Chapter I

Introduction

Assam came under the political map of British India by the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 having five districts of the Brahmaputra Valley namely, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur, which were formerly ruled by the Ahom Kings. Since the last part of the eighteenth century the East India Company was well aware about the political condition of Assam. They came directly in contact with Assam in 1792 when captain Welsh came to Assam to assist Gaurinath Singha. But he returned from Assam on account of non-intervention policy of Sir John Shore in 1796 followed by civil war and the Burmese invasion in 1821. Finally Burmese were expelled from Assam by the British East India Company in 1826 by the Treaty of Yandaboo. Assam was then formed into a Division of the Government of Bengal under a Commissioner.

In 1874, Assam was created a Chief Commissioner province as a result of the reorganization of the administrative system of Bengal. It consisted of the districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhaimpur, the Bengal districts of Sylhet, cachar, and Goalpara and the Hills district of Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the Garo Hills (present Meghalaya), the Naga Hills (present Nagaland), the Lushai Hills (present Mizoram) and the North east Frontier Tract (present Arunachal Pradesh).
During the period from 1905 to 1911 Assam was tagged to East Bengal which formed a single province in the name of Eastern Bengal and Assam under Curzon plan of Bengal partition. Again in 1912 following the annulment of the partition, Assam was made a separate province under a Chief Commissioner. In 1921, Assam became a Governor’s province which continued during provincial autonomy introduced by the Government of India Act, 1935. Finally in 1947 when India achieved independence, Assam became a separate state without Sylhet, which by a referendum went to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) except three police station of Badarpur, Ratabari, Patharkandi and a portion of Karimganj.

The term Line System can broadly be defined as a colonial devise of racial segregation. Such colonial policy has been found in South Africa where the British colonial Government introduced a system known as Pass Laws in the Cape Colony and Natal during the nineteenth century. Pass Laws in South Africa were designed to segregate the population and put a limitation on the movement of non-white populations.

In the context of Assam the Line System is associated with the immigration of land hungry peasants from the district of Mymensingh of East Bengal. The immigration in Assam started with the last decade of the nineteenth century with the encouragement of colonial officials. It is to be noted here in this context that the immigrant population mainly belonged to the Muslim community who settled in wastelands of Assam by clearing the forest and started cultivation.

The large scale immigration resulted into a tremendous increase of population in the first three decades of the twentieth century. As
observed by scholar the population of an area grows in two ways, an excess of birth over deaths and an excess of immigration over emigration. In case of Assam, the number of immigrants exceeded that of emigrants during the period under study.\(^1\)

**Table.1.1: Variations of Population**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population in Assam</th>
<th>Persons per square mile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>4,151,231</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>5,129,891</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>5,477,880</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>6,126,945</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>7,060,521</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>7,990,246</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of 1921. p.3

**Table.1.2 Statement showing the relative importance of migration and natural growth in the province and its natural division:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gain (+) or loss(-) by immigrants in 1911-21</th>
<th>Variation of natural population</th>
<th>Total increase in 1911-21</th>
<th>Percentage of total increase due to Migration</th>
<th>Natural growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASSAM</td>
<td>+411,941</td>
<td>+517,784</td>
<td>+929,725</td>
<td>+44.3</td>
<td>+55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmaputra valley</td>
<td>+416,350</td>
<td>332,300</td>
<td>+748,650</td>
<td>+55.6</td>
<td>+44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surma Valley</td>
<td>-14,216</td>
<td>+111,987</td>
<td>+97,771</td>
<td>-14.5</td>
<td>+114.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hills</td>
<td>+13,613</td>
<td>+69,691</td>
<td>+83,304</td>
<td>+16.3</td>
<td>+83.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(SOURCE: Census of 1921. p.3)

\(^1\) Nripen Dhar p.16
In Assam by the Line system, villages were mainly divided into four classes. In the first place some villages were exclusively reserved for the indigenous people. Secondly, some other villages were exclusively meant for the Bengali immigrants. Thirdly, there were villages in which a line was drawn either on the map or in the ground, on the one side of which immigrants could settle and on the other side of which their settlement was forbidden. Fourthly, there were villages in which both immigrants and indigenous people were free to settle. The lines drawn on the map or on the ground were somewhat arbitrary as no fixed principles were followed determining them. The Line System at first owed its origin in the district of Nowgong in 1920. It was, in fact, a device to segregate the Bengali Muslims from the indigenous population including tribal and backward classes.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century a steady stream of agricultural immigrants from adjoining districts of Bengal mainly Mymensingh, Dacca, Bogura and Rangpur started to come to Assam, most of which were Muslims. They settled permanently with their families mainly on the vast culturable wastelands lying in the riverine belt of the lower and central districts of the valley namely Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong. It coincided with the creation of a new province in the name of Eastern Bengal and Assam following the partition of Bengal. Lord Curzon had given the partition a political colour by stating that the Muslims would get a province where they would be majority. Accordingly, the colonial Government was encouraging immigration particularly to the chars of Goalpara. It was in 1911, that the Census Commissioner first pointed out the dangers of immigrants who had gone beyond the chars of Goalpara. By 1921, the
movement had extended in all four lower and central districts of the valley to a considerable extent.

Moreover, during the partition of 1905 when Assam was merged with the Dacca division of Bengal, the communication gap between the people of Assam valley and those of Eastern Bengal narrowed down. This also facilitated the movement of people from one region to other. The completion of Assam Bengal railway reduced the remoteness of Assam from the rest of India.

The Census Report of 1931 gives the picture of the movement of large scale of East Bengal immigrants in Assam. According to which in 1911 few cultivators from east Bengal had gone beyond Goalpara, and in between 1911 to 1921 the movement of immigrants had extended far up the valley that formed an appreciable element in the population of Goalpara, Kamrup, Nowgong and Darrang. Till then the two upper districts namely Sibsagar and Lakhimpur were not affected by the inroads of immigrants. In Goalpara nearly twenty percent of the population was made up of those settlers, in Nowgong the immigrants formed about fourteen percent of the whole population. In Kamrup wastelands were being taken up rapidly, especially in the Barpeta subdivision. In Darrang, the immigrants had not yet penetrated far from the banks of the banks of the Brahmaputra. In between 1921 to 1931 the immigrants had consolidated their position in Goalpara, Nowgong, Kamrup and Darrang. Mr. Lloyd in 1921 census estimated that including children of the immigrants born after their arrival in the province, the total number of settlers was at least 300,000 in that year.
Table No. 1.3 Table showing the number of persons born in Bengal in each districts of the Assam Valley in 1911, 1921, 1931

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Goalpara</th>
<th>Kamrup</th>
<th>Darrang</th>
<th>Nowgong</th>
<th>Sibsagar</th>
<th>Lakhimpur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>77 (Ms.34)</td>
<td>4 (Ms.1)</td>
<td>7 (Ms.1)</td>
<td>4 (Ms.1)</td>
<td>14 (Ms.Nil)</td>
<td>14 (Ms.Nil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>151 (Ms.78)</td>
<td>44 (Ms.30)</td>
<td>20 (Ms.12)</td>
<td>58 (Ms.12)</td>
<td>14 (Ms.Nil)</td>
<td>14 (Ms.Nil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>170 (Ms.80)</td>
<td>134 (Ms.91)</td>
<td>41 (Ms.30)</td>
<td>120 (Ms.108)</td>
<td>12 (Ms.Nil)</td>
<td>19 (Ms.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ms** – Mymensinghias migrated from Mymensingh (Bengal) to Assam (Sources: RD/23/43 p.3)

In the above table the figures for Mymensingh district have been given in brackets as that district was the one which was chiefly responsible for the flood of immigrant settlers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>1921</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>1931</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>1941</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>600643</td>
<td>211562</td>
<td>389081</td>
<td>762523</td>
<td>316490</td>
<td>446033</td>
<td>882748</td>
<td>387709</td>
<td>495039</td>
<td>1014285</td>
<td>468924</td>
<td>545361</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>667828</td>
<td>64627</td>
<td>603210</td>
<td>762671</td>
<td>111546</td>
<td>651125</td>
<td>926746</td>
<td>240422</td>
<td>736324</td>
<td>1264200</td>
<td>367522</td>
<td>896678</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>377314</td>
<td>20305</td>
<td>357009</td>
<td>477935</td>
<td>36535</td>
<td>441400</td>
<td>584817</td>
<td>67503</td>
<td>517324</td>
<td>763791</td>
<td>120995</td>
<td>615796</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowgong</td>
<td>303596</td>
<td>15689</td>
<td>287907</td>
<td>397921</td>
<td>70582</td>
<td>327339</td>
<td>562581</td>
<td>177762</td>
<td>384819</td>
<td>710800</td>
<td>250113</td>
<td>460687</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>690299</td>
<td>21718</td>
<td>660581</td>
<td>823197</td>
<td>34994</td>
<td>788203</td>
<td>933326</td>
<td>43907</td>
<td>889419</td>
<td>1074741</td>
<td>51769</td>
<td>1022972</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>468989</td>
<td>13419</td>
<td>455570</td>
<td>588295</td>
<td>15446</td>
<td>572849</td>
<td>724582</td>
<td>25949</td>
<td>698633</td>
<td>894842</td>
<td>44579</td>
<td>850263</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3108669</td>
<td>355320</td>
<td>2753349</td>
<td>3812642</td>
<td>585593</td>
<td>3226949</td>
<td>4664800</td>
<td>943252</td>
<td>3721548</td>
<td>5695659</td>
<td>1303902</td>
<td>4391757</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Assam Muslim: Politics and Cohesion p. 27
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>1911 to 1921</th>
<th>1921 to 1931</th>
<th>1931 to 1941</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total increase</td>
<td>Percen t</td>
<td>Total increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>104,928</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>556,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>46919</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>47,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>16,230</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>84,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowgong</td>
<td>54,893</td>
<td>349.9</td>
<td>39,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsaagar</td>
<td>5,276</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>127,622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>2,027</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>117,279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>230,273</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>473,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source (RD.23/43 p.4)
Table 1.6 (Statement showing the Khiraj area and area settled with immigrants)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total settled khiraj Area</th>
<th>Area settled with other immigrants as Mymensinghias, Railway coolies, and U.P Cultivators (Other than ex-Tea garden Coolies, Nepalese and Santhals)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In 1911-12 Acres</td>
<td>In 1921-22 Acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>549,456</td>
<td>658,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>316,527</td>
<td>419,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowgong</td>
<td>262,442</td>
<td>355,438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>617,531</td>
<td>715,486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>284,969</td>
<td>396,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,236,245</td>
<td>2,606,645</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (RD: 23/43 p.4)
Table 1.7: Expansion (Increase in area settled)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Khiraj area</th>
<th>Khiraj area</th>
<th>Khiraj area</th>
<th>Khiraj area</th>
<th>Khiraj area</th>
<th>Area settled with immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1911-12 to 22</td>
<td>1921-22 to 22</td>
<td>1931-32 to 42</td>
<td>1921-22 to 42</td>
<td>1911-12 to 42</td>
<td>1921-22 to 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>118.4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>190.6</td>
<td>1921-22 to 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>108.9</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>236.6</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>102.6</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>126.7</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>229.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowgong</td>
<td>92.99</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>135.4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>105.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>97.95</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>121.6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>41.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>111.0</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>172.3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>105.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source (RD.23/43 p.4)
From the above tables it has been observed that since 1911 the Brahmaputra valley witnessed large scale immigrants from East Bengal particularly Mymensingh districts in Assam in search of vacant lands which changed the the composition structure of the population structure of Assam in many respect.

**Statement of the problem:**

The present study sought to explore the origin and development of Line System as a colonial device in Assam. An effort has been made to focus on the causes of change in the colonial policy of immigration from nineteenth to twentieth century and highlight the colonial attitude of making division between the Indian communities.

For the first time in 1913, the problem of agricultural immigrants and the need of preventing interference with the indigenous Assamese had begun to attract attention of the colonial Government. Interestingly both the Assamese middle class and the Colonial Government encouraged immigration to settle in the wasteland considering the economic prospect of the province. In view of the increasing number of immigrants the colonial bureaucrats like Deputy Commissioners considered steps to meet the situation. A plan was framed in 1916 and was first applied in Nowgong. According to which the new coming immigrants should not be allowed no longer to settle anywhere they liked but would be confined to certain areas in villages demarcated by lines. J.C Higgins, Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong in his order in 1923 officially inaugurated the Line system though it had already been implemented and in operation in 1920. The Government could device no better measure to tackle the immigration
problem of settlement and as the number of new comers increased gradually, the Government gave their approval vide letter No.2132 R, dated August, 1925.

Therefore, initially, the problem of immigration in Assam was sought to be tackled by the colonial official circle. The official attempt failed because of multi-dimensional character of the problem. It should be noted that the colonial handling of the situations gave rise to communal consciousness and the matter was taken up by the public representatives.

An attempt for the solution of immigration problem was made with the formation of Line System Enquiry Committee in 1938 under the Chairmanship of F.W.Hockenhull. The report they submitted was an amalgam of conflicts, contradictions and compromises. They could not suggest any clear cut solution of extremely complicated problem. To sum up the Muslim members of the Committee condemned the Line System and recommended its abolition while the Hindu members commended it with some restrictions in future. By the time of enquiry the matter had further complicated by the introduction of the question of language.

In September 1938, the Saadulla coalition Ministry was broken by the first Congress coalition headed by Gopinath Bardaloi who was able to do nothing better to solve this problem which began to assume racial, communal, linguistic and political colours. The resignation of Bardaloi left the field open for Saadulla, who had formed his coalition Ministry in February, 1940. Till 1946, he was premier for number of times and followed a policy of settlement which was subjected to severe criticism by the Congress, both at national and provincial level.
The policy of evictions of large scale immigrants pursued by the Bardaloi Government in 1946 met with strong opposition from the Mulsim League and their followers. It resulted in communal tension prevailed all over province till the declaration of Mountbatten plan for referendum of Sylhet.

Thus the Line System, immigration issue and the policy of evictions had split up the province more deeply and widely than any other things. The rise and fall of Ministries was linked up with the issue which defied any solution because of divergent approaches of the political leaders which only hastened communal bitterness and tension. Against such background, the emergence of Muslim League as a formidable force in Assam politics serves only to intensify the communal cleavages. The All India Muslim League officially took up the matter of immigration problem in Assam, condemning the Line System as an instrument of injustice and oppression and declared that it could be remedied only by the establishment of Pakistan. Finally the British colonial policy of Line System furnished as a pretext for the separation of Sylhet from the mainland of Assam.

SURVEY OF LITERATURE:

Makhan Lal Kar in his book *Muslims in Assam politics (New Delhi, 1990)* highlighted the settlement of Muslims in Assam since the earlier period, their socio-economic position along with their progress in education sector. In this book the role of Muslims in the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly were also discussed. It was also discussed that the Muslims after securing land and numerical strength became more vocal in echoing the views of separate interests in all spheres of life in the thirties. The book also mentioned about the Muslim legislators, who were divided into numerous groups, sort out their differences
under the leadership of Saadulla and owed their allegiance to the All India Muslim League. By 1944, the Assamese Hindus realized the dangers of the demand for the creation of Pakistan. On the other hand, Assamese Muslims wanted Pakistan in which they desired to include the whole of Assam. The Assamese Hindus opposed Pakistan, and advocated for the inclusion of the Bengali district of Sylhet with a Muslim Majority in Pakistan.

Bimal J Dev and Dilip Kumar Lahiri in their book *Assam Muslims: politics and Cohesion (Delhi, 1983)* highlighted the social settings and sentiments of the Muslim people in Assam. It highlighted the various factors for the rise of Muslim League politics in the history of Assam. The role of the All India Muslim League in Indian politics and Assam as its part was also discussed in this book. It also mentioned the Muslim League movement in Assam and the role of the Press in it.

Homeswar Goswami in his book *Population Trends in the Brahmaputra Valley* (Delhi, 1985) highlighted the factors responsible for the growth of population in Assam. The book also deals with the attitude of the colonial tea planters towards the indigenous cultivators due to slow agricultural growth in the province.

Sanjib Barua in his book *India against itself: Assam and politics of Nationality* (Pennsylvania, 1999) highlighted the colonial manipulation in their effort for economic transformation of Assam which caused enormous demographic shift. It also highlighted the colonial concept of wasteland and affect to local gentry and peasantry of the region. The author also tried to relate the immigration of nineteenth and twentieth century with the post-colonial ethnic problem in Assam.

Amalendu Guha in his book *Planter-Raj to Swaraj: Freedom and electoral politics in Assam (1826-1947)* (ICHR, Delhi, 1977) highlighted the attitude of colonial officials towards opening of tea and other industries in Assam. It also highlighted the Assam’s plantation economy, opium problem, along with problem of influx of immigrants, peasant and workers struggle, evolution of the Ryot sabhas, trade unions and of the Communist party. The author also discussed the role of various organizations in settling the question of linguistic and regional
identity along with the issue of immigration in Assam upon which depended the existence of Assamese race.

Sarfaraz Hussain Mirza in his book *Muslim Students and Pakistan Movement-selected documents, 1937-47* (Lahore, Pakistan, 1988) highlighted the role of the Muslim students in the freedom struggle against the British colonial rule and their faith in the ideology of Pakistan. The book also focuses the activity of the Muslim students while participating in the movement since 1937 throughout India.


H.M. Bareh (New Delhi, 2004) in the book *Encyclopedia of North East India* discussed the factors responsible for retarded agricultural growth in colonial Assam. The author also highlighted the attitude of political leaders towards immigration problem in Assam.

**OBJECTIVES:**

Though all these aforesaid works have dealt with the immigration issue and communal parties of Assam in the twentieth century, the present study seeks to highlight the virgin field that focuses the colonial manipulation to divide the two religious communities with the help of Line System and finally to create two opposing linguistic communities, that is, the Assamese and the Bengalese. The study also seeks to explore the correlation between the immigration, Line System and the socio economic aspect of Assamese life and creation of valley politics in Assam. The present study concentrates its attention on the ethnic, racial, and religious politics
which began with the large scale land hungry, economically pauper Memensinghia Muslims in Assam and the colonial British policy of divide and rule. It is also important to explore how the British Government changed its position in connection with immigration problem in Assam and encouraged local inhabitants, Assamese people as well as Muslims to stand against each other on this issue. It can also be said that how the British Government followed the policy of racial segregation in Assam, which had a serious impact not only in the history of Assam but India as well and which still exists as a problematic issue in Assam.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

(i) The present study seeks to highlight the issue of immigration into Assam in the early twentieth century.

(ii) The study also tries to show the policy of the colonial Government towards the issue of immigration.

(iii) The change of Government policy and official discouragement of immigration issue through Line system.

(iv) The study wants to explore the attitude of the Congress and Muslim League politicians on the issue of immigration into Assam.

(v) The study also seeks to explore the new elements like language and culture which emerged in Assam politics as a consequence of Line System.
DATA AND METHODOLOGY:

The present study has adopted empirical method. Therefore, both primary and secondary sources have been discussed for the purpose. For the primary sources the study has adopted archival methods. Much importance is given on collecting primary data. The Assam State Archives, Dispur, Guwahati, the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Guwahati, and Indian Official Documents (IOD) Section of the National Library, Kolkata have supplied the major source for primary data. The Assam Secretariat Files, published and unpublished Government official reports under colonial rule, Administrative Report, Report on Line System Enquiry Committee, District Gazetteers, Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly proceedings, various official correspondences have been consulted for the purpose.

Various secondary sources like journal, magazines, books, have been consulted available in the National Library of Kolkata, State Assembly Library, Dispur, Assam, Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development Library, Guwahati, Administrative Staff College, khanapara, Assam, and Gauhati University Library for the purpose.

CHAPTERISATION:

The entire work has been divided into six chapters including the present one, which is an introductory and contains the main themes of the study. An effort has been made to give an image of immigration problem in Assam which started with the large scale influx of East Bengal cultivators mostly Mymenisinghia Muslims from the neighboring Bengal districts of Brahmaputra valley in the first half of
the twentieth century. This immigration issue had stirred the politics of Assam in the colonial period. The colonial officials of Assam encouraged immigration on purely economic ground as they saw the vast wasteland of Assam lying uncultivated by the indigenous people. The movement of the people was also accelerated due to the completion of Assam Bengal railway and the partition of Bengal in 1905, by which a new province was created in the name of Eastern Bengal and Assam on the plea of administrative convenience. At the same time in absence of any restrictive law on the land revenue settlement the situation was conducive for these cultivators to settle in any vacant land particularly on the riverine base of the Brahmaputra valley. But with the increase in the number of immigrants and apprehending collision with the interest of local people the colonial district officials took initiative to introduce the policy of Line System as a protective measure in 1920. By it the indiscriminatesettlement of the immigrants wasrestricted which received Government sanction in the 1925.

Chapter II deals with the official attitude of colonial rulers towards the immigration issue in nineteenth and early twentieth century. An effort has been made to find out the motive of the British colonial officials to encourage immigration of people for tea plantation and other industries in Assam from outside Brahmaputra valley. In this chapter, the agricultural growth of Assam under the earlier phase of colonial rule was discussed. Relying on the official correspondence between the Government of India and the Chief Commissioner, Assam, the present study has made an effort to analyze the attitude of the various colonial officials towards the proposed scheme of Colonization of vast wasteland in Assam by the immigrants.
from outside the province. The factors responsible for the immigration of East Bengal cultivators particularly the Muslims in Assam under official encourage were also discussed.

In chapter III the change of attitude of the colonial officials towards indiscriminate settlement of Mymensinghia immigrants in Assam are investigated particularly since the annulment of Bengal Partition in 1912. In this chapter an effort was made to analyze the concern of colonial officials over transfer of lands to immigrants by Assamese landholders and preventive measures taken by the Government in this connection. It has also discussed the Colonization scheme undertaken by the colonial Government to solve land settlement problem with the immigrants in Assam.

Chapter IV deals with the attitude of the politicians of Assam over the issue of immigration and Line System. Under this chapter an effort has been made to show how the members of the Legislative Council and Assembly were divided over the issue of immigration highlighting the interest of their respective community. Since the inauguration of provincial autonomy the issue of Line System became the bone of contention between the Congress and the Muslim League, one favored its retention, other its abolition. The politics over the issue of land settlement and the policy of Line System under Saadulla and Bardaloi Ministry are the main theme of this chapter.

Chapter V deals with the relation of communal politics with the Line System and the creation of valley politics. The policy of eviction of large scale illegal immigrants pursued by Bardoloi Ministry after 1946 and the role played by the Muslim League in opposing it are analyzed in this chapter. An effort has also been made to highlight the
communal politics inaugurated by the Muslim League and their demand for Pakistan as a remedial measure of Line System. This chapter also highlights linguistic problem, and the valley politics which was intensified due to Line system, coupled with the demand of the Assamese people for separation of Sylhet from Assam.

The last chapter that is Chapter VI deals with ultimate findings of the whole thesis. In this chapter an effort has been made to find out the relation between the immigration, Line system and politics of two valleys in Assam.