CHAPTER VI

HOME LIFE

Introduction:

The social structure of the Muslim society is hierarchical in character. The headship generally goes to the eldest of the male members in the family - patriarchy system.

The Modes of Housing:

The system of constructing house with reeds, bamboo cane and timber is indigenous to Assam. We learn from the accounts of the Fathiyah-i-Ibriya, how the Muslim invaders of the seventeenth century were struck with awe and admiration, when they for the first time saw the Assamese craftsmanship on wood work in Ahom palaces. The Muslim settlers soon to have became adepts in the construction of houses with such materials. They also seem to have been under the influence of some of the local customs and devices concerning such construction of houses. Like the Hindus, they are also seen, even now, in villages to observe the custom of tying a piece of red cloth on the first main post to be erected on the site of construction, in order to mark a happy and auspicious beginning. On the occasion of the first occupation of the new house (Grihapravesam) the Muslim also arrange parties, or congregations of well wishers, as the Hindus do, with a wish to averting any impending evil.
The increasing impact of the Western mode of living as well as emphasis on town planning in recent years is tending to obliterate differences in the design of Muslim dwellings and the style of houses built by other communities. The houses planning and Municipal authorities are, by and large, of the same type meant for renting them out to the tenants who abound in cities. However, the residential structure built earlier by the Muslims were almost well ventilated and spacious with a wide court but the inside view was secluded from the outside. Two other features of these houses were that the lavatories were always constructed in a way that one did not have to face the qibla while excreting or urinating. The Muslims are forbidden to sit facing the Ka'aba while answering the call of nature and hence this precaution had to be taken in every Muslim country in the construction of houses. The Assamese Muslim houses also had bath-rooms secluded from the public view and had a raised plateform for keeping the buckets in order to comply with the rules of ritual purification.

Decoration of Houses:

In the house of an average Assamese Muslim, there are copies of Holy Quran in different sizes kept in a niche wrapped in cloth coverings. In certain families every member, young or old, daily recites the sacred scriptures early in the morning.
Decoration of the houses with pictures of animate objects having been prohibited by Islams. Wall texts having Qur'anic verses or a few lines by some well known poets written a flowery pattern can be seen over hanging the walls in almost every middle class houses. In certain modernised households, now-a-days, who have shaken off the grip of religion, pictures have found their way as decorative pieces.

**Arrangement for offering prayers:**

In almost every house one would find prayer mats or a sheet of cloth set apart for offering prayers. Women, who are normally more religious minded everywhere, perform the prayers regularly in the privacy of their houses. The male members of the family usually perform their prayers in the mosque but some of them offer their prayer in the house owing to illness or some other inability. For such occasions as well as for the guests who might prefer to perform the service alone, a small wooden prayer-bench is also available in every house along with the prayer mat. Everyone in the house young or old, is fully aware of the direction of the qibla and also abide by the precautionary measures meant for showing the deference to the Kaaba, the Holy of the Holies. In certain sophisticated families a separate lota or jug is set apart for performing ablutions. It would not be out of place to mention here that
the lota\textsuperscript{1} or jug with a beak shaped pipe attached to it is in common use among the Muslims for a long time. It ensures economical use of water and, being of a bit bigger size, is very convenient for performing ablutions.

\textbf{Respect for age}:

Old age among the Muslim is not something to be despised or denigrated. On the contrary, it claims highest esteem and reverence, as a mark of respect for maturity in wisdom, and make one entitled to greater love and care by the younger members of the family. Anybody visiting a Muslim house would not unoften came across an old man and he may be a distant relative or the imam of the local mosque sitting on a prayer mat engaged in the recollection of God. He would see the members of the family making obeisance to him, saluting him in the morning and desirious of his blessings. No servant, child or elder member of the family can show disrespect to him. Everybody deems it an honour to serve him and do whatever he asks.

The same regard is paid to the old lady in the family. These grandmas usually pass their time in prayers and recollection of God, invoking Divine blessings for the women and

\textsuperscript{1} Perhaps the remark of Jawaharlal Nehru in his autobiography that he did not find any difference between the Hindu and Muslim cultures excepting the special design of Muslim lota, has given it an ignominious publicity.
children of the family and the neighbourhood who regularly pay a visit to them for that purpose. The blessing by such old ladies are considered efficacious for warding off evil. Whether such a lady is a blood relation or not she is affectionately called grandmother or aunty.

Dress:

The painting depicting Islamic theme of Assamese poem, Sahapuri Upakhayan, suggest that Muslim used coloured Lungis as their waist garments. Apart from these, the common people, whether Hindu or Muslims used "Jama Kapor" or winter clothes an "Phulam Barkapor" or larger rapper with rich brocade work probably on certain occasions. The Zikirs make reference to the use of such clothes. The painting of the Ahom courtiers, by Dilbar and Dosai, in the Sukumar Barkah's treatise on elephant called "Hasti - Vidyarnava", show that the Muslim officials of the Court used turbans and other dresses as did their Hindu colleagues. These dresses consisted of shirts with long or short sleeves, known as Chapkan, Mirjai, etc. and Churia or Dhoti which was popular among the Hindus and probably pajamas among the Muslims. But the use of Churia and pajama was not uncommon among the officials of both the communities.
The ordinary section of the Assamese Muslim women as the paintings in Sahapari-Upakhayan show, wore a long sleeved jacket for the upper part of the body and an Assamese Mekhela or long skirt for the lower. But the ladies of the higher class wore richly clad with well-decorated clothes and the mode of its wearing appears to have been more or less a variation of the Burkha with the face left exposed. This might be due to local influence, because we learn from the Fathiyah-i-Ibriyah that the Assamese women in the mid seventeenth century used to move freely in the streets and market places with bare heads so much so that it attracted the attention of Shahabuddin Talish.

The use of a beautiful embroidered small kerchief called Hachati or wallet for betal nut preparation is still in vogue among both Hindus and Muslims of either sexes. Apart from the long skirts or Mekhelas and jacket with sleeves, the Muslim women like their Hindu counterpart might have used Cheleng, Khania and Riha, as their upper garments, because such clothes are still used by them. The indigenous gold ornaments such as Hemhar for neck, kundal for ears and Nupurs for feet were found among Muslim women and still used by them. The Assamese Zikirs and Zaris records the intense longing for, as well as the use of these by Muslim women in several places. It is also learnt from this source that like their Hindus friends they also used Gathiyan, a kind of aromatic root for preparation
of scented hair oil and Ghila as shampoo, besides kakai that is comb made of bamboo or horn or ivory for grooming hair. Bahadur Gaoburah, one of the heroes who led the struggle for the cause of Assam sovereignty in 1857, supplemented his earnings by manufacturing ivory comb or "Kakais" and other similar ivory goods.

The use of Tambula:

Various social uses of betelnut have been observed amongst the Assamese people from ancient times. In the old Assamese literature we have ample reference to its use by the Hindus in the country. In the middle of the seventeenth century when Shihabuddin Talish visited Assam, he noticed that betel leaves and areca nuts were the only commodities sold in an Assamese market. It seems that Muslim settler in the country soon became accustomed to its use in their private and social life. Even today both the communities offer it as the first article of reception to their guests. It has also been used by the Muslims in the same manner as the Hindus, in soliciting one's favour or making an appeal as well as in seeking compromise between disputing parties and also in apologizing for one's own wrong doing. The system of extending invitation to people by offering a pocket of betel nut to attend important ceremonies in one's family is still prevalent not only among the

1. Entadascondens.
Hindus but also among the Muslims in some parts of the country. Similarly an Assamese Muslims like his Hindu friend, desist from plucking betel leaves or arecanuts himself, for a few days if he happens to attend a funeral rite in the burial ground. These we have found Muslim have been giving importance to the uses of betel nut in their social and domestic life. This is the impact of the Hindu Society on the Muslims of both sex.

**Household Utensils:**

Apart from the "Bata" or metallic tray to serve betel nuts, the use of "Saphura" that is high tray with a dome covered and Sarais or such trays without cover on holy occasions as well as a mark of honour to dignitaries has been prevalent among Muslims. Similarly the use of "Bera Kahis" or metallic (brass) plates with stands for meals were used in higher classes of Muslims. This utensil is considered to be of native origin.

**Food and Diet:**

Though India as a whole falls within the monsoon belt, yet Assam may be regarded as a land of showers and shallows, and as such its agricultural products greatly differ not only from those lands of the Saracens, but to a considerable extent from even these of the Indo-Gangetic plains. Consequently Muslim settlers were not only compelled to be acclimation.
here but were also bound to accept Assamese dietetics. As it is today, the use of Chira or fried and flattened rice, sandah - a kind of flour from fried rice, laru a kind of balled sweet meat from rice and pitha or cakes made of rice, formed the important tiffin, and matimah or phaseolus aconitifolius comprised a popular part of the main meals for Muslims. Similarly some of the items introduced by the Muslims to the system of Assamese dietry like Polao, kurma, kabab, Kufta etc.

Hair Dressing:

Though in the beginning different kinds of khopas were popular among Muslim women like that of kaldilia khopa, Zalepi khopa but at present because of want of time there is a noticeable change in this respect. Now hair dressing is very simple. Only in special occasion like marriage, festivals they do different hair style and in time of Bihu wearing of kapou flower is very popular.

Ornaments:

The crafts of enamelling gold and silver jewellary and of making jewellary of solid gold and silver attained a high degree of perfection in Assam from ancient time. Gold and silver ornaments set with rubies and emeralds are in used on an extensive scale. The most typical of Assamese ornaments,
very popular amongst Muslim women are the dhol-biri, Jon-biri, bana dugdugi, Golpata, Gamkharu, the thuria and lokaparco. The dholbiri, also called maduli is made in the shape of dhol. It is a hollow tube of gold covered with gold leaves, rubies and emeralds. The jonbiri is also a hollow ornament made of gold in the shape of a half moon. The dugdugi is a large size locket worn round the neck. The Galpata resembles a necklace fitting tightly on the throat. Gamkharu are bracelets made of hollow silver rods shaped cylindrically plated with gold and jewells. The thuria made of gold embedded with stone, is worn on the ear, passing through a hole in the earlobe. The bana is similar in shape to the jonbiri, that is made of flattened gold ornamented with stones and jewells. The lokapara is a complicated ear ornament.

The advent of jewellers from Bengal in recent times, with their cheaper and more quickly executed ornaments, has driven out the traditional Assamese patterns made by new comers, whose articles are of inferior workmanship.

Other Household Articles:

Almost every Assamese villager makes his family's requirement of bamboo articles such as fishing tackles called polo, jakoi, kuki etc. For use in the house and kitchen they

1. Assamese drum.
make kula, dala, bisoni, saloni and other articles of attractive shapes and sizes. Bamboo mats are made and used extensively for such purposes as drying of vegetables, paddy and rice. A fine variety of mat is made from patidoi, which is something like fine cane grows wild almost everywhere in Assam.

The same articles are made of Cane, which is also used as thread for making bamboo articles. The finest cane product is the sitalpati. These patis are used in summer as underlay for beds for their cooling effects.

Another kind of mat or floor spreads called kaths of reeds is extensively used in the satras, mosques and temples as sitting mats. Beautiful bisonis are made out of cane.

A very common article of use both as a hat and as an umbrella is the japi, made of tokoupat, that is leaves of wild plant called tokou. The quality of a japi depends on the workmanship. Rough ones are used for day to day work in the field and the finer one, for festive or ceremonial occasions. The size of a japi varies from that of a bowlers hat to a huge umbrella of six feet diameter used by respectable women as purdah till

1. trays of varying type.
2. fan.
3. sieve.
4. Small soft and cool mat.
5. monasteries.
recent times. They are called bar Japi. Because of the fine decoration which adorn some japis, they are also used by fashionable people for interior decoration.

Religious belief and establishment:

Whether through propagation of the faith or by different types of folk movements, it becomes clear that Muslims, from the beginning, formed but a small part of the total population of the country. It is, therefore, inevitable that they should fall under the influence of the mode of life of the majority community Assamese. It would appear all the more certain when we consider that, being under the rule of the non-Muslim rulers of Assam, for centuries, besides the intermittent wars and conflicts between the two centuries, they were completely cut off from their co-religionist of Northern India. The climatic conditions of the country, as well as the catholic trand of mind of the ruling class of the Assamese people of the time seem to have greatly helped the Muslim to come closer to the native populace. We learn from the Shihabuddin Talish, the chronicler of Mir Jumla, that unlike in the rest of India, the "Assamese" ate food cooked by Musalmans.

The acceptance of Sankardeva as their apostle, by Assamese Muslim like Chandkhan, and Jahahari and of Madhavadeva by Yavana Haridas show to what extent Vaisnavism exerted

1. Big Japi.
its influence on the Muslim settlers of Assam. This is further confirmed by the marked influence of Assamese neo-Vaishnava literature on the Zikirs and Zaris or marshiyas composed of several Muslim pirs and Awliyas in the seventeenth century.

Apart from the impact of Vaishnavism certain other local religious beliefs also seem to have influenced the Assamese Muslims to a certain extent. Like their Hindu neighbours, the Muslims believe that the outbreak of communicable diseases is the doing of a Goddess known as Ai (Mother) and that if this Goddess is propitiated in a proper manner people might get rid of the menace of epidemic. They therefore, invoke the Goddess like the Hindus as soon as an epidemic of small pox breaks out and some of them even go to the length of sacrificing fowls and pigeons. In some of his Zikirs, Azan Pir regrets, that some Muslims indulge in the worship of trees or deities who are believed to have dwelt in trees, sacrificing ducks and pigeons or offering oblatious on the upper end of a plantain leaf like the Hindus. Besides this animistic practices in their private life many Muslims in the Kamrup, Mangalodi and Nowgong districts have also been taking part in the worship of Manasa, the Goddess of snakes. In Kamrup this section of Muslims is known as "Jahils" while in Nowgong they are called Dhekiris.

1. Fools.
Though there are many separate Hindu and Muslim villages in Assam, the two communities do not always reside separately. There is a large number of villages where the people of the two communities live together, having different prayer houses, Namghars and Mosques, in different places in the same village, but they jointly take part in the welfare of the particular village. Even to-day in many of the Assamese villages Muslim villagers are often found visiting their Hindu friends in Namghars and delighting them having unhesitatingly accepted "Mah prasad" that is part of the offering made during prayer of the latter. Similarly, the Hindu villagers are often seen visiting Majars of pirs khankahas and Dargahas, and making offering as well as hanging threads on trees or posts in such places indicating their wish to obtain fulfilment of their prayers. The ancient custom which is said to have been followed till today in the Chamariya Satra, the renowned Hindu Vaishnava temple in the Kamrup District, is that once in a year the Hindu and Muslims meet together in Namghar or in the prayer house of the satras and a large quantity of "Prasad" prepared for the occasion of community prayer is served to them all in a large basin from where everyone take his own share with his own hands and enjoys all sitting huddled together.

Agricultural customs:

In agriculture Muslim women take active part with their male partners. Though in the beginning Muslims were ignorant of
of the system of agriculture prevalent in Assam. But gradually they are accustomed to it which we find from the Zikirs of Azan pir. The references to various agricultural terms and to different indigenous implements used for the work in the Zikirs and Zaris of Assam also assert that agriculture became the essential part of life of the Muslim. They also seem to have adopted many of the local customs pertaining to agriculture. An Assamese refrains from ploughing on the death anniversary of their religious leaders. In case of any death in the family, or in their clan, they will not hold the plough. Some Muslims also act in a similar way. If death occurs in their family they refrain from work for three days and in case it occurs in a family of their kin, the work is suspended for the day only. Besides this Musalmans in many places also abstain from tilling on Friday. Like their Hindu brethren they also consider the act of "Goch Lowa" or the inauguration of transplantation operation of paddy seedlings, when the family employs servants for farming, the head of the family or his nominee would first transplant a few seedlings by way of beginning the work for the season. The act of tilling and transplantation is also closed with a feast as done by Hindus who call the performance as the "Nangal dhowa" the washing of the plough similarly at the end of harvesting both the communities observe the day of Na-Khowa, which means eating of the new fruits of the harvest. On this occasion, Muslims send the first part of the food prepared
from the new harvest yields to mosque or any other holy place, the Hindus offer it in the name of God in the Village Ramghars or the family chapel, in the presence of invitees to the feast arranged for the occasion.

Customs relating to Nuptial Ceremonies:

The custom of playing a village orchestra particularly on the indigenous drums (dhol) in a Hindu or tribal marriage ceremony is a very ancient practice in Assam. It is said that till about 50 years ago from now Muslims in the country also followed this native custom. Besides this, the custom of constructing bamboo gates with an arched top which is often decorated with a piece of red cloth, and also erecting dome-shaped structure in the place where a bride or bridegroom is given bath after the customary anointing of their persons with pastes prepared by pounding the rhizomes of turmeric and "Gathiyan" along with Matimah and mustard oil, and the ladies singing wedding song, have been prevalent amongst Muslims and Hindus alike. To observe the local customs of Hengar dhara on their way to the bride's house is also common. It is often found that people from both the communities join together in such fun.

1. Phaseolus aconitifolius.
2. Offering impediments or obstruction to the bridegroom and his party.
The custom of demanding bride-price for their daughters has been prevalent among certain sections of Assamese Hindus. It is said that Muslims in some parts of Assam also followed this custom. Similarly like their Hindu neighbours, many of the native muslims also said to observe the Nowai Tolani ceremony first mensus when a girl attains puberty.

Common beliefs and Customs:

There are certain common beliefs and customs to which Muslims women give more importance. They are very strict in maintaining those things. For instance happy and successful journey should be started on a good day and at an auspicious moment, and generally avoids the latter part of Thursday, besides the Friday, the day of the religious services. There is a belief that crows possess the occult power of fortelling an impending event. Muslim women hold as evil omen such incidents as the falling or breaking of a pot while using water for some purpose and the displacement of falling away of the platter while taking meal. Though the cock-fight, which has been a popular past-time among some section of the Assamese people and the system of lending and borrowing money on interest, which has been prevalent among the Hindus, are strictly forbidden by Islam, it is observed that some of the Muslim in the state unhesitantly indulge in these acts. Similarly un-Islamic process of killing animals or birds for meat by strangulation
was, as it is said, in vogue among the Mariyas, who are considered as the earliest group of Muslims to have settled in the eastern part of the Brahmaputra Valley. We have found that khalifas or the Muslim religion teachers in Assam "think it beneath their dignity to touch the plough or to carry a bhar or load affixed to two ends of a bamboo and supported on the shoulder, though they are willing to the hoe or carrying things in bundles. Such custom appear to be the result of influences of similar customs followed in the country by the Brahmanas and Gosains.¹

Names of persons:

The personal names of Assamese Muslims furnish clear evidences of local influence. It is often found that Muslim villagers take names like Mira, Mukuta, Powal, Son or Sona, Rup or Rupa which are derived from the local terms denoting precious jewels and metals, like diamond, pearl, coral, gold and silver. It is also commonly found that men are named after their physical features for example Katiya², Dighala³, Bhaluka⁴, Kaliya⁵, Bagai.⁶ The names of favourite flowers and

¹. Assamese Hindu priest and the religious preceptors.
². Short
³. a longman
⁴. hefty
⁵. Dark complexioned.
⁶. A fair complexioned.
and natural objects besides the local terms denoting personal qualities and complexions are often used in naming women folk. Thus, such name as Tagar, Nargis\(^1\) or Tagari, Bakuli\(^2\) Kalati\(^3\) Golap\(^4\) or Golapi, Jonaki\(^5\) Tara\(^6\) Batahi\(^7\), Lahari\(^8\) or Geeta, Sadari\(^9\), Rupahi\(^10\), Kali\(^11\), Bogi\(^12\), are very common. To address their relatives and kins the Muslims have been using the same terms kakaiti, baiti, dadaiti etc. and modes of their Hindu friends, instead of using Persian or Arabic terms of address except in the case of addressing one's father for which they often use the terms Babul or Abba or Abbajan, as against Deuta or Petai, Ma or Amma or Ammajan instead of Bouti or Aai or Ma.

Occult practices:

In ancient times Assam was known to the people of India as a land of black art and witchcraft. Even the chronicles like Riyazus-salatin, and the Fathiyah-I-Ibriya ascribed the cause of death of Aurangzeb's great general, Mir Jumla, to

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1. A species of flower.
2. Mimus opseluegi.
4. Rose
5. a glow worm
6. star
7. Wild like
8. lovely
9. Affectionate
10. Beautiful
11. dark complexioned
12. fair complexioned.
sickness caused by witchcraft and sorcery practised by the Assamese. It is, therefore, not unlikely that those Muslims who had to settle in Assam being forewarned beforehand, with such an idea about the country would soon be influenced by local bodies about the powers of Mantras or charms to subdue invisible spirits on men and women, as well as to control diseases, and would try to learn and practice the art themselves. As a result of this many of them in course of time, became acquainted with various magic charms and modes of their practice. The existence of Arabic and Persian words (Like bismillah) besides, references to Muhammad, Allah and Rasul along with name of Siva and Brahma, Tara and Gauri in some of the esoteric mantras lead us to believe that many musulmuvpinersed in the subjects and such charms were composed by them too for example one of the charms used for detecting thieves and burglars open with.

Bismillah i Allah Tara Gauri Haji Bakun, Haji Bakun etc. Here the names of the Goddess Tara and Gauri consorts of Siva, appear with the word Bismillah and Allah. Haji Bakun was probably a celebrated Muslim charmer who composed the charm. That the Muslims acquired celebrity in the art, is also confirmed by the fact that in some of these indigenous charms we come across references to Mughalar Ban as well as

1. The Black art of Mughals.
to the Gariyar Bez\textsuperscript{1} as experts in the work. The existence of many Muslim Bezes\textsuperscript{2} even now in the villages of Assam also confirms this. It is interesting to note here that a Mantra containing a story about Lord Siva relates the Once Brahma Vishnu and Siva approached Narayana or Iswara, to enlighten the Quran which became the fifth scripture with the four Vedas. To this Narayan replied that at the time of the creation of the Vedas, four saints came and received from him the contents of the Quran. Then Brahma Vishnu and Siva expressed to Narayan that this fifth scripture embarassed them all. This reference to the Quran reminds us about Abdul Karim Jili's reference to the fifth scripture revealed to the Brahmanas by Brahma. According to Dr Tara Chand this fifth scripture is the Vedanta, but this Mantra described it as the Quran. This reference to the Quran in the story of Siva reminds us also about S.K. Mitra's observation that the name of Mecca was derived from the worship of Siva as Makkesh, in the place. It is also interesting to note that some of the Mantra's show an attempt at establishing harmonious relation between the philosophy of Hindu scriptures and the Quran. Such Mantras, being completely devoid of Arabic and Persian vocabulary, go to relate Hindu myth in the usual diction of Hindu religious texts leading us to think that they were

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1. Muslim charmers.
2. Village medicineman.
composed by Hindus who acquired some knowledge of doctrines laid down in the Quran. Since these Mantras contain reference to various Hindu and aboriginal deities the modes of their practices prescribe propitiation, of such deities, these charms have been regarded as the records of different religious beliefs prevalent in the country. The practice of these Mantras by the Muslim in the country, therefore, leaves no doubt that the latter have been greatly influenced by such local beliefs.

Social Customs and Taboos among the Muslim Woman:

In Islam, faith in Allah is the main thing. Whenever anything is to be done the name of God is uttered.

2. Another most important teaching of Islam is that you should praise those who have given you shelter. That is why Muslims throughout the world generally adopt the cultures, traditions, taboos of the region where he or she resides. And specially in Assam when Muslim came here, mostly they came as soldiers and then as carpenters, musicians, builders not accompanied by women. As a result when some of them desired to settle down in Assam they married local girls. So these Muslims known as Gariyas adopted almost all the social customs and Taboos of the locality. For instances in comparison to other parts of India Assamese Muslims do not adopt Pardah that means they do not use Burkha.
3. Then in marriage ceremony's, Tamul pan katka that is cutting of bettle nut and bettle leaves, ring ceremony that is putting ring on the finger of the bride, Joran that is giving of various dress, make-up to the bride, digging of plantain tree, changing dress for the bride in a tray given by mother-in-law when bride first arrives at the groom's house, keeping a ring in the midst of rice which is required to be found out by the bride, exchange of food between bride and groom, serving of food for three days in the room where the bride and groom reside and they have to take food in a common plate, all these customs are adopted from the Hindu community.

Muslim women perform a ceremony in the seventh month of pregnancy where as in Hindu community it is performed in the ninth month of pregnancy.

Then again pregnant woman can enter the room of a newly born baby only after seven days of the birth. A pregnant woman is not allowed to sit on the door step.

Some customs are observed after death in the Muslim community which are the direct result of local influence. For instance Tilani performed on the third day of the death and Daha performed at the tenth day of the death.
Only exception is found in the treatment meted out to the widow. Unlike the Hindu religion, Islam did not impose widowhood on women. Thanks to the British. The Hindu widow Remarriage Act was promulgated in 1856. There was no need for such an enactment in the case of Muslim woman. According to Muslim Law, a Muslim widow is entitled to marry a man of her choice ignoring the objections and protest of others whatsoever. Then there is no special bar on widow to participate in auspicious ceremonies.

In the beginning Gariyas were given reception in the Bihu festival. Because of this reception Gariyas presented Gagana to them. In other words Gagana, one of the important musical instrument of Bihu was contributed by the Gariyas. This reference is found in the Bihu songs.

Other beliefs and taboos are when any journey is to be taken first it must be towards west then any other direction. Journey before Jumma (Friday Prayer) is regarded as inauspicious. Sneezing before the start of a journey is ominous. Before coming out of the house for a journey, it must be swept and one corner of the bed sheet should be turned to the middle.

Then when there is Azan (calling for prayer) no work should be done, even radio and Television should be put off, and women are required to put a veil on their head.

Nobody should be called back when he goes out for some works, if it is to be done, then the person concerned has to
come back and sit for some time and then only he has to start on journey.

Then again when a muslim starts on a journey if a black cat crosses his path it is regarded as ominous.

Before starting any work something falls and breaks then it is bad.

If the thing used daily fall down then it is the signal that some guests will come.

Dancing of left eye is good but dancing of right eye is bad.

If anybody coughs while taking his meal, then it is said that somebody is speaking ill of the person who is coughing.

Then again if two persons speaks the same thing at the same time then the coming of guest is certain.

While combing hair, the comb falls down, then it is certain that person concerned will receive a letter.

The Zakat is intended to reduce poverty "Zakat" that is the system of utilising a portion of one's property towards charity.

In Islam wife is entitled to a share in her husband's estate and also a share to the daughter in her father's estate.
Then again "Mahr" should belong to the woman. She had the right to use it as she pleases. Marriage should be contracted in accordance with the woman's will and consent. The woman was accorded the right to demand divorce under certain circumstances. Many restrictions were imposed to prevent the husband who had hastily divorced his wife to remarry at once. This stringent measure compels a husband to think twice before giving Talaq.

Polygamy in Islam is not denounced but made it impossible by commanding that all the four wives should be treated equitably and equally in respect of love affection and honour.

In Indian Muslims have always had a taste for the perfumes which has also been encouraged by the rules of Shariat and practice of the holy prophet. The development of perfumes industry owes much to the efforts of Indian Muslims who invented numerous varieties of Attar which are renowned all over the world.

Dog is kept as a pet in most of the houses but in Islam it is regarded as inauspicious one.

Eating of pork meat is regarded as haram.

Crying of cat means sign of the death of a relative. Then again when cat scratches its face with its paw it means that some guests will come.
When the crow shouts then also it means that guests are coming. But when cock crosses in the midday it is a bad sign. When suddenly a cock crows and birds shout then it is the signal for earthquake.

After the birth of a child, thorns are placed before the room, fumigation is done to drive away the evil spirit. In a Muslim family bottlegurd is not allowed to cut in the middle because it resembles to bālī. The period between the end of afternoon and the beginning of night is regarded as Kalsandhya that is very very inauspicious so children are kept inside and specially they are not allowed to play. Because if they get hurt it will be grievous.

In the Muslim family before eating food a small bit of salt is to be first taken by speaking Bismillah. When many people sit together to take food one should not leave his seat after finishing his food. He should get up only when all had finished eating. If there is any urgency or emergency he has to take the permission of others to get up from his seat.

Then a male member is not allowed to pass under the undergarment of ladies hung over a string. If he does so it is believed that his life is shortened. So generally ladies under garments are not hung in places where man are likely to walk.

I a sacrifice of animal
A girl may be brought up in her grandmother’s house, and her schooling may be done there. But at the time of her marriage she must be in her father’s house. Because she is not allowed to be married from her grandmother’s house. She should be given farewell after her marriage from her own father’s house. Because there is a custom that she should not be married in the same house.

Again when both bride and bridegroom leave the house after marriage then one part of the main door must be closed.

At the time of reception when the bride is ready then a safety pin is pinned in back of the bottom of her mekhala so that evil spirit can not touch her. To drive away the evil spirit mustard seeds are also spread around the sitting place of the bride at the time of reception.

Role of Muslim Woman:

In Politics:

In politics Muslim woman played an important role. A Muslim lady Mrs. Anowara Taimur was appointed as the first woman Chief Minister in the whole country.

Then another Muslim lady Jubaida Atur Rohman made her marks in politics. She was the first woman President of Assam.
Legislative Council. She was also a member of the Indian Whiteley Council. Because of her selfless service during the second World War she was honoured with the title Kaier-i-Hind.

There were ladies like, Mafida Ahmed, Afia Ahmed who worked as M.P. and M.L.A. Of course the number of Muslim women in individual capacity in politics is very small. Still as an organiser or through various association and organisation they played a very important role. To name some of them are Anowara Mansur, Jinnat Ara High, Anjumia Ara Begum, etc.

In Freedom Struggle:

In freedom struggle also Muslim women has a part to play specially by their hospitality to those who fought for the country.

In Education and Literature:

In a brief survey I find that in educational institution many women serve as a teacher, lecturer, Professor from Primary to University level. Not only that some acted as Principals and Head Mistresses to the College and High School. To name them we have found Mrs. Ama Rasul as the principal of Handique Girls' College and her sister Miss Lily Ahmed as the Head Mistress of Panbazar Girls' High School.
In Literature also the contribution of Assamese ladies is great. They are Mrs. Allahun Nissa Fiar, Mrs. Asia Rasul, Miss Rausan Ara Begum, Mrs. Shakina Asraf, Sultana Salima Hazarika etc.

In Social Administration and Arts:

In social administration though the role of Muslim women is very little but gradually it is growing day by day. There is the example of Muslim ladies serving as Deputy Secretary, and Magistrates, Pleaders etc. In arts and music there number is very great. For example Saleha Ahmed of Jorhat earns reputation as a sculptor which is a very rare art to be practised by lady specially in Assam. She took her degree from Santiniketan. She exhibited her sculpture in Terrecota, wood plaster, iron and bronze. She is new working in due composite training centre of Lichubary. She is of the opinion that for expressing one's own mind sculpture is the best media. With this media a revolutionary change can be made in India.

In music Mrs. Perveen Sultana is a renowned musician. She gathered fame both in India and abroad. For her devotion and love for music she is rather forced to live in Bombay where she can get all facilities and a field for showing her aptitude in classical music. In light music the number of performing artists is great, like Mrs. Nilima Khatun, Mrs. Hasina Hazarika etc.
In Cinema art also we have found some Muslim ladies like Rochida Khatun, Perveen Amin etc.

In sports we have found Mrs. Taibun Nissa. She is famous for her Discus Throw, and earned reputation both for Assam and India. She is an employee of N.F. Railway.

Then there are some ladies who contributed in the field of some of the rare activities.

Alhaz Rabia Khatun is famous for her weaving capacity. When she got married she brought with her many clothes woven by herself. Not only that she gave to her four daughters her own hand made clothes of Kuga and Pat in their marriage. When Mahatma Gandhi came to Assam, she weaved before him Pat Silk and was rewarded with a gold medal. She hailed from Jorhat.

Bilkish Begum: She is a lady contractor and started this profession in the year 1957 with the permission of the General Manager of Burma Oil Company.

In 1962 she took contract from Duliajan Oil India Limited and constructed many houses, pump stations, steel fabrication. She was the only lady contractor of this company. This is a very rare thing.

She had to take this profession because her husband was a contractor, and died at a very early age. So to bring up her two minor children one son and another daughter she
took up her husband's profession. She advised the women community to take up contract as a profession. She hailed from Sibsagar.

Asma Ara Begum of Dibrugarh with a capital of only Rupees one thousand started her Taxi business in the year 1963. The cost of her taxi was Rs. 4000/- She ultimately succeeded in paying the cost at the rate of Rs. 1000/- monthly. Ultimately she became the owner of three taxis and carried out her business successfully. She believed where there is a will there is a way.

Anisa Ahmed of Nowgong was adept in tailoring. She took training in Central Women Industry Institute in Delhi and was employed by the Assam Government. But as at that time she had a minor daughter so she could not continue her service.

In the meantime her husband who had also training in this field started a training school in Nongmulki, Shillong with the help of the Govt. But after five years he died and whole responsibility was taken over by Anisa Ahmed. She helped many women specially poor girls, and Khasi girls in this profession.

Jinat Ara Ahmed: hails from Guwahati. She excelled herself in sports from her very early age. In Bihu, and School's sports she won a number of prizes. In other words she showed her skills in sports. She got appointment in Kaliram Girls'
High School as an N.C.C. teachers. She went to Nagpur to get training in different branches of sports. She acquainted herself with sports like Volleyball, Handball, Kabadi. She also passed referee examination in the above sports. She is the only lady referee of Handball and Kabadi in Assam. Under her guidance many teams were sent outside Assam.

But it must be admitted that because of customs and social restrictions, Muslim women and as a matter of fact women in general did not play a greater part than their population strength warrants. After independence however many Muslim women are taking active part in all fields, because of advantages that Muslim women in Assam enjoy which Muslim women in other parts of the country enjoy, namely, freedom from social restrictions. Muslim women in Assam are comparatively and conclusively enjoy greater freedom than their sisters in other states. This is due to the fact that Muslim men in Assam adopted a liberal attitude towards women. Generally there is no difference between Hindu and Muslim women in Assam.