

CHAPTER-VI

Conclusion

During the research, the researcher found it very queer to face severe paucity of available sources about Saadulla. Though he was a very active figure in the political arena of Assam before independence, surprisingly enough his memories had been pushed to oblivion unlike other similar personality of his period. It has been found by the researcher that this sort of attitude has been harboured a large number of people because of his amity and allegiance to the imperialistic British Government and also because of his association with Muslim League. Intensive study and analysis of available sources of Saadulla's life and works reveals that these associations, though a call of the hour, has helped in forming a negative propaganda against him.

Saadulla fully believed that the future prosperity of Assam laid in the active participation of people of Assam in the administration and in the full acknowledgment of their political rights and duties in a constitutional manner. He also thought that the burning questions of the province could be solved by drawing the attention of the Government through their speeches and debates in the Council. This attitude brought him closer to an organisation having a similar ideology named Assam Association. While marching along with this organisation and supporting its views and objectives he energetically participated in all debates and discussions in the Council and even moved resolutions against the issues which he thought were not fair. Though Saadulla worked closely with the Assam Association in their constitutional agitation yet he was not its member. Saadulla severed all his connection with the Assam Association when the Assam Association decided to boycott Council elections in response to Gandhi's call for Non Co-operation Movement.

Syed Md Saadulla never favoured the policy of continued obstruction and wrecking the Constitution on the ground that it would not bring any benefit to the people rather he advocated a policy of 'parliamentary obstruction' if necessary and treatment of issues based only on their merit. Being an ardent supporter of the policy of 'parliamentary obstruction' Saadulla refused to co-operate and join Swarajya Party and later accepted office as a minister under the Dyarchy system.

After the suspension of the Non Co-operation and the Khilafat Movement when the relation between Hindus and the Muslims deteriorated in Assam following the all India pattern Saadulla moved closer to British to draw more political concessions for his community on one hand and for the interests of his province on the other hand. Saadulla was an advocate of separate electorate. He preferred the retention of the separate electorate not because he had separate separatist feeling but because he regarded it essential for the political survival of a community. Because of his concern for his community and support of the separate electorate he got branded as communal and defender of the Muslim interests only. But Saadulla's role as the defender of Muslim interest was rooted in backwardness of Muslim community position in all walks of life and their permanent minority position in the political set-up based on the majority rule. Moreover, he extended his support to the British as they were the ultimate decision makers and even went to the extent of choosing a non-confrontation-path with the rulers, the British. Saadulla also developed a close relation with the British to attain stability to his political position in the Council as he was not affiliated to any party and had no party support in the Council.

In 1937, Saadulla formed his first ministry. The supporters of his first coalition ministry consisted of members from heterogeneous groups and his government was based on diversified conditions and negotiations put forwarded by them. Any

deviation or alterations from such bound norms could result in the fall of the government. For this reason, he had to rely increasingly on the European bloc and their cohorts for succor in times of distress. The European bloc also stood by him in his political crisis. In 1939, when Congress Party under Bardoloi resigned in pursuance of the Congress Working Committee's directive on the issue of war, the Governor persuaded Saadulla to form the Government. But Saadulla was reluctant to shoulder the responsibility as he was conscious of his lack of majority support behind him. In spite of that Saadulla was permitted to form government by the Governor and allowed to work for party support. In order to reciprocate the assistance that the Governor had provided, Saadulla honestly supported the British war efforts including the ordinances promulgated by both the Viceroy and the Governor. Saadulla contributed a sum of one lakh rupees to the war fund. Assam was the first and only province to make such a huge contribution to the Central Government for the prosecution of war. Political compulsion and call of the hour made Saadulla to turn towards the European side and because of this he got branded as a pro British. However, at some occasion Saadulla also refused to co-operate with British whenever he thought that such action would shake his political position. Saadulla's refusal to include a European in the cabinet in 1942 on the ground that it would frustrate his ministry making effort depicts Saadulla as an experienced politician.

At the time of forming his first coalition ministry Saadulla made an appeal to 34 Muslim members elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly under different groups and parties to patch up their differences and unite themselves under a common banner. In response to Saadulla's appeal for Muslim solidarity the various Muslim groups or parties in Barhmaputra Valley united themselves under the banner of Assam Valley Muslim Party headed by him whereas Muslim groups or parties in Surma

Valley united themselves under the banner of Surma Valley United Muslim Party. But the Muslim League founded in the Surma Valley by Abdul Matin Chaudhury did not merge with the Surma Valley United Muslim Party; rather it retained its separate identity. Saadulla made alliance with the Surma Valley United Muslim Party and not with the Muslim League because of the fact that the strength of the Surma Valley United Muslim Party after unification had rose to 17 whereas the Muslim League had won only four seats in the election and these negligible members could not help him in forming a stable Government. Abdul Matin Chaudhury, after being frustrated for not including in the Saadulla ministry, joined hands with the Congress Party. The Muslim League then in collaboration with the Congress Party caused enormous harassment to Saadulla and they stood as a stumbling block to smooth functioning of his Government. When the immigrant Muslim legislators of the Assembly headed by Abdul Hamid Khan shifted their allegiance from him and moved closer towards Muslim League Saadulla not only joined the Muslim League but also reshuffled the ministry to include Muslim League members in the cabinet to checkmate the Congress onslaught in the Assembly and to enlighten and strengthen his ministry and political career. To strengthen his ministry Saadulla also incorporated a minister from the depressed class of the Surma Valley. To resist the continuous machination of the Congress party Saadulla filled the Local Board with nominated pro Europeans members, did not take any action according to the recommendation of the Line System Committee and even promised the tribals that he would plead for a separate electorate for the them when the opportunity would come for review of the Constitution. In spite of adopting all these ways and means Saadulla failed to postpone his defeat in 1938.

Saadulla proved his calculative and farsighted nature in dealing with the celebration of the Deliverance Day as declared by the Muslim League. But realising the ill-effect of the celebration, he very cunningly avoided the situation. He could very well visualise that it might antagonise his cabinet colleagues who were not affiliated to the Muslim League. But he was not even in a position to put objection against observing the deliverance programme because he knew that it would displease the League members. He did not want to lose support of any constituent parties that he had gathered after much difficulty. Such a critical situation put Saadulla in a very precarious position. But he proved his caliber as a seasoned politician in resolving the issue. He tactfully departed to Calcutta when the time of implementing the programme arrived. One more instance that exhibits Saadulla's individual decision making power was the acceptance of a seat on the National Defence Council offered by the British. In order to impress the British, he did it without any reference to Jinnah, even violating the League's directive of 15th June 1940 forbidding Muslims to serve on War Committees. Therefore all these established the fact that Saadulla's was more influenced by political consideration than anything else. Had political policy not been the primary objective of Saadulla, than he being a member of the Muslim League would have definitely implemented Jinnah's instruction.

As the Premier of Assam, Saadulla inherited the problem of land settlement for the immigrants of East Bengal and Line System. The Line System and the immigration issue dominated the entire tenure of his office. The Muslim leaders as well as the immigrant leaders united and condemned the Line System because this system had segregated them from the autochthonous communities of Assam and confined them within unattractive lands whereas the autochthonous communities of Assam clamoured for the continuation of the Line System. The Muslim leaders as

well as the immigrant leaders had rendered their support to Saadulla in the hope that Saadulla being a Muslim would abolish the Line System. They under their leader Bhasani persistently pressurised Saadulla to allot more and more lands to the landless immigrants from East Bengal by abolishing the Line System. Saadulla knew that any attempt to abolish the Line System would arouse hostility among non Muslim groups who preferred preservation of the Line System. To retain the support of the immigrant group and non Muslim groups of his government Saadulla adopted a middle course. He allowed land to be passed in the hands of the immigrants without abolishing the Line System. Saadulla provided land to landless immigrants not only to consolidate his political position but also for the economic prosperity of Assam. Assam was rich in its natural resources. Assam's main source of income was tea and petroleum, kerosene etc. Assam had to pay maximum of its income to the Central Government in the shape of excise duty. Under the Subvention Committee headed by Sir Otto Niemeyer, Assam received subvention of Rs 30 lakhs per annum. In addition to this from divisible income tax together with a share of the export duty Assam was assigned 2%. When Saadulla accepted office as Premier in 1937 he found the subvention of Rs 30 lakhs per annum inadequate to run the new Constitutional Scheme under the Act of 1935. Moreover, the new Government under Saadulla inherited liabilities of 32 lakhs. This deteriorate financial status of Assam led Saadulla to follow British policy of increasing the revenue of the province by opening up the wastelands for settlement with the Muslim immigrants. For the perspective of developing Assam and making it a wealthier state, Saadulla encouraged the settlement of lands with the immigrants. Saadulla had linked up his political interest with the interest of the province and like a skilled politician he led the two aspects together.

In 1941 Saadulla following the instruction of the Central Government conducted the census operation of 1941 on the basis of community rather than on the basis of religion. As a result the number of the Hindus dribbled down and the number of tribals and Muslims increased. The issue of providing land to the immigrants under economic compulsion and political consideration; the enumeration of the Census of 1941 on the basis of community and not on religion under the order of the Central Government were two different issues but these two issues had an adverse effect on Saadulla's position as the Premier. This was due to the declaration of the Lahore Resolution which stated a separate state for the Muslims. Since Saadulla was Muslim and the Premier of Assam on one hand and Muslim League member on the other hand it confirmed the apprehension among the Hindus of Assam that Saadulla through immigration issue and Census operation of 1941 wanted to make Assam Muslim majority province and thereby wanted to include Assam in Pakistan zone. When after the Muslim League's Lahore Resolution, the Saadulla Ministry was suspected of pro-Pakistan activities through his land settlement policy and the Census of 1941; R. K. Choudhuri resigned Saadulla ministry. Following the resignation of R. K. Choudhuri, Saadulla also resigned.

Saadulla was again installed to power in 1942. In 1942 when Saadulla came to power he found the economy of Assam in a very critical situation. By 1942 Assam was declared within the War Zone. As a part of his commitment to support the war efforts he had to bear the load of supporting the war economy including the burden of feeding the military men, stationed at various parts of the province to resist the advance of the Japanese in Assam. But Saadulla found that the provincial exchequer was not sufficient to meet the economic crisis of such huge magnitude. It was about the same time Indian Viceroy Linlithgow initiated a policy known as the "Grow More

Food Campaign". In the interest of Grow More Food Scheme Saadulla was ordered by the Central Government to extent cultivation in Assam from 52.8 lakhs of acres to 57 lakhs during the year 1943. Simultaneously, a terrible famine erupted in the neighbouring province of Bengal. The magnitude of the consequence of famine was so horrible that a large number of people had to migrate to various provinces of India including Assam in search of food thinking it to be a land of plenty. To reduce the hardship of famine stricken mass who had migrated to Assam, the Government of Bengal requested Saadulla to provide them with food and shelter by opening its reserves lands to the landless and hungry immigrant from Bengal in the interest of the inter-provincial amity and particularly as an act of sympathy towards the landless immigrants. Under the pressure of the Government of India and others to grow more food and the pressure from Bengal to reduce their hardship due to famine and lastly to solve the economic problem of the province, Saadulla enunciated a new policy in favour of the immigrants without abolishing the Line System outrightly. Saadulla's unwillingness to go for total abolition of the Line System created a rift within the Provincial Muslim League. Saadulla's policy of providing land to the landless immigrants from Bengal led the tribal representatives to form alliance with Bardoloi to unseat Saadulla. Such precarious situation led Saadulla to enter into a negotiation with Bardoloi and Rohini Choudhuri. The agreement collapsed when Bardoloi withdrew from it on the eve of the general election of 1946. The conclusion of the Tripartite Agreement with Congress Party without the permission of the Muslim League High Command and later the collapse of that Agreement after Lord Wavell announcement that the Central and Provincial elections in India would be held in the coming winter not only deteriorated his relation with the Provincial Congress Party but also made him a bad fellow of the Muslim League and impaired his position

within the party. In such situation when the Provincial election was knocking at the door Saadulla thought that he had two options at his hand - to leave the Muslim League and join other party or to remain in the Muslim League and give full afford to its aims and objectives in order to improve his political position. Saadulla opted for the latter and identified himself fully with League's objective and aims because of his awareness of the fact that there was no other strong party in Assam which he could lead and which could stand against the onslaught of the Congress and the Muslim League. Saadulla openly supported the Pakistan issue for his political benefit. Moreover, his awareness of the fact that inclusion of Assam in the Pakistan zone would place the Muslims of Assam particularly the Assamese Muslim in better position, Saadulla supported inclusion of Assam in the eastern wing of Pakistan.

When the demand for Pakistan by the Assam Provincial Muslim League was first publicly aired at its provincial conference at Barpeta in April 1944 Saadulla's response was lukewarm. Even he did not identify himself completely with the Muslim League plan of increasing the number of Muslim immigrants by abolishing the Line System in order to make it a Muslim majority province and thereby to qualify it for inclusion into East Pakistan. Saadulla wholeheartedly stood against Line System and refused to co-operate with Bhasani and A. M. Chaudhury who wanted Saadulla to abolish the Line System by taking the advantage of Grow More Food Campaign and make it a Muslim majority province and thereby to include Assam in Pakistan.

Saadulla wholeheartedly stood against the abolition of Line System as he was aware of the fact that abolition of the Line System besides hampering his political position it would create more impediments to the Assamese identity. So, Saadulla did not mingle the issue of Pakistan with the immigration issue and Line System. While dealing with the Line System he proved himself to be an indigenous Assamese. As a

skilled politician he only used the immigrant issue and the Pakistan issue to stabilise and revitalise his political position whenever necessary. By rejecting the offer of Governorship of East Pakistan during the partition of the country and expressing his desire to cast in his lot with Assam Saadulla proved himself that he was a skilled Assamese politician first and a Muslim League leader thereafter.