....a redistribution of power in society, giving the once oppressed community for the first time a measure of effective influence in public affairs". Kothari also recognizes the relevance of parties and elections and the participation of people through these channels, for the rise of new social groups to power and the 'social displacement' of others. He notes that social stains and tensions have occurred in India during the political development process. The social base of the polity has been expanded as a result of participation through political mobilisation and socialization and new groups have began to be involved.

In the way of operationalizing these highly generalized concerns, we can specify certain theoretical objectives in the study of mass involvement. Such activity is relevant for four levels of analysis (1) the individual citizen (how does participation fulfill his needs) (2) the group (how does participation enhance its status) (3) the political process (how does participation affect the working of the legislature and (4) the system (how is the legitimacy or integration achieved). Although we are interested in all these levels and questions, yet focus of investigation is on-

(a) What mass participation behaviour tells us about the engagement with the political systems of the Muslim community in the state of Assam and
(b) What is the meaning of this for understanding the development of the existing political system?

Generally, studies on people’s participation in political process are concerned with initial inquiries such as who is involved, types and styles of participation, ‘determinants’ and ‘conditions’ for involvement as well as association of participants with basic political attitudes and orientations. But studies differ sharply in their theoretical goals, in the basic dependent phenomena to which they wish to relate these data. These theoretical concerns can be diverse. A model of these diverse theoretical concerns is best presented by Eldersveld S. and Bshiruddin in their study of Indian Political system {in 1972}. Here it would be conducive for our project to sketch the model. The model is bellow....

**MASS POLITICAL PARTICIPATION STUDIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Descriptive</th>
<th>Different Theoretical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analytical Concern</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 Levels of Concern</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1- Who is active?</td>
<td>A- For the individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- In what ways?</td>
<td>“Self-interest”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Because of what social and economic factors?</td>
<td>“Influence”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- Conditioned or stimulated by What types of political environment?</td>
<td>“Politicization,” etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B- For the group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Cohesion”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Status”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Equality,” etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>C- For the processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Representation” (P.T.O)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The thrust of our enquiry seemed to comprehend all four levels of analysis, but the study is primary concerned with the nature of individual political behaviour and its relevance to system performance. We have a passion to discover as much as possible the ways in which the Muslim community of Assam have been ‘engaged with’ or ‘involved in’ the existing political system. Here it is intended to carefully explore these types of involvements forces and factors which lead them to this involvement. We are also interested in the meaning of political participation for them what it seems to mean for their cognition and perceptions of the political order. At the other extreme we wish to generalize about the meaning of this mass political involvement of Muslims of Assam for their society or community. Our enquiry at the system level is in the levels of “effective citizenship” and the integrative consequences of this for the society. The great crisis in the state of Assam is over socio-economic policy and migration issues are the difficulties in the achievement of an egalitarian society.
The study of political participation of Muslims in Assam poses certain particularly special problems. It is a well known fact that there is a great difference between the nature and the role of a seemingly identical political activity vis-à-vis the advanced western democratic societies, though there are certain basic uniformities. Therefore, social context, historical and cultural environment within which participation takes place must be incorporated carefully in every attempt to understand the political involvement of the community under study. This may well affect the definition of the phenomenon of participation itself. It will certainly affect the meaning of participation for citizen, elite and system.

Thus, while there may have a similarity in the percentage of active political participants in both India and United States, the meaning of the concept {of political participation} in the context of the society’s culture, history and development probably differs widely. For instance, Rudolphs, Edward Shills and others have pointed out that one must remember that Indian culture originally emphasized ‘self-interest’, ‘non-violence’, respect for legitimate authority, avoidance of conflict and ‘groupism’, a minimal or non-existent role of individual in political life (of dormant nature) and overwhelming apathy. This observation equally applies to the state of Assam. Within the groups at its social bases great changes have been taking place. The question is whether in a span of nearly sixty
years since independence the role of individual and groups in politics has changed.

With the attainment of independence along with other parts of the country Assam also experienced the emergence of new political elites who initiated the great democratic experiment, which Kothari called as ongoing “structural crisis”. As a result of “Assam Agitation” by AASU leaders against so called “illegal-Muslim migrants of Assam” a new political group came into the state’s political scene. These AASU leaders after successfully accomplishing Nailly Massacre turned into a new political party namely Akham Gana Parishad {A.G.P.} which has the strong base against “illegal migrants” issue. From that time the Muslim community of the state is being deported to Bangladesh without proper judicial enquiry. Therefore, during this fear-psychosis situation prevailing in this community a considerable change has been occurred in their social base since 1983. Hence our study enquires on how does the community participate, for what reasons and what consequence for the system?

The crux of the problem is the Muslim minority community in Assam vis-a-vis to other, social groups are relatively uneducated, loyal to local groups and symbols, less socialized to participate in the larger political system, having less sense of personal efficacy in the system were compelled to be involved in politics in a large extent virtually overnight. This is the essence of the theoretical issue of political participation in the present study. The point has been amply aired by Gopal Krishna when he writes “Paradoxically, the process of
modernization.....has ....accentuated certain forces of parochialism by requiring
mass participation in the political process when the attitudes of most of the
population have not been modernized. The elections in these circumstances have
come to play a major educative and mediating role between the modern,
modernizing and traditional aspects of Indian society."8

Thus, it is in the light of cultural norms, social conditions, historical
experience and the ongoing development of the political system. That one must
try to understand the meaning of political involvement of the citizen in India
today. It, indeed, is not a cake walk9. Keeping in view the above discussion, the
aim of the analysis of political participation of Assamese Muslims is to explore
the following from the date collected for this study.

1- What is the extent of political involvement .... Has the norm of
participation penetrated into this community or is political activity still
remote for these peripheral group? What is the meaning of political
participation for this community?
2- Whether this “newer” social group on the periphery, who have
been just mobilized and now participate has led to the (as Kothari has
observed) concomitant withdrawal or displacement of “older groups”
frustrated by these trends? Above all is political participation in the
context of Assamese Muslims a social group phenomenon?
3- How people in this community under study have been stimulated
to participate, as a result of what pressure, forces and circumstances?
Has the family begun to assume a socializing role? Are the political
parties important as socializing agents and above all, is the community
assuming a politicizing functions?
4- What is the relevance of the patterns of participation to the political process with special reference to (a) adoption of certain types of politics (b) nature and quality of competitive relationships among the parties and (c) support for governmental economic and social goals?

5- What is the probable relevance of the pattern of political participation to the system characterised as the achievement of (i) system stability, (ii) political integration, (iii) system adoptability and (iv) redistribution of social power and a more egalitarian society?

6- In what way has political involvement changed the perspectives of Muslims of Assam towards society, replacing the old cultural norms of apathy, weak sense of political efficacy, distrust of politics, with greater interest, knowledge and more optimistic view of the political world, and citizen's role in it? Or does there have been a change in the pattern of earlier basic orientations persists? Has participation played the role of educating and enlightening while mobilizing and involving individuals of this peripheral community in the society?

Many a scholars on Indian polity has focused on these above mentioned problems in a variety of ways. Gopal Krishna in 1967, used aggregate analysis to deal with the integration of peripheral groups and regions classified by developmental status, caste or tribal reserved constituencies, and Muslim minority raised some significant questions: In the year 1971, Bashiruddin Ahmad examined different types of political activities in India, their inter-relationships, and pattern of political socialization of Indian society. Similarly, Verba et al did a comparative analysis (using data from four Indian states) with the United States, Nigeria, Austria and Japan to demonstrate the non cumulative patterns of
participation and to test in a very preliminary way a social mobilization model for explanation of activism\textsuperscript{12}.

\textbf{THE EXTANT AND MANNER OF PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS}

It is widely felt that the extent and manner of public involvement is a key test of the democratic character of the system and is central to democratic theory. We are interested in the performance of the political system and feel that the extent and pattern of the public’s participation can be related to the system’s performance both in the narrow sense of the decisional outcomes from that system and in the much broader sense of the nature of the political process and the achievement of certain functional goals for the system, such as ‘integration,’ ‘stability’ and ‘democracy’.

There are a variety of ways in which citizens can manifest a meaningful ‘engagement’ with a political system, many of them not overt acts of ‘influence’. There are also a great variety of motivational orientations which underline a citizen’s ‘engagement’ with the political system. In essence, one must recognize that citizens’ engage in a great variety of activities and for a great variety of purposes. Scholars have used different languages for distinguishing the patterns of involvement. Lester Milbrath long ago distinguished between the ‘spectators’ and the ‘gladiators’\textsuperscript{13}. Verba and his colleagues suggested four categories for those members of public who do more than vote: ‘parochial’ participants (who only contact leaders for personal reasons), ‘communalists’ (who work with others on
local problems), 'campaigners' and 'complete activists' (who engage in a wide
range of activities beyond voting)\textsuperscript{14}. Bashiruddin Ahmad, in stratifying Indian
electorate, sees two categories beyond those who only vote; ‘auxiliaries’ (active
beyond voting who have a medium level of interest in politics and political
knowledge and ‘politists’ (who are engaged in two or more types of political
activities and have a high level of political interest and information)\textsuperscript{15}.

In order to undertake this research, we classified our sample into some
basic types of political participants. Further more, under every basic type we
grouped many sub-types. These types are discussed as follows:

(1) **ALLEGIANTS:** These participants are those who manifestly identify
themselves with political parties. This type of respondents is mentally as well
behaviorally attached to a particular political party. They constitute four-fifth
{i.e., sixty percent (60%)} of the total sample. However, alignment with a
political party may be strong (long lasting) or weak (short lived or the preferences
may change). Based up on these criteria there are two sub-types viz. strong
identifiers (those who voted for the same party in past elections and would not
change their voting preferences in future) and weak identifiers (those who’s
voting preferences may change in the future). The former category constitutes
only nineteen percent (19%) while later category represents forty one (41%)
percent in the present survey.
Table 6.1: Allegiant Political Behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>ALLEGIENT</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Strong Party Identification</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Weak Party Identification</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ALLIGIANT POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

This huge difference between the two types of participants has come into vision due to several reasons. Firstly, according to some historians like A.M. Kar, Heren Guhain, A.H. Saberi as well as some leftist scholars like, Monirul Hussain, Sanjaya Hazarika, Shakhdhar Gupta etc. Muslims could not bear upon the brutal Nellie massacre (February 18, 1983) during the A.G.P. regime in 1983. Secondly, although Muslims are traditional supporters of Congress from the very beginning of independence, yet its failure to protect them from deporting indiscriminately and. Finally, when I M D T Act was dismantled by the Supreme Court of India in 2006, Muslims felt insecure in the Indian soil. Therefore, under the aegis of Jamiat-Ulema-E-Hind they formed a minority based political party
namely AUDF (United Democratic Front of Assam). The new party has considerably ceased their traditional membership of Congress.

However the data leads us to conclude that Muslims of Assam are getting increasingly involved in politics through political parties since the Agitation of 1983 either intentionally or under the pressure of situation. At the same time, political parties also have been successful in penetrating into this religious community and increasingly drawing the community into their fold. As a result of this increasing allegiant behaviour a mass based leadership among this community also has been emerged. Furthermore, political parties are becoming increasingly sophisticated, specialized and competitive giving people a variety of choice. It has also helped in political socialization, and nation-building efforts, restoration of system-stability, adaptability and political integration effecting redistribution of socio-political power equation in the society as we have discussed in Chapter III. Thus, an egalitarian society is being emerged through this process.

(2) ATTENTIVENESS: The people who pay a lot of attention to the happenings in the political circle; closely observe and follow them through various media of mass communication (e.g., Radio, T.V., Newspapers etc) are called political attentives. These people are, to an extent, interested in politics which inspire them to contact political candidates, observe, follow and participate (often in a not-vary-active way) in campaign activities. These type of people generally posses a fair knowledge about the political system and its various sub-systems (such as parties, elections, issues etc). They are enthusiastic about
political matters, give and take advices on voting, talk about politics with friends and relatives. But many of them are not “political activists” rather they are dormant in their political activism.

**Table 6.2: Attentive Political Behaviour**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Participation</th>
<th>%AGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attentiveness</td>
<td>86% (T.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Followed Politics in the Media of Mass communication.</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Met political Candidates.</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Interested in Politics.</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Interested in Campaign.</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Knowledge about Politics.</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in the table 6.2 shows that an excellent number of eighty six percent (86%) of the respondents are attentive participants. There are five subtypes of such political involvement shown in the table as the indicators of political attentives. The survey reports seventy seven percent (77%) of following politics in the media of mass communication (viz., Radio, T.V.,
Newspapers, Internet etc), eighty one percent (81%) met political candidates, and two third of the respondents (66%) interested in politics. A greater percentage of seventy three (73%) reported to have interest in campaign efforts and more than eighty one percent (81%) posses some degree of knowledge about politics. This is a recent development which suddenly came into seen during the 2006 Assembly election in the state as we have severally discussed earlier. A number of events like Nellie incidents of 1983, Babri Masjid demolition of 1992, continuous illegal deportation of Muslims to neighboring Bangladesh and recent dismantling of IMDT Act. etc. are responsible for this development of Attentive behaviour among the population under study.

It is true that many of them are not interested in politics in the real sense. As the table 4.7 in chapter 4 shows only one-third respondents are really interested while rest of the forty percent (40%) showed normal interest in politics. Therefore, the high percentage that presented in the table 6.2 may not be of voluntary nature. The prime reason has been discussed in the above paragraph. Apart from this, some people, mostly villagers observe these political activities as spectators or by chance. For instance, many villagers, although illiterates, view programme on T.V., observe highly mass-appealing propaganda by political parties during campaign, meet candidates who come to their door-steps during election periods just casually, not intentionally and seriously. They are not actually interested in all these affairs. Low political
efficacy (see Table 4.11 in chapter 4) a relatively high percentage of apathetic (67%) also support the above mentioned views.

This sudden growth in the attentiveness of Muslim minority can be explained in terms of threat-perception of the community which acted as a powerful psychological stimulus in the form of several incidents happened during the last 25 years as discussed above. Here we can say without any exaggeration that political participation has turned out to be a group phenomenon. However, one can not ignore the fact that, their attentiveness towards politics resulted in creating a good vigilant citizenry in an otherwise dormant segment of population in the society. This increased attentiveness largely contributes to better system integration (i.e., national integration) by inspiring for more participation. It also affects the power elites by effecting change in the political power of social groups.

**MASS PARTICIPATIVES** - This type of people are involved in mass actions either in a violent or non-violent way. One sub-category of them is consisted of those who attend election meetings, rallies during elections and by and large not involved in any type of coercive activity, while the other sub-category consists of those who join in protest, marches, demonstrations, strikes, *gheraos*, and the like activities. The former category represents an impressive number of more than (2/3) two-third respondents (i.e., 69%) while the later category shows a relatively small percentage of forty one (41%) who were involved in mass action. This happened due to the fear-psychosis
prevailing in them as from one side they are the pray of ULFA, Bodo, R.S.S. and the like violent organizations and the brutal government suppression from other side. During the survey we found only youth generations mostly students were involved in the violent method of participation and they were reported to be put into jail and cases were registered against them and ultimately many of these (like SIMI, AMSU, MULFA etc) students wings have been leveled as terrorist organization.

| TYPES OF PARTICIPATION (MASS PARTICIPATIVE) | % | A. Attended Political Rallies, Meetings | 69% | B. Joined Protests Demonstrations Gheraos. | 41% |

However, it can not be denied that both the types of mass participative behaviour among the Muslim population in the state have been increased during the last two and half decades. The process of increased participative behaviour came into its peak with the emergence of recent AUDF. party where
along-with other minorities, Muslims also found a political platform. However, as the party is guided by educated and religious clerics, they do not recommend any type of violent methods of participation. This increasing involvement has a meaning and reflects their problems of identity crisis. It is part of Pan-Indian problem of the community which came into force in the wake of Assam Agitation in 1983, following Nellie incidents and several other happening afterwards which activated them.

It is noteworthy that several previous studies on political participation have reported a very low percentage of mass-participative involvement by the people of India. Elderveld and Bashiruddin Ahmad, for example, in their 1971 study about mass behaviour in India, reported that only 25\%^{18} of people participate in political meetings and rallies and 5\% participated in the protest demonstrations etc. A greater percentage of 43\% and 23\% respectively were recorded in the state of Orissa during 1991-92 survey on minorities and backward classes of the state^{19}. But our figure is higher in degree which presents sixty nine percent (69\%) and forty one percent (41\%) respectively in the present survey. This increased activism indicates to a changing trend in the political participation process of people in India. Another inference is that society is passing through a period of socio-political tension due to apathetic attitude of the political decision-makers towards the long-standing demands of people at large. Frustration of people, especially these peripheral social group (Muslim minority), due to inaction of the government to ameliorate their
genuine grievances since independence, has been increasing day by day. This has led to an increase in the percentage of “alienated” participants as recorded twenty five percent \{(25\%)\} (See Chapter. IV).

4. SOCIAL GROUP ASSOCIATES: This group of participants is involved in other social activities beyond voting. Social group associates are also categorized into following sub-types- (a) People belonging to a particular political party, club etc. (b) Those who ever worked for a political party, and (c) Those who worked (at least once) with community/ group organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPES OF PARTICIPATION (SOCIAL GROUP ASSOCIATES)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Belong to a political party, club etc.</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Ever Worked for a Political Party.</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Worked with Community/ Group Organization.</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An analysis of the data presented in the table 6.3 explores that a good percentage of forty two (42\%) Muslims in the state of Assam belong to political parties and community associations. This is a recent development which came
into vision with the wake of Assam Agitation in 1983 as described by noted historian A.H. Saberi. In fact these people are not only strongly identified with one or other political parties but have formally enrolled themselves as members of the political organization. They are, in general, active political participants. A few of them also hold position in the party hierarchy at different levels. In fact, they are politically active stratum of the society. They are the politically socialized citizens, highly conscious about their rights and posses good knowledge about the structures and functioning of the political system.

The survey also finds more than one third i.e., thirty five percent (35%) respondents who had worked for a political party. As we have discussed earlier (in the chapter 4) Muslims in Assam has been working for political parties under some influential leaders like Anwara Timur, Moinul Haque Choudhury, Abdul Muttalib Mazumder, Maulana Abdul Jalil Choudhury, Fkhruddin Ali Ahmed etc. during different periods since independence. But these traditional workers were limited in number and belonged to elite class of the society. However, with the emergence of AUDF in 2006 the process of mass based political activism is becoming visible.

The third sub-type of social group associates are those who neither belong to a political party nor ever worked for any party but certainly are interested in their community affairs and had worked with such-quasi-political or non-political organizations (NGOs) for the development of their community. They are not the ones who intend to involve themselves in politics but their
participation and involvement in their community organizations does affect the choices in the apolitical circles of their community. Sometimes these groups directly get involved in influencing the decision making process of the political system. Our data in table 6.4 reveals that of all the sub-types in the Social Group Associates, this category is most preponderant group in the society. We have found an overwhelming percentage of fifty six (56%) respondents who have ever worked with their community organization/association. As we have already noted that Muslims in the states are mostly guided by religious clerics and there are some mass based religious organizations like Nadwa-Tul-Tamir, Jamiat. AMSU. (All Assam Madrassa Students Union) etc., in which more than 80% Muslims are enrolled.

Indeed, an analysis of Social Group Associate throws light on interesting aspects of political behaviour of Muslims in Assam. First, a good percentage is associating themselves with the political parties which goes to prove that the political system is becoming successful in penetrating to the life of that peripheral groups in the state. The socialization process is working satisfactorily is also proved by the constant increase in political participation over the years. The second thing is that of developing group consciousness among the population under study. Such a large number of people are associating themselves with community organizations eloquently speak of social-group political participation. This has led to a change in the political power structure
and eventually led to circulation of elites. Undoubtedly, this exemplary score shows the level of political development.

**5-Voting:** Voting turnout implies how the masses react to the various political stimuli in a given political system. It is a very basic and one of the easiest forms of political participation that constitutes the life blood of democratic system. Although a totalitarian regime also entertains some sorts of voting right to its citizen, but these are state regulated and very much restricted in nature. The examples of such participations are found in the Peoples Republic of China, Cuba and in former Soviet Union. The high percentage of voting turnout in totalitarian systems reflect 'rulers' or 'elites’ total grip over the masses rather than the freedom of mass choose their representatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPES OF PARTICIPATION (VOTING BEHAVIOUR)</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Voted in the National Election</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Voted in the Assembly Election</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Voted in the Local (Panchayat or Municipal) Elections</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Table 6.5 Voting Behaviour](image-url)
An analysis of data presented in the table 6.5 makes it clear that voting behaviour of Muslim minority in the state very much impressive. We find fifty-four percent (54%) of total sample turned out for voting in the recent national election, fifty-nine percent (59%) in the Assembly election and amazingly seventy eight percent (78%) in the local (Panchayet or Municipal) elections. Our survey was conducted just after the three elections in 2004, 2006 and 2007 respectively. The score implies that people are enthusiastic in exercising their voting rights and privileges. If we compare this data with the Election Commission report we will find a remarkable increasing trend in voting turnout among the community member. In 1988-89 Election, Muslim voting turnout was 41% in the National Election which rose to 48% and 54% in 1999 and 2004 respectively. Similarly, regarding Assembly Elections it was 43% in 1985 which rose to 51% and 59% in 1997 and 2006 respectively. However, there is a marginal change in local elections which was 73% in 1996 and recorded 78% in 2007-08. The reasons for this dramatic change have been discussed earlier. It should be noted that the recent elections have recorded highest score due to the emergence of A.U.D.F. which could reach to each and every Muslim voter through Imams and local clerics.

It is worth mentioning that voting turnout in the national election is in lower degree than Assembly elections and local elections. The fact will be cleared if we look at their issues. It is evident that the community has been facing some serious local issues like illegal migration and deportation, attacked
by terrorist groups on the one hand and harassed by political and non-political organizations on the other. Therefore, the community is more concerned with local issues and thus pays more attention to the local decision making process.

6-**ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN:** It is one of the most effective types of political participation. The people who actively participate in the campaign also participate in other political activities in general. However, many a person participates in the campaigning due to circumstantial pulls or pressures. Some are attracted or lured to participate not out of any sense of political commitment but due to curiosity which develop in them when they observe the pomp and show associated with modern campaign activities. They are merely lookers of political drama known as the election campaign.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPES OF PARTICIPATION (ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS)</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Active in Campaign</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Donated Money in Campaign</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6.6: Electoral Campaign**

```
  40%  | 35%  
  30%  |     
  20%  |
  10%  | 17%  
  0%   |
```

A. Active in Campaign
B. Donated Money in Campaign
The Table 6-6 highlights the campaign activity of the Muslims of Assam. The data shows a good percentage of thirty five percent (35%) of total sample have activity participated in the election campaigns. This activeness implies that political consciousness and development have been taking place among this peripheral group. An all India figure of sample survey was conducted by Eldersveld & Ahmad in 1967 puts the score at 12%\(^{23}\). Similarly, a slightly higher percentage of 18% is recorded in the study of Minority & Backward classes of Orissa by I Ahmad in 1992\(^{24}\). Therefore, considering the backwardness of the state and the community together the score of the present study is very impressive. It is noteworthy that due to the emergence of new parties like A.G.P. in 1980, U.P.P.A. in 1996 and the recent A.U.D.F. this development has been possible as these parties put new issues before the public at different times. The impact of ever newer techniques of luring voters also contributed to the increased participation in campaign activity by the masses.

Turning towards the monetary donations to political parties during the campaigns the data is relatively poor i.e., seventeen percent (17%). Many of these donors are not business class or Zaminders rather they are unemployed educated people belong to rich, middle or even lower-middle class. They donated money keeping in mind to get a government job if the party or candidate wins the election as it has been discussed in earlier chapter (chapter 4) that people in general do not think to get a government job in the state without extending money to political leaders. At the same time, we also found
that some people donated money in order to get a P.R.C. (Permanent Residence Certificate) in the Muslim dominant districts as the certificate is not issued easily in those bordering areas of the state. Of course few of the respondents donated money at the call of their religious masters (clerics). However, we find some evidences of democratic political recruitment, more competitive party and political process from analyzing the data.

7- **ELITE CONTACT:** This type of political participation represents one of the basic and most prevalent types of political involvement. These people have received advice either from political or community leaders, religious or land masters or from tea gardeners. It is a widely accepted phenomenon that such a backward segment of the society is generally dependent on the elite class. In such a situation the elite class motivates people, direct their mobilization and act as a link between masses and the political system. Their role as medium or channel of interest articulation is discussed here.

The data in the table 6.7 reveals that about (55%) fifty five percent Muslim respondents in the state have approached party or government leaders for various reasons. A number of (39%) thirty nine percent respondents contacted to party leaders while only (26%) twenty six percent contacted government leaders. The score is certainly good in compared to Eldersveld & Ahmad’s All India findings of 9% and 20% respectively which was conducted in 1967, or findings of I Ahmad in the state of Orissa as 18% and 20% respectively in 1991-92 survey.
Here it is worth mentioning that, most of the respondents believe that though political leaders disappear after the election process is over, yet they expect some concession in government jobs by showing loyalty to political leaders. As we have noted already (in the chapter-4) that it is very difficult to get a government job in Assam without serving a political party or leader. Simultaneously, it should be kept in mind that the state is one of the least industrial parts of the union of India. So people have the only option to get a job in public service section.

On the other hand Muslims in general do not rely on government officials or leaders as they feel that government leaders and officials look towards them with some prejudiced approach. Although millions of Hindu settlers came from neighbouring Bangladesh during Indo-Pak War of 1971 and
afterwards, yet the blame is always gone to the Muslim population of the state. We have discussed the phenomena in chapter-3 of the present study. It is due to this reason the data shows a poor percentage in regard to governmental elite contractors.

_Socio-cultural and Economic Dimension of Political Participation._

Political behaviour of different groups in the social hierarchy is the grave concern of contemporary political scientists. In fact it helps to search out the role of these diversified groups in the way of development of a country. In a demographically diversified society like India, the analysis of political participation of such diversified groups of social hierarchy has a special importance and of great interest. It will lead us to know about the extent of the importance of social origins and status in explaining political activism as well as the nature of political conflict at mass level in society. The central theme of our research is to analyse the political behavior of Muslim of Assam along-with keeping a glance on the changes that have been taking place in their political attitudes during the last two and half decades.

In order to explain the aforesaid phenomenon we have taken the help of certain independent variables as the supporters of dependent variables of political activism. These independence variables are age, occupation, income, residence and education. In the way of explaining the determined purpose we have sketched a ‘participation index’ which quantifies the
degree/extent/intensity of political involvement that differentiates highly active citizenry from relatively low political activism. The index comprises of the following two things.

(1) The voting frequency of the Muslim respondents in all the three types of recent elections.
(2) Extent of their activeness in the campaigning process and
(3) Affiliation or membership of political party.

The index is constructed in a cumulative manner descending from those who voted in all the three election, active in campaign process and having a party membership score highest (score 4 points) to never voted in elections, not involved in campaign activity and not a party member score lowest (0 point score) By high degree participants we mean those response which score 3&4 points and those less than that number are placed in the category of “low” degree of political participation.

Table 6.8 IDENTITY/DEGREE OF POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INVOLVEMENT INDEX</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. HIGH (score 3&amp; 4)</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. LOW (score 1&amp;2)</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data in the table 6. 8 reveal the degree or extent of political participation of the Muslim respondents. We find an impressive score of more than one-third (i.e., 34%) Muslims in the state are highly active in the political sphere. This sprout in Muslim participation emerged due to feeling of insecurity in the country as there is a threat perception from the side of militant organizations like ULFA, BODO as well as other tribal militia groups. Moreover, both the government officials and militant organizations allege them as Bangladeshi immigrants though they have sufficient records of Indian citizenship. This threat perception further sparked by several happenings in both the national and state levels among which Assam Agitation(1979-1984), Nellie Massacre (1983), and Babri Masjid Demolition tragedy (1992), post Godhra-violence (2004), etc. are most barbarous.

Here, our core concerning assessment is with the highly active citizens only (who score 3&4 in our participation index) in order to probe into the socio-economic base of political participation. The ‘low’ category (having the score 1 and 2) in our participation index are not included here because they may not be involved in these efforts voluntarily or with pre-determined intentions rather than by chance or incidental involvement. For instance, we met many respondents who admitted that they were not involved in these activities intentionally but due to some socio-economic pull (like getting money from candidates or getting a job by showing loyalty to them). So in determining the
socio-economic bases of political participation we have not taken ‘low’ degree participants into consideration.

Here it is worth mentioning that the ‘low’ degree participants are not lag behind in percentage. The survey shows that a little less than that number (i.e., 32%) of respondents come in the ‘low’ score category. This impressive number is a good sign of political institutionalization. Because, those samples which shows ‘low’ in our participation index will certainly get matured in future and turn into ‘high’ degree participants soon.

**Age Factor in Political Participation:**

In a traditional society like India where older generation hold considerable influence over the entire house-hold as well as the locality, study of political participation correlating with age has a special importance. However, the perception of older-generations hold over the younger or locality is not perhaps true in the case of Assamese Muslims, as we have found 41% respondents vote without caring for anybody’s advice in previous chapter (chapter 4). However, our primary concern here is to analyse the activeness of Muslim population in the state of Assam by dividing the total sample into different age groups. These are (a) 18-30 (b) 31-40 (c) 41-50 and (d) above 50. Some previous research in the field of social science have generalized that older people participate more till they reach at 60 years old\(^{25}\). Let us examine which age-group of Assamese Muslims dominates the most active cadre of political stratum.
An analysis of table 6.9 compels us to disagree with previous generalisations.

Here, we find that with the increase of age people’s interest in politics comes down. After entering into ‘above 50 club’ Muslims in Assam remain rarely active in political process. Our data shows that only (09%) nine percent Muslim respondents are highly active in politics and the small number who are active in politics at this stage were inducted into political activism during their youths. Bulk of older generation is not anymore interested in politics. On the other
hand, the least aged registered Muslim citizen in the state of Assam are the most active in politics. The survey reveals that more than one third (35%) respondents of 18-30 years age group are highly active participants. They are mostly newly mobilized voters who have recently got registered in voters list and hence have a zeal and enthusiasm in participating in politics. It is noteworthy that majority of newly registered voters of this age group are either unemployed youths who found politics as a good job to gain material benefit or are students who want to show their loyalty to the leader in order to get a government job as a reward for their efforts during election campaign.

The respondents under age-group 31-40 score little lower in percentage than the above category (i.e., below 30 years age group). They constitute about thirty one percent (31%) as highly active participants in political process. (Table 6.9) They are however, highly socialized people, possess some experiences in politics and understand it in a better way than the newly mobilized voters. They have been observing various socio-economic happenings which are mould by politics. For instance, politics of infiltration and pushing back to neighbouring countries, formation of different militant organizations and their transformation into political parties, are some observable phenomenon. This means these Muslim respondents are to an extent matured political participants.

Turning towards participatory character of 41-50 group our analysis of data reveals a fair result. Table 6.9 shows that twenty five percent (25%) respondents of this group are highly active participants. These Muslims are long term
experience holder who have seen and helped the nascent India struggling to establish democratic values and infrastructural development. As they are completely matured citizens, they are displeased with those dusty politics prevailing during the recent years in the state. They have found the recent politics not as salient as it used to be when they are in their prime. So the percentage of their political participation is lower than that of above two category respondents.

**OCCUPATION AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

Occupation has a deep impact on the political behavior of citizens. Several previous studies in various societies also found this fact. Therefore it is inevitable to understand political activism in the context of various occupational background of the community under study. For the purpose of analyzing political participation of Assamese Muslims we have divided our sample into following some occupational groups. These are (a) Farmers (b) Workers (c) Unemployed and (d) Professionals, white collar & businessmen.

An analysis of table 6-10 reveals that unemployed group is the most active participants representing a high percentage of forty six (46%). Then we find farmers (29%), Professionals, white collar and businessman (15%) and worker group (10%) in a descending order as highly active participant citizens. The unemployed Muslims of Assam are the most active citizens as our study discloses here. They are mostly youths who have the only option to have a political carrier to earn money or to get a government job.
Table 6.10: Occupation & Political Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEPENDENT VARIABLES. (OCCUPATION)</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Farmers.</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Workers (tea estate and other).</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Unemployed.</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Professionals White-collar Businessmen.</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The state is one of the most backward regions of India regarding industrial development where an educated youth hardly get a job in private (industrial) sector. Moreover, due to the lack of communication facility in the state business is also proved ineffective to satisfy the needs of people. Therefore, unemployed youth are mostly engaged in political activities as a profession. This has led to the formulation of a new elite-class known as Young-Turks in every levels of party hierarchy.

Cultivation of rice and tea is the main occupation of Muslims in Assam. They have several demands and issues need to be fulfilled. They participate in
political activities in order to get attention of party or leaders to solve these issues. Therefore, percentage of farmers' participation is also high i.e., twenty nine percent (29%). The professional class is the most content citizen in the state which is least participative overtly as they have no urgent need to get fulfilled. Similarly, working class, as we discussed earlier, can not expense time and money for political activities other than voting as they are lacking these two things. Thus, unemployed class becomes the most active participants and workers the least.

**Income and Political Participation**

Several scholars have admitted that there is a positive correlation between politics and income. It is not an easy task for an extremely poor person to take high interest in politics as he has to save time to meet his daily needs. Most of the political scientists after analyzing Western democracies have generalized the fact that more affluent citizen participate in politics more actively than less affluent citizens. In a traditional society it is generally assumed that more prosperous are more likely to possess those characteristics which facilitate comprehension of politics. These people can be more influential in decision making process and have a greater degree of political efficacy. However, in India rich population is generally found indirect participants who largely operate behind the scene by providing funds in campaigns rather than directly participating in the political process.
In order to examine the aforesaid conceptions in respect to Assamese Muslims we have divided our sample into four categories of respondents. Viz. (i) Lower class (ii) Middle class (iii) Upper Middle class and (iv) Upper/Higher class. Our analysis of following data finds a mixture of correctness and incorrect trends in those perceptions among the Muslims of Assam.

**Table 6.11** Income and Political Participation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEPENDENT VARIABLES. (INCOME LEVELS)</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Lower Class.</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Lower Middle Class.</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Upper Middle Class.</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Upper / Higher Class.</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in table 6-11 shows that only eleven percent (11%) among the lower category Muslim respondents in Assam are highly active participant in politics which is far more lower than that of middle class and upper middle class. There are two other classes (lower-middle and upper-middle) representing
thirty seven (37%) and thirty six percent (36%) respectively. This is a slight difference, which certainly challenge the previous assertions (i.e., more affluents are more active in politics). Lack of economic prosperity could not cease their political rights through being influenced by their co-social beings. In fact we find that upper middle class is a little less active citizen in case of Muslim community of Assam. Another interesting point here is that higher class is much lower in political activism than the lower-middle and upper-middle classes.

This group represents only sixteen percent (16%) which again stands as evidence against the previous assertions. However, it can not be denied that lower class is the least active participants among the Muslims of Assam. So if we put aside the lower income group we will find that more advanced group of Assamese Muslims are politically less developed. It is because of certain reasons among which predominant one is that rich people (higher class) are mostly busy in the economic development and protecting their lands as we have found during the survey. They have no leisure time to serve in political activities rather than voting and giving advice to their servants and followers. On the other hand most of the respondents from middle and upper middle class want to have a political carrier in order to earn money as they are mostly jobless. They could neither work in other’s land as it is beyond their prestige nor could get a job as there are limited vacancies in the state.
It is to be kept in mind that lower income group is not far behind their affluent brethren in regard to voting behavior. Because poor people has no time and money to use for other political activities like campaigning, becoming party members etc rather than voting as they have to go for work and to care-take their household. On the other hand, higher income groups, particularly middle and upper middle class have time as well as money required for spending in political activities. Sometimes it is found that poor people sell out their votes to the candidates or party or they just vote only out of curiosity by the pull of community factor which is much prevalent in the state as Muslims community in the state is the most important vote bank or political pray for every party. It is because of these reasons poor Muslims have a high voting turnout in the state.

**Residence & Political Involvement:** Place of the residence of a citizen occupies a dominant position among the social factors that influence political participation. In the parlance of social science it is known as “urban-rural dichotomy”. One of the major mainstays of political research in the USA has been the study of differences in urban and rural candidates and effect of these on political behaviour of the citizen. It has been found in many American studies that rural dwellers are less likely to become active in politics than city dwellers. Students of social mobilization also indicate that urbanization is associated with sharp increase in the level of political participation. In other words, urban society as opposed to rural society is perceived as a participant society. In fact Muslim population in the state of Assam is mostly based in rural
and tribal areas. Therefore, it is important to consider their place of residence in the context of political participation.

But our study does not find any such difference between the two types of respondents. Our data in table 6.12 (A) show that about forty eight percent (48%) of highly participant sample belongs to urban areas while fifty two percent (52%) from rural area. The core reason as we have found during the field work that most of the Muslim leaders have rural background. Like many other Indian states, Assam also has a patron-client society where rural people have some special attachment with their leaders. This attachment leads them to be active in political process.

**TABLE: {6. 12 (A)} RESIDENCE & POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEPENDENT VARIABLES. (RESIDENCE)</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Urban.</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Rural</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RESIDENCE & POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

- **Urban.**
  - A.
  - 48%
- **Rural**
  - B.
  - 52%
Apart from these findings, we have also studied about the Muslims of “char” (who reside on the river bank of Brahmaputra) area. These people are as a whole alleged as Bangladeshi immigrants, having no shelter or permanent homes. For sometimes they are deported by Indian authority into Bangladesh and also pushed back by Bangladesh Rifles (BDR). This process has been continuing since 1970 as we have discussed in Chapter Three (Muslims in Assam). However, they are important vote bank for all political parties in the state. Therefore, we feel it necessary to study about these people too.

Table; {6.12 (B)} *Residence & Political participation:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEPENDENT VARIABLES (RESIDENCE)</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Char Area</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Urban</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Rural</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data shows that a small percentage of only thirteen (13%) is highly participants among these people against forty-two (42%) and forty-five percent (45%) of the urban and rural area respectively {Table 6-12 (B)}. The obvious reason of this less number of high degree participation is due to their threat perception as we observed in the field study that they were not willing to respond our questions because of suspecting us as government agents. However, one can not deny that even this segment of suspected Muslim citizen in the state also somewhat participative in the political process though in a small number. This is also a sign of the success of political system in penetrating and mobilizing hitherto dormant and extremely marginalized population into the mainstream or organized politics.

**Education and Political Participation:**
There is an intimate relationship between education and political participation. In fact the core objective of imparting education is to build sound citizenship in a country which is expressed through participation in political process. The relationship between education and political participation is one of the most documented research findings in political science. Social scientists in general have found a positive co-relation between the two. Almond and Verba concludes that activities increase with the rise of education levels of citizens. This hold true in all the five nations they studied. Daniel Lerner, using UNESCO data from 54 countries also emulates that strong co-relation exists
between literacy and political participation. Lester Milbrath has also held this view.

Western scholars have generalized these findings in one of the best scientific ways. But these findings are yet to be tested in India along-with many other Afro-Asian developing nations. Studies in India do not fully support the above generalization. Eldersveld & Ahmad, on the basis of cross-national survey, conclude that the highest educated are not necessarily most politically active. Similarly, Goel also holds the same view using data from 11PO surveys. Verba, Nie & Kim reported that “in India, the educated individual is no more (perhaps even a slouch of less likely) to vote than the lesser educated person.”

In order to bring-out the relation between education and political participation of Muslims in Assam we have divided our sample into four sub-categories representing different levels of education.

1. Illiterates
2. Semi-literates and less-literates. This group consists of people having the knowledge of 3Rs (i.e., reading, writing and Arithmetic), primary and middle school passed or having an equivalent certificate from Madrassa.
3. High school educated or having an intermediate passed certificate from State Madrassa Board.
4. Highly educated (i.e., having a college or university degree or equivalent qualification from state regulated Madrassa).
Our data in table 6-13 does not allow us to comply with the findings of Western scholars about which we have discussed above. Rather we have found that highly educated respondents are not highly active participant citizens. There is no such distinction between the category 3 and 4 (i.e., high school and college educated) respondents regarding their activeness in politics. In fact the data shows that high school educated category respondents thirty four percent (34%) and college educated category represents one third of the total sample {i.e. thirty three percent (33%)} as highly active participants in the political process. Again, the
data shows nineteen percent (19%) semi-literate or less literate (i.e., whose education level is not more than primary school or middle schools) as highly active participants in political process

Approximately, fourteen percent (14%) illiterate Muslim respondents are also found highly active in our study (Table 6-13). So countering with Ahmad and Eldersveld we can safely say that illiterates are not isolated from participatory activities in politics. This shows that political norms of society are increasingly penetrating into the vast body of illiterates or less educated citizen of our country. Their good response to the socialization measures is also evident from this data. Thus, the impressive score of highly participant character of Muslim population of the state represents a positive sign of political development.

**Summary:**

In a nutshell, we can follow the suggestion of Milbrath that there is no particular typological scale to measure the dimensions of political participation. On the basis of data we have made a seven fold classification among the several principal types of participation. These are (1) Allegiant (2) Attentive (3) Mass participative (4) Social group associates (5) Voting (6) Electoral campaigns (7) Elite contact. Each of these principal categories has some sub-categories. We have not found any hierarchical pattern among them on the basis of analyzing our data rather than a configurative model. Thus, a cosmic pattern has been found in Muslims participation in the political process.
There is a sound record about Muslim respondents in Assam as reported in the data regarding the extent of participation in politics. A high percentage of sixty (60%) is found as allegiant activists and amazingly eighty six percent (86%) are attentive in political activities. As far as mass participative behaviour is concerned we have found fifty three percent (53%) attended in the rallies and a relatively small percentage of thirty five (35%) reported to join demonstrations protests, gheraos etc. This means they are either peace loving or supportive social group. However, sudden rise in joining protests, demonstrations and gheraos during the recent years is a good indication that the community is shifting toward violent methods of political participation for influencing the decision making system at any cost.

A glance on social-group-associate type of participation finds an encouraging percentage of respondents are involved. About forty two percent (42%) belongs to a party, while thirty five percent (35%) reported to have ever worked for a party and amazingly fifty six percent (56%) had worked with a social or community organization (Table 6-4). Although the trend of social group associate behaviour was prevalent among Muslims from earlier period, as there were a number of socio-political reformers and leaders among them, yet it has ripened with the recent emergence of A.U.D.F. party which is rooted on Jamiat-Ulema-E-Hind (A religious reformist Association).

Voting is the most important weapon for a minority community to influence decision making machinery as minority politics in percent India is in
its peak. Our data in table 6-5 finds a good percentage of fifty four percent (54\%) in the national election, fifty nine percent (59\%) in the Assembly election and an exemplary score of seventy eight percent (78\%) participated in the recent local (Panchayet or Municipal) election. If we compare this data with the elections held in Assembly election and *Lok Sabha* elections we find a distinction of 16\% and 11\% respectively. However, election for local self government is a recent phenomenon.

Turning towards participatory activities in the election the data is comparatively poor. About thirty-five percent (35\%) Muslims actively participated in different campaign activities, while only seventeen percent (17\%) reported to donate money to the candidate or the party. The score is low because most of the Muslims in Assam are farmers who have neither much money to use for donating nor much time to spare for political purpose. However the data records a fair percentage of Muslim engagement in elite contact behaviour. About fifty five percent (55\%) reported to have contacted with party leaders and about thirty nine percent (39\%) met with government official for different reasons, mostly their personal ones. It means they are less faithful on government official.

We have constructed a “participation index” in the analysis of socio-economic bases of political participation to facilitate our research. An impressive score of (43\%) thirty four percent are highly participant citizen
(table 6.8) in Assam; it is found that rural people are, to an extent more active in political process. They represent fifty two percent (52%) while the rural population scores forty eight percent (48%) as highly active participants. This is a good sign of penetrating participatory institutions and orientations to rural areas. Apart from these two residential categories we have also studied about the participation of those homeless who are residing in the river bank of Brahmaputra (Char Adhivasi). About thirteen percent (13%) among them are highly participants against forty six percent (46%) rural and forty three percent (43%) of urban population.

The general perception of “higher education leads to high degree of participation” has been challenged in our research finding. Instead, we have found that semi-literate or the moderately literate population is more active in politics than highly educated Muslims in Assam. A pleasant finding is that about fourteen percent (14%) illiterates are highly active participant in our sample. There is no specific pattern of correlation in the age with political activism. Age advancement do never leads to high degree of participation. On the contrary, older citizens are largely apathetic and youths and early middle aged are found highly active political participants. Similarly, income level also does effect political participation. We found that middle classes are more active and the working class is found least active as they can not manage time and money. The data assures that unemployed Muslims of Assam are more active
(46%) and they are followed by farmers (29%), professionals, while-collar and businessmen (15%) and working class (10%) respectively. Here our analysis is, to an extent, closer to the findings of Ahmad & Eldersveld who conducted a nation-wide study during 1971.

Thus, participation norms have affected this marginalised community thereby resulting in higher degree of socialisation, better sense of citizenship and their enlightenment on the political scenario. Similarly, increased participation (especially by rural folk) has resulted in mass-based leadership recruitment which ultimately led to more democratic and competitive party system. Political parties have been greatly successful in penetrating the largest minority groups in the state since 1984. Moreover, this large scale participation has helped in the way of achieving a greater system-integration which has an immense significance.
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7. See the Rudolphs’ essay, for example, on “The Private Origins of Public Obligation,” in their book ‘The Modernity of Tradition”, p- 240-46. See also Shils, ‘Political Development in the New States’, p-29
8. Krishna Gopal ‘Electoral Participation and Political Integration’op. cit. p- 28
10. For details see Krishna Gopal “Electoral Participation and Political integration”, Economic and Political Weekly, Annual Number Feb 1967 p-179-190
11. Ibid 179-90
14. see Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie, Jae-on Kim, p-36.
16. For detail see Chapter III (Muslims in Assam)

18. Eldersveld S. J. and B. Ahmad; 'Citizen and Politics: Mass Political Behaviour in India,' p-163.

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24. See, I. Ahmad; p-115


29. 18 Lerner, Daniel: op-cit.,p-64.

30. See Mibrath, Lester W. Op cit. p- 122-124

31. Elder, S.J. &Ahmad, Bshiruddin; Op cit. p- 189
