CONCLUSION

The desire to work on this particular area had been occasioned by the need to know about the fashioning of an identity by the people of my home. The political nationalism, which seemed to grow out of linguistic nationalism, was an eye-opener for me. This trajectory made the Assamese nationalist movement more or less unique in the history of Indian nationalism. The 'Little Nationalism" which Guha had hinted at seems to be actually attested to but with very critical emendations. I had mentioned earlier that along with the yearning to be one with the unified Indian identity, there also existed a very strong and equally powerful movement towards what, people variously call - 'provincial', 'chauvinistic' or a 'conservative' tendency towards a total satisfaction with one's own limited 'Assameseness'. The aggressiveness of this movement can be seen from the very beginning of Assam's struggle for self-hood and came to be crystallized in the dedicated battle, which was fought for the 'honour' of the Assamese language.

One related question, which I wish to mention here, is the rather thorny issue of whether the idea of nationalism in subject countries was actually a 'derivative discourse' created by an awareness of the ideas of freedom, democracy and sovereignty which spread through the apparatus of Western education. Although I could have dealt with this debate at length in one of my chapters, I preferred to mention this in my conclusion.
so as to be able to prove my contention conclusively. Even while I accept Benedict Anderson's primary criterion of imagination being a necessary constituent for the construction of the nation, his formulation that nationalism is a fundamentally Western concept begs questioning. The 'modular' nature of western nationalism, which found eager imitators in the colonies that Anderson talks about, is worthy of debate, especially in the light of the findings in my thesis. He does not accept the possibility of variant or different nationalisms. However, any sensitive reading of a campaign like the Assamese nationalist's struggle for the reinstatement of the Assamese language (even while accepting Andersonian categories like 'print-capitalism') will show marked differences from the 'modular' form which Anderson enumerates.

I also wish to point out that the word, 'fabrication' in the title of my thesis is not used in the pejorative sense of 'falsity as Anderson interprets it when he quotes Gellner's use of the word, 'invention'. I use fabrication to mean 'manufacture' or 'construct' an identity out of the raw materials available to the nationalists, a process we see in the context of Assam.

The selection, interpretation and modification of the historical facts under the command of the nationalists show a desire to create an identity worthy of respect. The possibility of gaining a much deserved political independence and the awareness that this idea of an Assamese nationhood

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1 Anderson, p.6.
could be gained only through a mass-mobilization of the newly created reading public, led to the kind of writings which I had enumerated in Chapters iii, iv and v. These writings definitely show a particular conceptualisation of what being a 'modern Assamese' person meant in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I had, of course, used only the canonical writers of Assamese literature, but there were other marginal writers who did talk about other probable Assamese identities. These were, however, beyond the purview of my work.

I wish to conclude by saying that the word 'Identity' in the singular and with the definitive article, 'the' before it in the title of my thesis is proved wrong by my own research. Even while all attempts were on to create one homogenous Assamese identity, identity was a plural, heterogeneous entity; constituted among others by the lower classes, the peasants, the advisasis and the women. Even while this multiplicity of voices remained silent, we can read the actuality of their existence in the anxiety of the voices that have been given the floor. Even while the Assamese elite talked about these groups, spoke for or against them, we read in their silences, the suppression of identities, which were yet to be created and which would be created in the course of time.