PREFACE

In the contemporary era importance of political participation especially of minorities for a viable democratic polity is being increasingly realized in all the corners of the world. To empower them socially, economically, educationally and politically there is an ardent need to assess their decision making capabilities. Political participation encompasses all those voluntary involvement of individuals or groups at various levels of political process that attempt to influence the structure of government, the selection of government authorities, or the policies of government. These activities either may be supportive of the existing politics, authorities, or structure, or they may seek to change any or all of these.

The present study is an initial effort in the context of political participation of Muslims in the Indian state of Assam since 1984. The study is solely based on empirical analysis of the beliefs, orientations and perceptions of the Muslim minority in the state of Assam especially focusing on the role of this segment of population in the political system at micro level. Special focus is given on the transformation and changes that have been occurred in the participation process of the community during the last twenty-five years after the mass killing of Muslims in 1984 Assam Agitation. With the accomplishment of Agitation, a new epoch has been started in the history of political participation of Assamese Muslims that made them highly active citizens in the political process.

The thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter deals with a brief introduction of the state of Assam; its geographical location, history, people's socio-cultural, religious and linguistic orientations. Role of Assamese people in the Indian struggle for independence is also discussed in this chapter. In the chapter Two, attention is given on historical background of Muslims in the state, their present population dividing into two valleys of the state and surrounding politics among them. Factors that encouraged or discouraged them to join politics are also discussed.
in this chapter. The third chapter deals with the theoretical perceptions of political participation, various forms and dimensions and the recent trends that have been identified concerning political participation in liberal democracies. Fourth chapter focuses on political culture of Muslims in the state including their cognitive, evaluative and affective orientations. Their involvement in the political process despite being alienated also has been discussed in the chapter. The fifth chapter is an attempt to analyse the nature and magnitude of political mobilisation of Muslims in Assam. Special importance is given to analyse the role of political parties and leadership in the process of mobilization as these institutions perform a crucial function particularly in a society like India where open and competitive politics is relatively a new phenomenon. Sixth chapter is an estimate of the extent and manner of public involvement as it is a key test for the democratic character of the system and is central to democratic theory. In order to facilitate the research efforts have been made to analyse the socio-economic bases of Muslims’ political participation in the state. In conclusion, the research suggests that this marginalized community must be socialized in the mainstream of political system in order to prevent them from becoming alienated and hostile towards the system. I think the study will be helpful for future researchers as well as students of this field.