

A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY OF SIR SYED MUHAMMAD SAADULLA

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By

Sherin Sultana Talukdar

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Supervisor

Prof. Sajal Nag



**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
JADUNATH SARKAR SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
ASSAM UNIVERSITY
SILCHAR-788011, INDIA
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Statement of the Problem

Biography, as defined by the Oxford dictionary, is ‘the story of a person’s life written by somebody else’. Late in the seventeenth century, John Dryden, has defined biography neatly as ‘the history of particular men’s lives’. The name now connotes a relatively full account of a particular person’s life, involving the attempt to set forth character, temperament, and milieu, as well as the subject’s activities and experiences.

Both the ancient Greeks and Romans produced short, formal lives of individuals. The most famed surviving example is the ‘Paralled Lives’ of Greek and Roman notables by the Greek writer Plutarch, C. AD 46-120. In England, the fairly detailed secular biography appeared in the seventeenth century, the most distinguished instance is Izaak Walton’s ‘Lives’ written between 1640 and 1678. More importantly, biographies focus on the nature and purpose of history. Man is proverbially the crown of creation and therefore the lives of important persons deserve to be recorded for future generations. A biography centres on an individual, his or her birth and death, activities and experiences which in turn serve as legacies and points of reference for the posterity. A political biography centered only on the political career and political ideology or principle of a political figure. There are many good biographies on Indian political figure. Among them mention may be made of S. Gopal’s *Jawaharlal Nehru - A Biography*. A political biography not only reveals the political career and activities of a political figure but at the same time also reflects the prevailing socio-political and economic condition of the particular state or country. Likewise the political biography of Sir Syed Muhammad Saadulla has not only given details of his exploits in life as a politician but also has given a vivid picture of the political scenario of Assam, during his period.

In Assam's political history, the role of Sir Syed Saadulla, the member of the Legislative Council and the Premier of pre-independence Assam was historical. The time-span selected for the study is 1912 to 1951. 1912 is opted as the starting point, because Saadulla started his political career as a member of the Legislative Council in 1912. 1951 is selected as the closing date, because it was in that year Saadulla withdrew from public life. Saadulla was an Assamese Muslim whose ancestors came to Assam during the medieval period. Saadulla at the initial stage of his political career involved himself in the matters of Municipal and Local Boards and later he entered the Council as its member in 1912. As a member of the Council, Saadulla soon grew in stature and importance and subsequently held office as minister under the system of Dyarchy. It was during the years in Dyarchy, Saadulla's ideas regarding the regional problems and the policies of the colonial government developed. During the election of 1937, Saadulla formed the Assam Valley Muslim Party and contested from the South Kamrup constituency. He was an indigenous Assamese Muslim who took five times oath as the Premier of Assam during 1937 to 1946.

When Saadulla formed his first ministry he had to depend on a number of groups and independent members. Saadulla's position in the Legislative Assembly was not save as the Muslim League in collaboration with the Congress caused considerable embarrassment to his ministry in many occasions and even inflicted as many as eleven defeat on it in the Assembly in the form of cut motions and resolutions. It is curious that while forming his ministry Saadulla did not include any member of the Muslim League party. Later on, he not only joined the party but also reshuffled the ministry to include Muslim League ministers in his cabinet.

As the Premier of Assam, Saadulla inherited the problem of land settlement for the immigrants of East Bengal and this was the issue that dominated the entire tenure of

his office. The issue was widely responsible for rise and fall of ministries during the decade of provincial autonomy. Saadulla in order to provide solution to the problem of immigration formulated or took many policies. But all the policies that were adopted by Saadulla from time to time satisfied neither the Congress nor the militant Muslim Leaguers led by Bhasani. The Congress accused him of opening the flood gates to immigrants in order to convert Assam into a Muslim majority province and thereby include it in the eastern wing of Pakistan. On the other hand Muslim League members felt that Saadulla was not following the ideologies and principles of the Muslim League.

In 1945 Saadulla with a view to solving the burning issues of Assam on one hand and to place himself in a better political position on the other hand he made a settlement with Bardoloi and R. K. Choudhuri. Another aspect of this settlement was that it led to the dissolution of his fourth ministry and formation of an all party cabinet under the leadership of Saadulla. However, the agreement collapsed when Bardoloi withdrew his support. Thereafter Saadulla supported Jinnah's Two- Nation Theory to which he was lukewarm and even supported Cabinet Mission Scheme of tagging Assam with Bengal. Though Saadulla gave full support to Jinnah's Two- Nation Theory, he opted to stay in India during the partition of the country in between India and Pakistan.

Few leaders from the early days of Provincial Legislative Councils to the eve of Indian Independence had a more prominent place or a longer period in government and politics than Sir Syed Muhammad Saadulla in Assam. Yet curiously, Saadulla did not receive the much needed attention of the scholars and hence no comprehensive study is available on the same. For this reason the present study is therefore an attempt to fill up this gap and to find an elaborate and extensive information on Sir

Syed Muhammad Saadulla's political career of forty years from a new and broad perspective and thereby to open the scope for further research works in the field.

Objective of the Research

An attempt has been made here to study and analyses the role of Sir Syed Saadulla, the Premier of pre-independence Assam in the regional political activities. So, the chief objectives of the present study can be stated as follows.

1. To throw light on Saadulla's childhood, family background, educational career and social context that shaped his political career.
2. To study Saadulla's political aims, objectives and his political ideologies or principles.
3. To study his attitude and relation with the British in India.
4. To understand his views, thoughts, position and participation with regard to different national and regional political issues like Sylhet separation, immigration question etc. that emerged during his long political career.

Review of literature

A number of books have been written on the politics of Assam, on individual political leaders or on specific political issues both by Muslim and Hindu scholars.

Muslims in Assam Politics by M. Kar is an account of Assam with special reference to the Muslims. This book contains a systematic and chronological history of settlement of Muslims in Assam, their socio-economic conditions and their political position since the beginning of the 13th century. The book has also touched in details the causes and roots of intricate and complicated problems of Assam like the Bengali

immigration, the Sylhet controversy and the language issue and also highlighted the role of the Muslims including Saadulla in those issues. But the book has made very scanty references to the objectives and motives behind Saadulla's dealing with those issues.

The Man Who Divided India by Rafiq Zakaria is an analytical political biography of Jinnah. It is a pioneering and in depth study of the issue of Muslim Nationalism leading to the partition in 1947 with special reference to the role of Jinnah in it. The book has thrown light on various crucial themes which led to the transformation in Jinnah's political journey from "The Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity" to the 'Creator of Pakistan'. But it has not focused any light on Jinnah's association with Saadulla or with Assam Provincial Muslim League.

Amalendu Guha's *Planter-Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947* is an account of the political development of Assam. In this book the author has discussed in details the various aspects and issues of Assam during the colonial period. It has also touched the salient features of the evolution of the Provincial Legislature in the province. Causes and roots of complex and thorny problems of Assam like the Bengali immigration, the Sylhet controversy and the language issue are also highlighted in this book. But this book has not touched in detail the problems and difficulties faced by Saadulla in running and managing the administration of the province.

Political History of Assam Vol-I (ed.) by H. K Barpujari and Vol-II and III (ed.) by A. C. Bhuyan, contain glimpses of the political developments of Assam during British period. The intellectual developments and rising of several organisations under guidance of politicians and elite people in the 19th and first half of 20th century are focused in this series of books.

Assam Muslim Politics and Cohesion by B. J. Dev and D. K. Lahiri contains in details the information regarding Muslims and their role in politics in Assam. This book at the same time is the most meticulous and complete account of the social setting and sentiments of Assam Muslims. It has also touched some vital issues like Muslim League Politics and its consequence on Assam in the pre-independence period. The politics of immigration in Assam and its impact have also been touched in details by the writer in this book.

Sajal Nag in his book *Roots of Ethnic Conflict: Nationality Question in North East India* has particularly emphasised on Assamese nationality question and its development in pre colonial era onward. He has also touched the issues that led to conflict between Assamese and Bengali in second half of 19th and 20th centuries.

Binayak Dutta's book *Religion in Politics: Eastern India 1905-1947* deals with the role of Ulemas in the Muslim League politics in Eastern India. There are scanty references to Saadulla in this work.

S. L. Baruah's book *Comprehensive History of Assam* has provided information about socio political history of Assam under company rule. Political development with territorial expansion has also been depicted in this book by the writer.

Nirode Kumar Barooah's book *Gopinath Bordoloi, The Assam Problem and Nehru's Centre* has provided ample of information regarding Bordoloi's political life. It has thrown enough light on the earlier period (1920-1936) of Bardoloi's life during which he was engaged in mass movement for national independence and social reconstruction. The book also contains account of the politics of Assam during the freedom movement and the first three years of the post-independence era.

Assam Attitude to Federalism by Girin Phukon has given a lot of information regarding the role and participation of the Assamese elite in the Constituent Assembly Debates. This book has mainly focused light on the reasons why the Assamese elite debated for greater Provincial Autonomy and a relatively weak Central Government when the Constitution was being framed.

A Century Of Government And Politics In North East India by V. Venkata Rao and Niru Hazarika Vol.1(Assam) (1874-1980) has given detailed account of the government and politics of Assam and has also touched various aspects of state such as election of 1937, ministry formation, burning issues of the period such as Line System, Sylhet issues etc. But this book has not provided any detailed analysis of the policies that were undertaken by Saadulla.

A.H. Shibly's book "*Abdul Matin Chaudhary: Trusted Lieutenant of Md. Ali Jinnah*" is a biography on Abdul Matin Chaudhary. The book basically emphasised on his political ideologies and on his political activities particularly his role in defending the interests of immigrations from East Bengal in Assam along with the main motive of including Assam in the proposed eastern wing of Pakistan as a prominent figure of Muslim League in Assam. At the same time the book has also discussed the interaction between Abdul Matin Chaudhary and Jinnah and also Saadulla. But this book has made no references to the Council Politics in Assam and thereby did not focused light on Saadulla's political activities as a member of the Council.

Monirul Hussain's book entitled *Assam Movement, Class Ideology and Identity*, has touched in detail the genesis of immigration problem in Assam and the various aspects associated with it like regional nationalism, process of assimilation among the Eastern Bengali Muslim with the greater Assamese society. The book has

also highlighted in detail the various aspects and issues relating to the Assam Movement of late 1970's and early 80's. Monirul Hussain while highlighting the various aspects associated with the immigration problem made scanty reference to the policies adopted by Saadulla to deal with immigration issue under economic consideration and political compulsion.

Thus, the foregoing of available literature apparently reflects that there is no single volume that could provides insight into the whole political career of Saadulla. It is felt that there is a genuine need for studying his work and contribution towards Assam and Muslim society with a view to helping the general mass as well as the student to give a vivid picture on his political career till his death.

Research Questions

- How was Saadulla's relation with the British in India?
- What were the issues and difficulties faced by Saadulla as a minister under the system of Dyarchy?
- What was Saadulla's position in the legislature as well as in the party and how he dealt with other political parties and organisations?
- Why did Saadulla oppose the separation of Sylhet from Assam but support the tagging of Assam with Bengal?
- What were the policies or measures adopted by Saadulla to deal with the problem of land settlement and what were its consequences?

Methodology

The methodologies adopted in this research work are empirical and analytical. In the process of historical enquiry of the research both primary and secondary sources has

been used to a large extent. Many archives and libraries were visited for collecting the sources.

The State Archives of Assam; Assam Secretariat Library, Dispur and National Archive have been of great importance. Numerous government letters, reports, gazetteers, debates related to the work were collected from the State Archive of Assam, Assam Secretariat Library and National Archive. The private papers of political figures of Assam have been generated from Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Delhi. From the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Guwahati various data of the colonial period have been collected from Assamese newspaper. The Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), Guwahati helped gathering numerous articles published in various NEIHA sessions and in the journal entitled Economic and Political Weekly. Books related to history of pre independence Assam have been gathered in large numbers from ICHR. The District Library of Cachar and Cachar District Record Room, Assam University Library, Silchar helped with numerous materials related to history of colonial period. Various secondary sources like articles in magazines, journals and books and newspapers of selected issues preserved in the National Library, Kolkata are also consulted.

Organisation of the Research Study

The outcome of the research has been organised into six correlated chapters.

Chapter – I

Introduction

For better the understanding and for the sake of methodical work, the thesis begins with an introduction which is the first chapter. In this chapter the statement of

the problem is discussed with the assistance of survey of literature, objectives of the present work, methodologies etc. The area and period of the research work is well stated in this chapter. The socio economic and political scenario of Assam at the time of Saadulla's entry into politics is also discussed in the chapter.

After the annulment of partition of Bengal in 1912 Assam was formally reverted to its old status as a Chief Commissioner's Province with a Legislative Council of its own consisting of twenty four members of whom thirteen were nominated by the Chief Commissioner while eleven were elected by class interests. Election of one Muslim member from the Brahmaputra Valley was perhaps the most important provision of the newly reconstituted Council. Saadulla who had already made his mark and became eminent not only as a citizen of Guwahati but also as a prominent figure in the Province of Assam took full advantage of the provision and contested the election to the Legislative Council from the reserved Muslim constituency of Brahmaputra Valley and got himself elected. He was the first Muslim to sit on the Legislative Council in 1912. When Saadulla entered into the Legislative Council as a member he found that the condition of Assam was very peculiar. There existed a rivalry between Assamese and Bengali, 'war' of valleys, unceasing immigration from outside the province and also division of population into two communities. The roots or causes of these issues had foundations in the very years when British annexed Assam after the treaty of Yandabo. After the annexation of Assam, the British established an administrative system in Assam that was different from administrative system prevailing during the Ahom rule. As the indigenous Assamese were not familiar with the British administrative system, the British establishment in Assam brought the middle class Bengalis mostly Hindus from Bengal who had already learnt English and acquired experience in colonial administration for managing the

subordinate services and running the administration of Assam smoothly on the British pattern. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Bengali Hindu migrants occupied all the subordinate offices in the Government, courts and also tea plantations.

The situation became more complex when Bengali Muslims mostly from East Bengal penetrate into Assam. During the early British colonial period, the British noticed that in Assam there existed large tracts of fertile lands that remained fallow for years. The British administrators in Assam felt that if the vast tracts of waste lands of the province were brought under cultivation, the revenue of the Government as well as the condition the people would be improved. The desire of converting the wastelands into cultivable lands was expressed by the British administrators in Assam in 1830's. Consequently, the British in Assam started experiments in the plantation sector and tea was also taken up for experimental cultivation. The tea cultivation began to flourish in Assam and development of tea industry in large number increased the demand for labour. The existing population of Assam being self-sufficient refused to work as day labourers in the plantations. To overcome the problem of scarcity of labour the planters then imported tea-labourers from Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.

As indigenous peasants of Assam were not interested to increase or expand land cultivation there was shortage of food to meet the requirement of the growing labour population engaged in tea plantation. It, therefore, became necessary for the British to bring more farmers and settle them on waste lands in order to bring more lands under cultivation and to produce more crops to overcome the food deficit. It is important to mention that the Muhammadan farmers of Eastern Bengal were expert jute cultivator and at that time there was worldwide expansion of jute-trade and

therefore jute-cultivation was in high demand. But the production of jute in Bengal was insufficient and as there was no scope for increased production there, the jute-traders wanted to grow the same in the soil of Assam. In order to increase the food production as well as to increase the production of jute and other cash crops the British encouraged a marginal inflow of agriculturists from Eastern Bengal to Assam and their settlement in the wastelands of Assam. Increase in revenue and taxes and production of profitable crops as well as other raw materials for the industries in England were the main aim of the colonial administration. The Government levied taxes on land occupied by the immigrant farmers after the allotment of permanent 'patta'. As a result of this policy of the Government a large number of Muslim farmers from Eastern Bengal migrated to Assam for permanent settlement. In the initial stage the Assamese people did not object the immigration of Bengali from Bengal. But gradually as more and more lands and jobs came under the occupation of Bengali from Bengal the relation between the Bengali immigrant communities and the Assamese embittered when they had to face keen competition with their counterparts of the immigrant communities for lands and jobs. In addition to this the replacement of Assamese by Bengali as the official language of Assam deeply hurt the feelings of the Assamese. The growth and development of hatred and ill-feeling between the Assamese and Bengali was also due to the territorial adjustment of the colonial Government to satisfy their imperialistic designs. It has already been mentioned that Assam, after the British occupation was placed under the administrative jurisdictions of the Dacca Division. In 1874, Assam was taken away from the administrative jurisdictions of the Bengal Presidency and was created as a separate Chief Commissioner's Province. With this territorial adjustment the Bengali majority districts of Goalpara, Sylhet and Cachar were clubbed with Assam. The inclusion of

Surma Valley comprised of Sylhet and Cachar in Assam added fuel to the existing conflict between the Bengali and Assamese and there subsequently emerged a war between the Surma Valley and the Brahmaputra Valley as Surma Valley was dominated by Bengali Muslim people and Brahmaputra Valley was dominated by Assamese Hindus people. Even though, in 1905, Assam was merged in eastern part of Bengal and, in 1912, she was made a separate Province; yet all these changes did not end the 'war' of valleys. Because Sylhet and Cachar continued to be a part of Assam and its Bengali speaking people continued to compete with the people of Brahmaputra Valley in the political and cultural arena.

Besides rivalry or war between the two valleys and Assamese-Bengali conflict, the grant of separate electorate to the Muslims by the colonial Government not only widened the gulf between the Muslims and Hindus but also made the two communities conscious of their political status in Assam. Even though the principle of communal representation in public services in proportion to their numerical strength was adopted by the British Government it was found that the number of Muslims was under-represented in various departments of Government Service.

It was in this socio-economic political context Saadulla entered the Legislative Council as a representative of the Muslim community from Brahmaputra Valley who in the coming years played an important but controversial role in the Assam political scenario. In order to understand his political activities it is very essential to discover the India during his times - the mental state of the people of Assam, the socio-economic, political and religious condition of the province which ultimately shaped the political destiny of Saadulla.

Chapter –II

Emergence of Saadulla in Assam politics

This chapter has shed light on Saadulla's family history with special reference to Azan Pir and his academic and professional career. It has also touched the reasons that inspired him to take part in politics. This chapter has discussed in detail the difficulties and issues which Saadulla had to face as a minister under the system of Dyarchy and also the policies and steps that he had adopted to solve those problems till 1935.

Saadulla, the Muslim member of the Legislative Council and the Muslim Premier of pre-independence Assam, was the descendant of the well known Muslim preacher Azan Pir. It is said that Azan Pir married an Assamese lady of high stature. They had three sons and their descendants known as Saraguria Dewans are still prevailing in different parts of Assam. The ancestors of Saadulla were also the inhabitants of Saraguria Chapori of Sibsagar and subsequently they settled at Naharani Kolahari and Kacharihat. Syed Tayibulla, father of Saadulla who hailed from Kacharihat, near Golaghat, came to Guwahati in or about 1878. Saadulla was born in Guwahati on May 21st 1885 to Tayibulla and his wife after one son and three daughters. While Saadulla studied at the school of his father, his eldest brother, Obeidulla had joined the Aligarh Muslim University. After matriculation Saadulla joined Cotton College as one of the students of first batch in 1901, and turned out to be one of the most favourite students of Prof. C. Das, Head of the Department of Chemistry. Saadulla was also the first Muslim to obtain the graduate degree from Cotton College. After obtaining Master's Degree in Chemistry from Presidency College, he joined the Cotton College as Demonstrator in Chemistry Department. He

wished to work as a Lecturer under his respected Professor, but he was refused by the college authorities. Being disgruntled with the decision of the college authorities, Saadulla resigned the college and began to study Law. Within a year Saadulla qualified himself for the Guwahati Bar.

Side by side with his legal profession Saadulla also took part in public affairs of the period. The reason of Saadulla's involvement in politics lies on the socio-economic and educational condition of the Muslims in Assam. Muslims began to enter Assam from the early part of the thirteen century. They entered Assam at different stages of history as conquerors, administrators, preachers and invitees of the local kings. The number of the Muslim population in Assam increased due to conversion of the local Hindus and tribals under the influence of Pirs who entered Assam during the period of Muslim invasions in the province. In 1874, when the Surma Valley districts of Sylhet and Cachar along with Goalpara were separated from the Bengal presidency and clubbed with Assam, the Muslim population of the Assam increased from 5% to 28.3%. The number also increased when the British imported Bengali Muslims mainly cultivators from Bengal and Hindi speaking Muslims mainly from Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa for their economic purpose. But the economic condition of the Muslims in Assam from the very beginning was weak. As they were not economically sound, they were not only socially, educationally but also culturally backward. Since economy was the base of all round development of a community and so without sound economy no community can develop in other aspects. To improve the condition of his community by constitutional means and the need of the Muslims to play an important role in politics in order to reckon the Muslims as a political balancing force so that no party can ignore the interests of the

Muslims of Assam in the new political set up of the British, Saadulla took part in politics.

In the early stage of his political career Saadulla involved himself in Municipal and Local Boards affairs for the purpose of including a Muslim representation from Assam Valley in the Provincial Council as because at that time the Local Bodies and Municipalities were empowered to recommend nomination of their representatives to the Provincial Legislative Council. After the annulment of partition of Bengal in 1912 Assam was formally reverted to its old status as a Chief Commission's Province with a Legislative Council of its own consisting of twenty four members of whom thirteen were nominated by the Chief Commissioner while eleven were elected by class interests. Election of one Muslim member from the Brahmaputra Valley was perhaps the most important provision of the newly reconstituted Council. Saadulla who had already made his mark and became eminent not only as a citizen of Guwahati but also as a prominent figure in the Province of Assam took full advantage of the provision and contested the election to the Legislative Council from the reserved Muslim constituency of Brahmaputra Valley and got himself elected. He was the first Muslim to sit on the Legislative Council in 1912. Saadulla fully believed that the future prosperity of Assam lay 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. For instances, he supported Ghanashyam Barua's resolution for the abolition of the opium trade and the grazing tax. Although Saadulla was involved in the specific problems of Assam, he did not cut himself adrift from the all India politics. Saadulla moved a resolution in the meeting expressing his strong sense of regret and disappointment at the action of the Government of proceeding with the Rowlatt Bill when there was opposition from non official members of the Indian Legislative Council and thus, urged the Government to drop the Bill.

During the Second Reformed Council election Saadulla contested the election as an independent candidate and was elected with Swarajist support. Though he was elected with Swarajist support yet he refused to work according to the principle and policy of the Sawarj Party and later accepted office under the Dyarchy system as the Minister of Education and Agriculture. In the third general elections to the Legislative Council Saadulla won the election by a large margin. The Governor retained Saadulla in the ministry on the ground that he was a Muslim leader who enjoyed the confidence of the Muslims of the two valleys and that he was a moderate in his political views and thereby against the ideologies and principles of obstructing the administration of the province under the new reforms. This time he was given the portfolio of finance and laws and order. Saadulla as a minister under the Dyarchy System co-operated with the British and even adopted the path of no confrontation with the British. Saadulla did this for the safeguard of his community and for the upliftment of the status of Assam as a major province in India, as the British were the final decision makers. 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.

Chapter -III

Saadulla's Ministry making efforts till the eve of the World War II

This chapter has highlighted Saadulla's political activities during his first and second ministry.

From the beginning of 1936, various political parties started hectic activities in order to participate in the Provincial elections which was due to be held in 1937 under the Act 1935. For contesting the election Saadulla formed the Assam Valley Muslim Party. Saadulla till 1935 was neither a member nor was affiliated to any political party or group. In absence of any party support in the Council Saadulla became well-aware of the fact that without requisite support of a party, it was ineffable to sustain and accrue any demands. His experiences in the Council and the introduction of the parliamentary politics by the new Act bound Saadulla to form the Assam Valley Muslim Party. In the election the Congress Party emerged as the largest single party but without an absolute majority and as such the Congress Party refused to the Government. In such prevailing situation Saadulla was not only requested by the Governor of Assam but also by all shades of politicians and people to form a stable government for the following reason. Firstly, he was a Muslim leader who enjoyed the confidence of the Muslims of the two valleys. Secondly, he was an experienced parliamentarian with an unbroken administrative experience for a greater part of the past fifteen years since the introduction of Dyarchy in the province, first as a minister and later as an executive councilor. Thirdly, he was a non-Congress and therefore was not under the Congress ideologies and principles of obstructing the administration of the province under the new reforms introduced by the Act.

Saadulla formed his first ministry with the co-operation of Rohini Kumar Choudhuri's United People's Party, J. J. Nicholas Roy's Progressive Party, Surma Valley United Muslim Party and the European group. On the other hand the most prominent League leader, Abdul Matin Chaudhury, after being frustrated for not including in the Saadulla ministry, joined hands with the Congress Party. The Congress Party in collaboration with the Muslim League under the leadership began to harass the Saadulla ministry in a number of occasions in different issues. Side by side Abdul Matin Chaudhury, the President of the All India Muslim League, who entered into Assam politics with the mission of organising the Muslim League in Assam and uniting the Muslims of Assam under its banner, started mastering the immigration issue. Chaudhury showed his political acumen by pledging that he would work for the abolition of the Line System in Assam and assured the Bengali immigrants that he would fight in and out of the Assembly to protect their culture and language. The immigrant Muslim legislators of the Assembly headed by Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani thus found a leader in him and agreed to join his camp. Moreover, there was a flow of opinion among the Muslim legislators in the Assembly that Saadulla was defeated in the Assembly because the Muslim League members headed by powerful and influential political figure of Surma Valley, Abdul Matin Chaudhury had placed themselves in determined opposition to the ministry throughout the session. The nature of Muslim criticism in the Assembly convinced Saadulla that with men like Abdul Matin Chaudhury and Munawwar Ali against him it would be impossible to run the government. Further it became clear to Saadulla that the support of the Muslim League was not only important to checkmate the Congress onslaught in the Assembly but also for the bare survival of his ministry since most of the Muslim legislators in the Assembly had decided to join the Muslim League. Under

such prevalent circumstances, having no other alternative, Saadulla not only joined the Muslim League for political anchorage but also reshuffled the ministry to include Muslim League members in the cabinet. To strengthen his ministry Saadulla also incorporated a minister from the depressed class of the Surma Valley.

As a Premier Saadulla allotted a carriage-contract to a Calcutta based company against an indigenous one for personal interest and nominated pro Europeans members to the Local Boards to check the hold of the Congress Party. The politicalisation of these two issues by the Congress Party adversely affected Saadulla's popularity. As a result, a number of his supporters went over to the opposition party. Side by side Saadulla's inaction on the basis of the recommendation of the Line System Committee obviously for the purpose of satisfying the sentiments of the immigrant group who provided a solid support essential for his political existence infuriated the plain tribal representatives in the Assembly. The corollary to this which occurred to tribal leaders' mind was that Saadulla was solely concerned for preserving the interests of the Muslim community and that Saadulla had done nothing for the welfare and upliftment of the tribal community. The Congress and the Tribal League then entered into an agreement to bring a new coalition Government. Even on the eve of the September session of the Assembly the Congress Party had entered into an alliance with the Surma Valley United Muslim Party.

The movement of his supporters to the opposition group due to re-alignment of forces inside the Assembly compelled Saadulla to resign. The conflict or differences between Ali Hyder and Abdul Matin Chaudhury for ministership was to some extent responsible for this crisis of Saadulla. Prior to Saadulla's resignation, no doubt, attempt had been made by some Muslim members of the Assembly to bring the two blocs under one leader. The members of the United Muslim Party of Ali Hyder

requested Saadulla to resign so that they might rally round him subsequently otherwise they would vote against him since they had already committed to vote against his ministry. Moreover, it was also demanded by the members of the Assembly who supported Ali Hyder and opposed Abdul Matin Chaudhury and that Abdul Matin Chaudhury and Munuwar Ali should resign. The two ministers however agreed to resign on certain conditions. Firstly, all the no confidence motion against Saadulla's government should be withdrawn and all the Muslim members should form one bloc under one leader and secondly their replacement should be done by persons other than the two expelled ministers. Since the attitude of the two bloc seemed uncompromising Saadulla preferred to resign in order to avoid an exhibition of split in Muslim unanimity in the face of critical situation. Moreover, it is important to notice that Saadulla never asked Abdul Matin Chaudhury and Munuwar Ali to resign. Rather, he preferred to sink or swim with them. This was mainly due for two reasons. Firstly, Saadulla had realised the indispensability of Abdul Matin Chaudhury in his first ministry who was an experienced national level leader with vast knowledge of politics and administration and was closely associated with Jinnah whereas Ali Hyder and Waheed were absolutely out of touch with politics. Secondly, it has already been mentioned that the majority of the Muslim members of the Assembly were in support of Abdul Matin Chaudhury who had pledged to fight for the right of the immigrants in the Brahmaputra Valley against the Line System. These are the two important factors for which Saadulla preferred to side with Abdul Matin Chaudhury and why he made no attempt to woo the disaffected United Muslim Party. However, Saadulla no doubt hoped that after his resignation the recalcitrant would support him subsequently and help him in coming back to power. Saadulla's announcement of his resignation from the ministry made the Governor to invite Bardoloi to form the

Government. Bardoloi Ministry continued till November 1939 without any trifle. However, Saadulla continued his effort to come to power and the outbreak of the Second World War and the subsequent politics of India during the course of the War paved the way for Saadulla's return to power.

Chapter – IV

Saadulla's leadership in Assam during 1939-1945

This chapter has laid emphasis on Saadulla's political activities during 1939-1945.

Saadulla came to power in 1939 when Bardoloi in pursuance of the Congress Working Committee's directive resigned during the Second World War. The newly formed ministry lacked majority support but in spite of that it was allowed to remain in office by the Governor and work for party support. By the end of the first week of December Saadulla not only succeeded in drawing support from different political groups and individuals to his side but also brought his third ministry on sound footing. It was about this time; Jinnah announced that the resignation of the Congress government in the provinces should be celebrated as Deliverance Day. Jinnah also instructed Saadulla, who was then the President of Assam Provincial Muslim League to observe the Deliverance Day in Assam. Being the President of the Assam Provincial Muslim League on one hand and the Premier of Assam on the other hand Saadulla's position was very pathetic. Saadulla's opinion was that his declaration of celebrating the Deliverance Day in Assam might antagonise his cabinet colleagues who were not affiliated to Muslim League. While on the other hand his objection to observing the deliverance programme might displease the League members of Assam. By giving the decision in favour or against the celebration of the Deliverance Day programme in Assam, he did not want to lose the support of his constituent parties

which he had clobbered with great difficulties. In such a critical juncture, Saadulla tackled the situation by avoiding the entire episode. So, when the time of implementing the programme came he left for Calcutta without implementing it, which was observed by the other members in Assam. All this vindicated the fact that Saadulla was not only very calculative and conscious about his decision but also a far-sighted politician. It also proved the fact that Saadulla's was more influenced by political consideration than anything else. Moreover, in order to reciprocate the gesture that the Governor had shown by allowing his minority ministry to remain in power in spite of lacking majority support Saadulla honestly supported the British war efforts against stiff opposition from Congress. To impress the British he even violated the League's directive of 15th June 1940 forbidding Muslims to serve on War Committees pending further instructions from Jinnah.

In 1940's, when the Tribal representatives demanded protection against the immigrants and the immigrant representatives urged for the abolition of the Line System Saadulla convened an all party meeting. The decision of the all party convention did not satisfy the immigrant legislators. As a result Bhasani and four other immigrant members dissociated themselves from the Saadulla's Party. In to retain their support and to silence Bhasani and other Muslim legislatures sympathetic to the immigrants, Saadulla assured them to provide land. In fact during 1939-41, Saadulla allotted one lakh bighas of land to the Muslim immigrants. Saadulla policy of giving land to the immigrants was more economic compulsion than political. Assam's main source of income was tea and petroleum, kerosene etc. but Assam had to pay maximum of its income to the Central Government in the shape of excise duty. As a result the remaining income of Assam was not sufficient for running the administration. However, in Assam there were plenty of fertile lands that remained

fallow for many years. The availability of fertile lands in Assam induced Saadulla to encourage settlement of lands with the Muslim immigrants in order to increase the revenue of the province. Saadulla gave preference to the Muslim immigrants from East Bengal because they were basically expert cultivators who could grow as many as five crops from the same soil in the same year. 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 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 R. K. Choudhuri, Saadulla also resigned.

Saadulla was 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 and the burden of supporting the war economy was shifted to Assam irrespective of the ability of the province. The period also coincided

with the appeal made by the Churchill Government to the Indian Viceroy Linlithgow to make India depend upon her own food resources. The main policy being to supply food grains from surplus to deficit region within the country. This policy came to be interpreted in official circles as the 'Grow More Food. In the interest of Grow More Food the Government of India assessed the extension of cultivation in Assam from 52.8 lakhs of acres to 57 lakhs during the year 1943, but the Assam government headed by Saadulla felt that as the year had advanced too far, the target was not realizable. So, Saadulla tried to find the solution of this problem. In the same period 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. This was, no doubt, an addition to Saadulla's problem of providing land to the landless immigrants from Bengal. The Bengal Legislative Council even carried a motion on 16 July 1943, calling upon the Government of India to take immediate steps to remove all existing restrictions imposed by the Assam Government on the land hungry, immigrant cultivators from Bengal. So, 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 Saadulla was compelled by circumstances to enunciate a new policy in favour of the immigrants without abolishing the Line System out rightly. Saadulla's unwillingness to go for total abolition of the Line System adversely affected his position within the Provincial Muslim League. On the other hand Saadulla's policy of providing land to the landless immigrants from Bengal led the tribal immigrants to make common cause with Bardoloi. Apart from that, the annoyance of the Muslim Leaguers with Saadulla, lack of discipline in the Ministerialist Party, release of Congress MLA's from detention

and their return to the Assembly as Opposition and finally the nerve breaking propaganda of the Congress made Saadulla's position as Premier shaky. In such situation Saadulla agreed for the negotiation with Bardoloi and Rohini Choudhuri as it was the only way by which he could place the ministry on a wider basis as well as through which he could remain in power. The agreement collapsed when Bardoloi withdrew from it. His attempt to solve the burning issues of Assam by going against the instruction of the Muslim League had dragged him into a deep dark corner on the eve of the general election of 1946. His relationship with both the Muslim League and the Congress party had touched a nadir and there was no other strong or large party in the province which Saadulla could navigate in order to resist the onslaught of the Muslim League or the Congress. All doors were closed. Finding no other alternative Saadulla was compelled and bound to remain in the Muslim League sacrificing his entire ethos and egos and giving full afford in achieving League's aims and objective. Destiny forced him to put his entire mite in achieving the League's aims and objectives in the days to come.

Chapter- V

Saadulla's political activities in Assam from 1946 till his death

This chapter has discussed in detail the political situation of Assam as well as Saadulla's role in Assam's politics from 1946 till his death.

Election to the Assam Provincial Legislative Assembly was scheduled to be held on 9th January 1946. The All India Muslim League resolved to fight the elections on the issue of Pakistan. In such situation, it could not be expected that the Assam Provincial Muslim League of which Sir Saadulla was the President would retain an existence apart from its parent organization. So, Saadulla on the eve of the election openly

advocated the cause of Pakistan. In the election the Congress secured absolute majority of 58 members in a house of 108 and this reduced Saadulla to the position of the leader of opposition. The new Government resumed the eviction process as per the All Party agreement of 1945. The League leaders of Assam viewed the situation with great concern and declared the policies of the Assam Government as barbarous atrocities, forcible mass eviction and inhuman practice. Saadulla even warned Bardoloi and his Government “not to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs”. This clearly shows that Saadulla’s sympathy towards the immigrants was only on the economic ground. Even when the Cabinet Mission divided the whole country into three sections and placed Assam in Group C along with Bengal. Saadulla welcomed the scheme for three reasons. Firstly, if Assam stood out of Group ‘C’, her geographical position as north eastern frontier with Bengal interposed between her and the rest of the country would make it unsuitable and impracticable to join any other section. Secondly, in financial matters Assam would suffer as her main income came from the European Planters who paid either in Calcutta or London. Thirdly, for law and order she would have to maintain a huge force of her own. Again, in respect of all types of higher and technical education, judiciary and health services, Assam was dependent on Bengal and so refusal of Assam to join the Section with Bengal would alienate the latter’s feelings. This clearly indicates that Saadulla’s supported the Cabinet Mission plan was also for economic point of view. However, the Cabinet Mission plan had been pushed to oblivion due clash between Congress and Muslim League at the national level.

After the partition of the country in December 1947, the All India Muslim League was divided into two parts, one for those Muslims who remained in India and the other for those of the Pakistan Area. At a convention held on 10th March 1948, the

All India Muslim League decided to wind up its activities. Consequently on 30th June 1948, the Assam Provincial Muslim League was officially dissolved. Thereafter Saadulla joined the Congress but he soon left the organisation, when the Congress refused to give more than fourteen seats to Muslims in the Assembly.

Chapter -VI

Conclusion

Conclusion is the summary of the whole thesis highlighting the main points of discussion. A “bibliography” has followed the conclusion. An “Appendix” has followed the “bibliography”.

Saadulla before the advent of Gandhi and mass movement was moderate in his political views, in gradual constitutional advancement towards self rule and therefore he worked closely with the Assam Association against the British Government and their policy. But after the Non-cooperation Movement he developed cordial relation with the British for the interests of his people and province and finally for political purpose. In 1937 Saadulla joined the Muslim League to check the onslaught of the Congress Party and to keep himself in power. In many issues and occasions he did not follow the ideologies and principles when he considered it to be injurious to his political position. However, while remaining in power and within the orbit of the Muslim League he tried to serve the interests of the people of Assam almost exclusively of those of the Brahmaputra Valley and worked for the prosperity of the province.

Saadulla encouraged settlement of lands with the immigrants from East Bengal for economic prosperity of the province only and 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. It was rather the motive of 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 it in Pakistan. But Saadulla like a skilled politician he repeatedly gave assurance of abolishing the Line System to the immigrant legislators and their sympathisers in order to retain their support. 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.

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. Saadulla openly advocated the cause of Pakistan in 1945 only when Assam Provincial Muslim League decided to fight the election on the issue of Pakistan. In fact Saadulla supported Jinnah's two-nation theory for political reason. Saadulla did not mingle the issue of Pakistan with the immigration issue. While dealing with the immigration issue he proved himself to be an indigenous Assamese. So, it can be concluded that Saadulla was an Assamese politician first and a Muslim League leader next.
