CONCLUSION

By a close study of relevant literature in the form of official documents, reports, notes, proceedings in addition to standard historiography with special emphasis on historiography of North-East. Attempt has been made to trace the process of transformation of the life of the Muslims of Assam with view to have gleams of their socio-political awakening. It has been observed that the general conception about the Muslims in Assam is subject to certain serious limitations which stand on the way of understanding the real psyche of the Muslims in Assam. Not to speak of the enlightened Hindus even the educated Muslims or even men in high places are not aware that the Muslims are not a homogenous entity as they are looked upon in Assam. They represent different socio-economic, linguistic, cultural, ethnic groups and each having its own problems and features to have a comprehensive view of the condition of the Muslims. However, present work seeks to do justice to it by attempting to include the lowest of the low among the Muslims within the purview of the study.

Coming over to the post-independence face it has been observed that the Muslims in the post-independent India (the Post-Partition India) have been afflicted with new conflicts and challenges which even
ConcCusion touches on the very foundation of existences in the country with their bona fides in the country denied now and then. The new generations of the Muslims are yet to fully realize this abject situation to which they have been thrown and find out a way out and participate in the national activities under the new circumstances.

Keeping the above in our view we may summarize the study by having an overview of the earlier chapters to carry the study to its close.

The colonization of Assam in 1862 by the Britishers gradually changed its traditional isolation from the Indian sub-continent. Once it became an integral part of British India, it was made, obviously open to the world outside Assam in the interests of British colonialism. Colonialism opened a new chapter of Assam’s history where migration was an integral part of this historical development. Besides, the British and other Indians, the East Bengal’s oppressed peasants started migrating to Assam with their families in groups to settle down permanently. Today’s Na-Asamiya Muslims are composed of the descendants of the migrants from East Bengal (now Bangladesh), particularly from Mymensingh, Ronpur and Pabna districts; they came mainly in the first half of the 20 century. To be more precise, this was an internal migration to Assam: (1) severe feudal oppression by landlords
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under the zamindari system and its resultant poverty and perpetually near famine conditions of a peasants of East Bengal (2) very high pressure on land in a feudal agrarian social structure (3) comparatively less oppression in Assam by the landed aristocracy, composed of both the high caste Asamiya Hindus and a section of the Asamiya Muslims in a semi-feudal agrarian social structure within a colonial system (4) operation of the relatively less oppressive Ryotwari land revenue system in Assam (5) abundance of land and very favourable land-man ratio in Assam, and the obvious reluctance of Asamiya peasantry to use waste and char lands (6) encouragement given by the provincial government headed by the Muslim League, in the late thirties and early forties (7) patronage received from Marwari trades and even Asamiya Mahajans and landlords and (8) the colonial policy of augmenting land revenue in Assam which was very meager compared to other Indian provinces. Interaction of all these factors under the colonial ages propelled the migration of the oppressed East Bengal peasants to Assam. Significantly, most of the peasants were Muslims.

The British penetration into the Ahom kingdom in 1826 resulted in the gradual annexation of the contiguous territories of native princes and hill tribes. The Ahom kingdom was submerged in the overwhelming
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territories of the Lushai, Naga, Garo, Khasi, Jaintia, and sundry tribes of North-East Frontier which were attached to it. If by Assam we mean a province where those who speak Assamese live application of the name of Assam to the new province of British India seemed quite paradoxical.

The Muslims of Assam were simultaneously labeled as Asamiya and Bengali. At times they were labeled exclusively as a religious community as if they did not belong to any nation or nationality. The communal elements tried to discover their dangerous connections with Pakistan and Bangladesh. Many identified the Muslims of Assam with foreigners very indiscriminately. Doubts were expressed about their design to outnumber the Hindus in Assam. Negative labeling, wild doubts and apprehensions were expressed, sometimes very explicitly and sometimes very implicitly against the Muslims. All these confusions and wild labeling were confined not only to within the Asamiya nationality but outside Assam also. This helped to blur the empirical situation, objective reality, social and demographic structure of the emerging society and nationality. The Muslims of Assam, like other Muslims in India contrary to popular belief, although belong to the same religious faith, reflect significant sociological variations in terms of caste, class, language, occupation, education, geographical distribution,
political ideology and culture. Besides, in terms of exclusion and assimilation with their immediate neighboring Hindu population, the various communities of Assam are at present standing at uneven levels. The Muslims of Assam represent a distinctive blend of similarities and diversities both vertically and horizontally, among themselves. However, this is not to deny that they have been able to maintain their distinct religious identity in Assam.

There has been a great deal of confusion about the Muslims of Assam even in the Indian sub-continent. This confusion is rooted in the lack of precise, information about the socio-economic, political and cultural diversities among the Muslims of Assam. The Muslims of Assam are not a single homogenous community; rather, they are a group of several identifiable distinctive ones. We can categorize them into four groups (1) Asamiya Muslims (2) Na-Asamiya Muslims (3) Muslims of the Barak Valley (4) North Indian Muslims living in Assam. This categorization is necessary to comprehend systematically any contemporary social, economic, political and cultural issues related to the Muslims of Assam.

The population of Assam which was considerably thinned by the internal wars and external aggressions, at the close of the Ahom period,
was increased considerably by the immigration of different races from different parts of India. With the establishment of British rule, Bengali office employees from Bengal came to serve the new government, the people of Rajasthan came to the new economic environment to trade in the British province, labourers were imported to serve in the plantation and mining industries; people of Nepal found in Assam good grazing grounds and market for their dairy products. The population of the province increased by the addition of the neighboring hills and plains were thus further swelled by immigration.

The socio-cultural profiles of Ahom Assam underwent considerable changes. There was fundamental change in Assamese society owing to the development of Administration in Assam and establishment of industries. Towns and Bazars came into existence all over the country. The Assamese society which was homogeneous in composition and vertical in structure now became heterogeneous in composition and parallel in style. Birth and caste which determined office and status and conferred social privilege and distinction now no longer conferred social privilege and distinction; postal and telegraph services, cinemas and theatres widened the outlook of the people.
Society in British Assam was cosmopolitan in composition and catholic in outlook.

The new society of Assam upheld a variegated pattern of culture. Towns and bazaars built with bricks, mortar, sand, cement, wood and iron with sanitary and water fittings presented a new look. Centering round the new urban areas people now took to new modes of living, social gatherings, festivals and recreations. Life had now more diversion and comforts.

Nevertheless, in the new environment of socio-economic-culture percolated fissiparous forces of discord and antagonism which rent the society into segments and prepared people for a struggle of political division in the post-independent period.

The population of Assam in the British period was a conglomeration of diverse people with a separate culture and heritage. As a result of new educational and environmental development however, the diverse people of India were politically united to fight against the alien rule. An Indianism not opposed to local variation and quite in harmony with regionalism had tended to develop. In Assam the diverse social interests formed themselves into organizations to further
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their class of community interest exclusive of national interest and received encouragement from the Government.

The economy of Assam revolutionized by Imperialism did not benefit the Assamese directly. The benefits were reaped by the British merchants who had come from outside Assam, and clerical and inconsequential technical jobs were monopolized by the Bengalis. Even the labour class was cent per cent non-Assamese. The landed property was the only means practically at the disposal of the local people with which they could procure modern amenities, comforts and recreations. When land no more could provide all that aspired for by the people, economy forced the people to look for opportunities elsewhere. But other economic opportunities and social positions had already been appropriated by non-Assamese people. The development of education and research had extended for horizons of knowledge and once the backward sections became aware of post social inequality they claimed a better status. Community within community began to be created when the Government posed as friends of the depressed communities and provided special facilities and safeguards for them.

The Government administrative measures roused jealousies and ethnic consciousness and antagonism among people. The addition of
Bengali-speaking territories to Assam compelled people of both the communities to prove their separate identity and socio-cultural differences. The same logic was applied in later phases by the tribal people under the influence of western culture to prove their distinction and separateness from the plains people.

The political parties in North-East India could not unite all the sections of people and launch a united movement for national liberation. In fact, all geographical areas and races and communities had not received new education equally and were not economically well off. Naturally, their responses to national overtures differed. Moreover Government sympathy for the depressed sections held them aloof from political leaders who were held as caste Hindu exploiters.

The Assamese Muslims also had their own viewpoint about the movements related to the freedom struggle in India. The Surma Valley Conference which spearheaded the Swadeshi Movement led by great men like Bipin Chandra Pal and others failed to attract Muslim support and stirred the Hindu minds only and initiated the cult of nationalism "which was synonymous with Swadeshi." The Muslim League did not rise to prominence in the Surma Valley till late twenties and under the influence of Muslim leaders of Bengal who were government title
holders and rich zamindars, the Muslims of Sylhet remained essentially pro partition. None of the later Muslim leaders of the district has any record of participation in the movement. Thus, we see that the Boycott and Swadeshi Movement did not take root in Brahmaputra Valley and only the Hindus of the Surma Valley were under its influence.

In Assam, the students took the initiative of participating in the Non-Co-Operation movement. According to Government different section of the people understood the purport of the movement in different ways. The lawyers “blindly” supported the Congress and denounced the reforms as “inadequate” and “unworkable”. To some of them “they had been set on foot in order to secure the power of the purse and control over reserved subjects”. Some thought that they were fighting for the “liberty of the country” and were ready to pay a price even if the “middle class should be destroyed”. However, in Assam the Khilafat side of the movement was more pronounced compared to the Non-Co-Operation movement.

Saadullah was an important political figure in Assam who’s thought always showed an apparent concern for the welfare of Assam, in his long political career of forty years; he never disentangled himself from the Europeans who persistently worked for imperial interests and
for the exploitation of the province. He made no sacrifices except renouncing the Knighthood in response to the call of the All India Muslim League in 1946. Secondly, he never showed any inclination to combine with other nationalist forces. This is of course not to say that those forces showed any anxiety for his support. Right from his entry into politics in 1913 till his death, Saadullah was more an advocate of Muslim interests than anything else. While Bardoloi was willing to make adjustments Saadullah would always remain Premier in case of any entente.

The Assam Muslims had joined the Congress en masse on the eve of the elections of 1952. Though the personal alliance of Saadullah foundered, the Congress Muslim entente brought about by him continued till the elections of 1977. Discontent of the Muslims with their new allies, however, became evident from the proceedings of their Gauhati Convention of February 1975 held under the inspiration of the then Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Syed Ahmed Ali and the support of Moinul Haque Choudhary. It discussed the “problem faced by 40 lakhs Muslim population of Assam”. Speakers from different parts of both the valleys of the state complained of “obstacles” to Muslim participation “in all spheres and branches” of life. Their condition had allegedly gone
down since independence particularly in respect of employment, representation in public bodies, nationalized banks, co-operatives, public undertakings, universities and Islamic education.

It was therefore decided to form a “Muslim Parishad” with Syed Ahmed Ali as the President for safeguarding and promoting Muslim interests. A “purely non-political body”, it would “fight for the common cause of the Muslims in other parts of the country”. Moreover, it would extend all co-operations to the “progressive measures” of Government. The Executive Committee included all Muslim Ministers of Assam as well as Moinul Haque Choudhary.

A section of the Muslims complained that the Parishad was formed only as a hand maid of the ministers whose sole interest lay in strengthening their own position. Further, since inception it was suspect as a Congress stooge. However the organization was dissolved by the President in 1975 without adducing any cogent justification. The Muslims now started thinking about having a political party of their own. Following the Congress debate in the Lok Sabha Election of 1977, a section of educated Muslims gathered at Haji Musafir Khana, Islampur, Gauhati on 8 May, 1977. After a detailed and open discussion,
unanimously all agreed in the urgent need of a party which alone could
look after their political and economic interests.

The Muslims could not join the Janata Party for various reasons.
Therefore, "time had now come when an alternative pragmatic, and free
and fearless political leadership which is nationalistic in outlook but
very much alive to the specific needs of the Muslims" should develop.
In view of this, the meeting unanimously decided to form a new political
party under the name of Eastern India Muslim Association (E.I.M.A.)
with headquarters at Gauhati. The Executive Committee of the Party
was headed by Abdul Muhaib Majumdar, four Secretaries and one
Treasure. Representation was given to Assam, Manipur, Tripura and
Meghalaya. Districts offices were established in Cachar, Darrang,
Goalpara, Kamrup and Nowgong. Fifty thousand members were
enrolled till February 1979.

On the eve of the Assembly elections of 1978, selected Muslim
leaders met at Gauhati and decided to form the Progressive Democratic
Front which consisted of the E.I.M.A., Kamata Rajya Parishad, Janata
Congress, Yuva Linguistic Minority Committee and the Citizens
Democratic Front. The Eastern India Muslim Association was formally
dissolved and merged in the Indian Union Muslim League in October,
1977 to reemerge as the Eastern Zonal Muslim League. Its constitution was adopted at the Annual General Meeting held in 25 December, 1978 at Gauhati. The office bearers of the new party elected for 1978-79 consisted of the President, four Vice-Presidents, General Secretary, three Secretaries and a Treasurer. The Secretaries were separately entrusted with organizational matters, publicity and youth league affairs. The meeting adopted resolutions related to the important issues of the day such as infiltration and Muslim grievances, law and order situation and the communal riots issue.