CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION:

A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM
INTRODUCTION: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Situated in the north-east of India, the State of Assam is connected with the rest of India by a narrow 18 mile corridor. Assam has common boundaries with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and Burma. Until a few years ago, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram were parts of Assam.

In ancient times, Assam was known as 'Kamrupa' and its capital was 'Pragjyotishpura'. King Narakasura and his son Bhagadutta were famous rulers in the Mahabharata Period, circa 1000 B.C. The 'Kamrup' kingdom was founded by Pusyavarman in the fourth century and reached its peak of strength and glory in the reign of Bhaskarvarman in the seventh century. The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang visited the country around 640 A.D. at the invitation of its ruler Bhaskarvarman. He left a vivid account of the country and its people. There is no unanimity of opinion as to how the name Assam came to be accepted. However, "In 1236 A.D., the Ahoms, a Mongolian tribe from Thailand crossed the Patkai range through Burma and conquered Upper Assam. Sukapha, the leader entered Assam with a handful of Nobles first. In the next two centuries the Ahoms defeated the Kochs, the Kacharis and other local rulers of lower Assam including Goalpara. The country was thus named Assam after the Ahoms." 1

The Ahoms ruled Assam for nearly sixth centuries. The rivalry among the Ahom Princes weakened the Ahom administration. In despair, prince Gaurinath Singha accepted help of the British in 1786. The British restored peace and returned to Calcutta. After this Badan Chandra Barphukan, the officer in charge of lower Assam invited the Burmese to fight against the king in 1817. The Burmese swept over the country three times, bringing destruction and misery. At the request of king Purandar Singha, the British drove out the Burmese invaders and entered into a treaty with the Burmese. After the treaty of Yandaboo with Burma on the 24th February 1826, Assam became a part of British India.\(^2\)

With the annexation of Assam by the British, the erstwhile Ahom Kingdom became an integral part of India. The present Goalpara district of Assam formed part of Bengal even before the East India Company was granted the Dewani of Bengal in 1765 by the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II. It was in 1639 that Goalpara had become a part of Bengal. Thus Goalpara was included in the British empire nearly 60 years before Assam as a whole became a part of it. It was in 1879, that with the

\(^2\) For details of British Conquest see, H.K. Barpujari, *Assam in the days of Company 1826-1858* (Gauhati, 1963).
addition of three Bengal districts, namely Goalpara, Cachar, and Sylhet, Assam was constituted into a chief commissioner's province. With regard to the inclusion of Sylhet into Assam, Amalendu Guha writes,

"Although vast in area, this new province with its small population of 2,43 thousand had a meagre revenue potential.... To make it financially viable the authorities therefore decided in September to incorporate into it the populous Bengali speaking district of Sylhet which historically as well as ethnically, was an integral part of Bengal. Even with the additional 1,720 thousands people of Sylhet, the new province was only about half as populous as the central provinces." 3

The British administration, to suit its own colonial designs, made territorial adjustments and re-adjustments of Assam in the west and south-west directions. So was the case with regard to the hill states inhabited by numerous tribal groups in the north, north-east, south-east and south. These hill people were self assertive and of independent character. They were war-like people and because of this trait the British imperialist did not view with favour the contact between them and the plains people. 4 "To pursue their policy of divide and rule effectively they devised a plan for segregation of the hill tribal people in their habitat. And this was the system

3. Amalendu Guha, Planter Raj to Swaraj (New Delhi, 1977), pp. 56-64.
of 'Inner line regulation' introduced in 1873, restricting the entrance of any person beyond the line so demarcated."5 These provisions prevented migration into the hills, but the British policies encouraged migration into the plains areas of Assam. The process of territorial adjustments and readjustments had its impact on the socio-cultural and economic aspect of Assam. The most important was on the demographic aspects of the Brahmaputra valley itself. A study of the 120 years of British Colonial rule in Assam will reveal that they opened the doors of Assam to the immigrants from distant places to suit their own colonial interests.

It is well known that the Moamoriya peasant rebellion in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the Burmese invasion in the first quarter of the nineteenth century had left Assam at almost half of her natural population. Diseases like Kala Azar had also swept away a large number during the early period of colonial rule.6 In this way the natural growth of population in Assam was retarded. As a result, miles after miles of the valley remained uncultivated and soon became covered with deep jungles infested with wild beasts. As the cultivable land was much more in proportion to the inhabitants,

and as the government did not want to be deprived of the land revenue from these lands, the British administration seemed to have encouraged large scale immigration into Assam. Hari Sankar Srivastava pointed out that during the famine of 1896-1898 a large number of people from central provinces migrated to Assam. Moreover, with expansion of Tea Plantation in Assam, the British planters in league with the government brought cheap labourers to Assam. Guha says,

"Men, women and children were enticed, even kidnapped and traded like cattle... absconders were hunted down like runaway slaves. Of the total number of 89,756 labourers recruited outside the province of Assam during 15 December 1858 to 30 June 1866, 103 fled away and 30,488 died on the way and the remaining 59,268 reached Assam." 8

Besides Tea labourers, men of different trades and professions started coming to Assam to cater to the needs of the new administration. Guha rightly concludes that all those factors helped the rapid growth of the population of the Brahmaputra Valley from an estimated one million in 1826 to about two million by 1872. 9

While the population went on increasing, Assam's pace of development remained very slow. With the coming of the

British, English education acquired considerable importance, but the colonial administration did not strive in right earnest for the development of English education in Assam. Calcutta was the centre of British commerce and administration for the whole of India, and it became the centre of Indian renaissance. The descendants of the Ahom feudal nobility also had their early initiation into English education there.\textsuperscript{10} The "Joraki Age", a glorious chapter in the history of Assamese literature, had its origin in Calcutta. Anyway, as there was limited scope for higher education in Assam, naturally majority of the Assamese youths could not avail of the opportunity of government jobs. Competition for jobs on the basis of English education developed at a later stage. But gradually educated youths, whether Assamese or non-Assamese (mainly Bengali) began to get government jobs that were open to them. The inevitable result was the greater numerical strength of the non-Assamese, particularly Bengalis in Government service in Assam.\textsuperscript{11}

Administratively, Assam was part of Bengal Presidency from 1826 to 1873, although historically and ethnically Assam was different from Bengal. The British administration made it a policy to recruit educated Bengali people for government


\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 299.
service in Assam as they did in the case of Orissa and Bihar.\textsuperscript{12} In the land revenue settlement work also men from Marwar and Sylhet were appointed in preference to the local Assamese gentry. This was objected to by Maniram Dewan in his memorandum to A.J. Moffat Mills, during the later's visit to the province in 1853. Dewan stated,

"Under the revenue settlement of military officers, while a number of respectable Assamese are out of employ, the inhabitants of Marwar and Bengalees from Sylhet have been appointed to Mauzadarships, and for us respectable Assamese to become the riots of such foreigners is a source of deep mortifications."\textsuperscript{13}

But such arguments did not seem to influence some of the later day educated Assamese like Boli Narayan Borah, because he implored the government to bring educated people from West Bengal with enhanced pay for the educational development of Assam. He was afraid that caste Hindus might be swamped by the plains tribals of Assam.\textsuperscript{14}

The policy of encouraging immigration into Assam effected the demographic situation in such a manner that "the non-indigenous population of Assam proper increased from less than a lac in a total population of 15 lacs in 1872 to an


\textsuperscript{13} Quoted by A.J.M. Mills from the memorandum submitted by Dewan in his \textit{Report on the Province of Assam} (Calcutta, 1854), p. LXVIII.

estimated five to six lacs in a total population of about
22 lacs in 1901 ... non-indigenous element came to constitute
at least one-quarter of the population of Assam proper in
1901."15

In Assam, there were two phases of immigration during
the period of British rule - 1826 to 1905 and 1905 to 1947.
In the first phase of immigration into Assam, mainly three
classes of people migrated - Tea Plantation labourers, 'Amolas'
(often employees from Sylhet, Dacca, Mymensingh, Rampur and
other districts of Bengal) and merchants and tradesmen from
Rajasthan and Bengal. "They mostly constituted a floating
population in the Tea Plantation area and in the towns. In
the second phase, beginning in 1905, the Muslim peasants from
East Bengal now Bangladesh started settling in rural areas of
Assam."16 In addition, the Bengali Hindu immigrants continued
to pour into towns. By 1947, there were approximately 3 mil­
lion non-indigenous people in a total population of about
7 million. The proportion of Muslims in the population of
Brahmaputra Valley had increased to 23 percent by 1941 and
remained the same in 1951, due to the return of some Muslims
to East Pakistan. But the picture becomes clear only when we

---

15. A.K. Das, *Assam's Agony - A Socio-Economic and Political
look at the facts like "in 1911 Muslims constituted 0.1 percent of the population of the Barpeta Subdivision but by 1941, their number increased nearly to 49 percent. The number of East Bengal settlers increased from 300,000 in 1921 to over half a million in 1931." In addition to East Bengalis, Nepalis who entered Assam without restricted area permits either from Nepal or from Bhutan, account for a sizeable number of immigrants. The following two tables clearly show the increase of Nepali as well as Muslim population in Assam.

Table - I: Growth of Nepali Population 1951-71

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Decade Variation</th>
<th>General Variation Assam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>101,335</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>182,925</td>
<td>80.51 p.c.</td>
<td>34.98 p.c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>353,673</td>
<td>93.34 p.c.</td>
<td>31.95 p.c.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 1971 (Assam)

### Table - II: Growth of Muslim Population in Assam 1901-1971 (Districtwise %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1971</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>27.76</td>
<td>35.19</td>
<td>41.48</td>
<td>43.89</td>
<td>46.23</td>
<td>42.94</td>
<td>43.32</td>
<td>42.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowgong</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>17.73</td>
<td>31.60</td>
<td>38.53</td>
<td>40.54</td>
<td>41.24</td>
<td>29.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>7.61</td>
<td>11.46</td>
<td>16.27</td>
<td>17.03</td>
<td>19.35</td>
<td>16.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>5.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>4.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cachar</td>
<td>38.06</td>
<td>37.60</td>
<td>37.61</td>
<td>40.06</td>
<td>42.18</td>
<td>38.49</td>
<td>39.14</td>
<td>39.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills</td>
<td>14.22</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>106.51</td>
<td>101.99</td>
<td>127.26</td>
<td>161.14</td>
<td>183.12</td>
<td>180.47</td>
<td>185.13</td>
<td>167.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Census of India, Various Reports.
The percentage increase of the Nepali population is higher by about 167 percent than the percentage increase in the general population during the period 1951-1971.

The situation came to such a stage that in the 1931 Census report C.S. Mullan, the Census Commissioner commented that during the years between 1921 and 1931, the immigration army had almost completed the conquest of Nowgong, the Barpeta district had fallen in their attack and Darrang was being invaded, Sibsagar had so far escaped completely. He wrote "It is said but by no means improbably that in another 30 years, Sibsagar district will be the only part of Assam in which an Assamese will find himself at home." Writing on the same problem, he stated that the immigration of vast hordes of land hungry Bengali people from Mymensingh and Eastern Bengal would surely alter the whole future of Assam and destroy it more surely than the Burmese invaders in 1820.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad a prominent freedom fighter and who later became the President of India had knowledge of the problem in 1920's. However, he was more worried about the fact that Hindus might be reduced to an insignificant minority in Assam and even considered populating Assam with Biharis to counter the Mymensingh influx. He wrote "... The influx

---

of Muslims from Mymensing was upsetting the population ratio and the Assamese wanted to retain a majority in the Brahmaputra Valley. The influx from Mymensing could be countered only by allowing Bihar Hindus to settle down on the land." The possibility of Muslim majority as a result of immigration has been highlighted even by some progressive historians like Guha in his article, "Nationalism Pan-Indian and Regional in a Historical Perspective." It was an unfortunate distortion because the dominant section of the Assamese have been worried about losing their identity as Assamese (culturally) and not merely as Hindus. Assamese political leaders were not worried by the threat to Hindu religion. In fact Assamese culture was such a culture that despite the dominance of Assamese speaking Hindus in certain aspects of Assamese life Hinduism never became the pivot of Assamese culture. The Assamese national festival 'Bihu' is primarily a cultural festival with strong tribal roots. The Assamese culture has been greatly influenced by the various tribal cultures of the region. This in turn seem to have save it from being communal from religious perspective. But the problem of immigration worried the leaders of Assamese society for a various other reasons. In 1940, leading Assamese citizens like Hem Chandra Barua and Omeo Kr.

Das said that "Assam had already reached a point where its rule of or capacity for absorption has far exceeded its assimilation capacity."\textsuperscript{21}

The immigration of the Muslim peasants from the present day Bangladesh in the first few decades of this century into Assam was clearly linked with the growth of the jute industry in and around Calcutta under the British finance capital. With the expansion of jute trade, the expansion of its cultivation also became an immediate necessity. As the area of jute cultivation in Bengal could no longer be extended, it was thought well to grow the same in the soil of Assam. Hence, the immigration of expert jute cultivators into Assam, Guha rightly states that with their superior techniques of cultivation, these East Bengal peasants taught Assam how to grow jute and several other crops. He shows that "the acreage under jute in the Brahmaputra Valley increased as a result of this great population movement from a little less than 30 thousand acres in 1905-06 to more than 106 thousand acres in 1919-20."\textsuperscript{22}

It is of course not possible to argue that a section of the Assamese themselves did not contribute to the process of immigration. Guha and others stated that Assamese middle class


\textsuperscript{22} Guha, Op.cit., p. 102.
contributed a great deal to the influx of outsiders, Guha says, "Local Assamese and even Marwari money lenders financed the immigrants so that the latter could reclaim land and expand the cultivation of jute, Abu rice, pulses and vegetables." But it is hence not true that the entire Assamese middle class has been in favour of immigration. People like Ambikagiri Roychoudhury, Bishnuram Medhi, Gopinath Bordoloi were very much against immigration. Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury submitted a memorandum to Nehru when the latter came to Assam in 1937. The memorandum stated:

"The Bengalee Hindu and Muslim who run at one another's throat in their own province, are all in one in Assam in this respect, not with a view to fighting for the cause of national freedom, but for establishing their Bengalee Kingdom in close cooperation with the British Government. There has been a serious set back to the process of assimilation with the Assamese. The Mymensinghi immigrants who had voluntarily come forward to identify their interest with those of the Assamese are now persuaded to give that up and are being forced to read Bengali."24

It is clear that a small section of people with vested landed interest encouraged immigration while many others who were concerned with the question of survival of the Assamese culture opposed it. So we cannot blame the entire Assamese middle class for the deeds of a few.

24. Memorandum presented to Jawaharlal Nehru, President, AICC "Jawaharlal Nehru's Assam Tour" AICC Papers, File No. 4(1)22, 1937. Assam Pradesh Congress Committee Office, Gauhati.
In Assam, when the immigrants started encroaching on lands set apart for professional grazing reserves and also inhabited the plains districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong, the problem reached a most critical point. The British Government in Assam introduced the 'Line System' in 1920 restricting the settlement of East Bengal peasants on the plea that the identity and individuality of the Assamese society should remain undisturbed. But the actual aim of this system was, perhaps, to isolate the immigrants from the local people by compelling the former to live and toil in particular segregated localities beyond which they were not allowed to settle. However, the resolution was not executed when Saadullah came into power after the resignation of Congress coalition government. "He considered that the immigrants were mostly landless, and the only solution was to provide them with available lands." The immigrants came to Assam only to acquire as much land as they can. That is why Hamid Khan, the Vice President of the Assam Provincial Muslim League encouraged immigrants to settle in the wastelands of the Assam Valley. His slogan was: "chal chal Darrang chal, jangal bhangia abad kar, patit mati dakhal kar" (Let's march to Darrang, clear the jungle and occupy the fellow

25. Assamiya (bi-weekly), 5 October 1940, Gauhati, p.2.
lands). The violation of the 'Line System' made a section of the Assamese middle class to think seriously of their future. Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury organised the Assam Samakshini Sabha which was later rechristened as Assam Jaitya Maha Sabha. This Sabha strongly opposed the settlement of immigrants in Assam and viewed it as a menace to Assamese culture. Roy Choudhury tried his best to draw the attention of the Assamese to the threat, to their language, culture and the way of life, by the continuous influx of immigrants to Assam.

The Line System in Assam created many problems. The Assamese strongly supported the system while the immigrants opposed it. There is so much of difference of opinion that to resolve the problem, an all party committee was formed under the government initiative with A.W. Botham in the chair in 1928. The committee had nine members, including N.C. Bordoloi and Saadullah. Bordoloi's opinion was for "settlement of land with the immigrants peasants in definite areas with sufficient reservation of land for further expansion of the indigenous population." According to the colonisation scheme, "a small family was given 30 bighas of land. As a result of this, altogether 47,636 acres of land were settled with 1,619 Muslims and 441 Hindu families in the district of Nowgong upto

27. When a section of Assamese people realised that their culture and identity is in danger, due to immigration Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury formed the Assamiya Samrakshini Sabha (Association for Conservation of the Assamese) in 1926 to propagate the Assamese cause.

March 1933. During the six years ending 1936, 59 grazing reserves opened up for the settlement of the immigrant peasant in the district of Nowgong alone.\textsuperscript{29}

According to the census report of 1951, "in 1947 when East Bengal became East Pakistan, the influx of Muslims halted for a while, but Hindu refugees poured in large numbers. What was even more surprising, a very few Muslims of Assam had left East Pakistan. Within a year or so, a large number of Muslims of East Pakistan who should have been regarded as foreigners, began infiltrating, thus repeating the story of the pre-partition years."\textsuperscript{30} The partition of India further complicated the situation. The Nehru-Liaquat Ali Pact, requiring passports for everyone crossing the Borders, did not work as far as Assam was concerned.

Every time there was a civil strife or economic crisis in East Pakistan, there was an exodus of its nationals into Assam. The influx became massive in the wake of Bangladesh liberation struggle, when the borders between the erstwhile East Pakistan and Assam, were left more or less open. There were many refugees who were registered, but it is also true that many refugees went unrecorded. During the mid-seventies

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 209.
Bangladesh was once again in social and political turmoil. The influx which then began, continues even today.

This brief account of immigration into Assam, both before and after partition of the country, includes immigration from other sources particularly Nepal which was by no means insignificant. Even so, the size and dimension of immigration from erstwhile East Bengal later turned East Pakistan and the Bangladesh, have no parallel in records of migrations. Even a cursory glance at the population growth rate in Assam, compared to that of India as a whole, points to an abnormal growth in the state population, as can be seen from the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population in lakh</th>
<th>Decadal Variation in thousand</th>
<th>Percentage of Decadal Variation Assam</th>
<th>India</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>+ 56</td>
<td>+ 16.84</td>
<td>+ 5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>+ 79</td>
<td>+ 20.19</td>
<td>- 0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>+ 94</td>
<td>+ 20.05</td>
<td>+ 11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>+ 116</td>
<td>+ 20.45</td>
<td>+ 14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>+ 137</td>
<td>+ 20.12</td>
<td>+ 13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>+ 287</td>
<td>+ 34.99</td>
<td>+ 21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>+ 385</td>
<td>+ 34.71</td>
<td>+ 24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>+ 551</td>
<td>+ 39.8</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Source: Various Census Reports.
Thus, during the 70 years period from 1901 to 1971, the population of Assam has grown more than four fold (more than six fold at the 1981 level), from 3.3 million in 1901 to nearly 15 million in 1971. The percentage growth rate in this 70 year period for Assam is over 500 percent (600 p.c. at the 1981 level) as against that of 130 percent for India as a whole. Computed at the all-India growth rate of 130 percent, the population of Assam in 1971 should have been 7.6 as against the actual population of 14.9 million. The difference of 7.3 million accounts for the population of the immigrants and their descendants. Even starting from 1951, Assam population at the All India growth rate should have been about 12.6 million, as against the actual population 14.9 million. The difference of 2.3 million, at least a major share it, is accounted for by the population of the illegal foreign settlers. And during the decade 1971-81, their number would have reached the four million mark as against the total of 20 million population of Assam.31

Such abnormal growth in population has had a crippling effect on the economy of the State. A high density of population in a state with a predominantly rural economy is bound to result in increased pressure on agricultural land. According

to the 1971 Census, the density of population in Assam is 186 per sq.km. as against the national average of 169 per sq.km. In the plains district, the density is 223 per sq.km. The effective density, after excluding the areas not available for cultivation, varies from 357 to 548 per sq.km. which is rather high for a state without much industrialization. As a result, there is enormous pressure on agricultural land.

There are other reasons also for the grave concern of the people of Assam over the pressure of lakhs of immigrants on their soil. It is alleged that with the negligence of the government, and the connivance of self-seeking politicians, a large number of foreign nationals have already been fraudulently enrolled on the electoral rolls. Further, there is a possibility of a certain section of the immigrant population consolidating themselves on the basis of language and religion. At the time of the 1951 Census, many an immigrant settler declared his language to be Assamese, thereby accepting the principle of assimilation with the majority community. But now, it appears that they are being persuaded to reaffirm their original language for political reasons. The consequences of such move are ominous. The Assamese would be shown to be much less in number on linguistic as well as

33. Ibid.
religious grounds. In such a state, the Assamese would be reduced to the position of the Tripuris in Tripura today or the Bhutan-Lepchas in Sikkim, a minority in their own home­land. Analysing the situation a senior social scientist of the North East India says, "The critical geo-physical position of Assam adds a new dimension to the problem. In 2000 A.D. there is the possibility of history repeating itself so as to result in the dismemberment of Assam."34

It is clear from the above that the problem of immigration in Assam is not a mere economic or demographic problem. Because of the complex political issues involved with it the problem has evoked various responses from the political parties and groups which resulted in formulation of distinct policies by these forces which in turn led to political action effecting Assam's history itself. In the next chapter we shall analyse the policies of Muslim League and Congress Party on this issue in the pre-independence period.

34. Ibid., p. 5.