CHAPTER- III

SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE MEDIEVAL ASSAM, REFLECTED IN PERSIAN WRITINGS
Assam is described as the land of anthropological Museum for its diverse ethnology. Population of Assam is composed of various races and tribes. The ancestor of these tribes and races migrated to Assam in different period of times. Khasis of Austeric origins were the first to settle in Assam. Subsequently Bodos of mongoloid origin established in different regions, and gradually, became divided into various groups, identified as Rabha, Bodos, Tiwa, Karbi and Dimasa etc. The Northern Assam's tribes Miri, Mising, Daflas also entered Assam in the same period that of Bodos but remained concentrated on northern Bank of Brahmaputra Valley, bordering Auranachal Pradesh. The original term Bodo denote to a large number of peoples. Garo, Rabha, Koch, Mech, Hajong, and Lalung etc, who speak Bodo Languages. Not a very distant past the Bodos proved themselves to be very powerful occupying almost the entire Brahmaputra Valley. The other tribes Kukis, Nagas and Mar entered the hilly regions of central Assam, at the same time of Bodo's, through the Burma- Manipur route. Jaintia is another tribe that settled at the same period, in some areas of Barak Valley. Indo-Aryans moved to Assam from Nothern India by 6th and 7th century A.D. Those groups of Aryans settled in different pockets of Brahmaputra and Barak Valley. 

The Muslim of Turkish Afghani and other origin, came from North India to enter Assam during medieval period, for different reasons, besides a large number of newly converted Muslims of Bengal settled down different areas of Assam. The other group of Peoples who entered Assam followed by Muslim was Tai Ahoms. Initially, they settled in upper Assam but gradually moved further west up to the Central Assam.

Assam is a land of languages and dialects, as many as forty five languages, spoken by its communities. It is a mini India in terms of language. There are many ethnic group, each have their own language culture and tradition and of course very distinct customs. From a small tribe of four to five thousand Mech, to Bengali the largest ethnic group, everyone have their language, culture and dialects. At present Assamese and Bengali are two principle languages of Assam. Assamese is the official languages of Brahmaputra valley and it is the common language of the same valley. People of different languages, dialects used Assamese as the medium of communication with others in Brahmaputra valley; many even officially accepted it as their mother tongue. Ahom having their own tribal dialect now speak and used Assamese as their mother tongue. Similarly Muslims of Beagali origin officially used Assamese as their mother tongue; though in their homes speak different Bengali dialects. The reason of Bengali Muslim accepting Assamese is largely because of political compulsion and security.¹

¹ Borpujari, H.K. OP. Cit. P.P. 9-24
Assamese is a language of Sanskrit origin directly connected with proper Magadhi Apa bramsha. Cultural fusion among various tribes and races among themselves has shaped the development of his language for centuries. That is why influences of Austro- Asiatic, Mongoloid and Tibet Burman dialects are palpable in Assamese language. During medieval period Arabic, Persian played important role in the development of Assamese language. Bengali the official language of the Barak valley is also the common language of Barak Valley and acted as a medium of communication among various linguistic groups. Eighty percent of the people of Barak Valley have Bengali as their mother language. Hindi speaking tea garden labours, Bishnupuria Manipuri speaking peoples, Khasia and all other small groups of Valley use Bengali in common interaction. However majority of Bengali speak a dialect known as Sylheti Bangla. Bodo is the third popular language of Assam and second in Brahmaputra valley. The total number of Bodos now, officially adopting Bodos as their mother tongue. English is use in two hilly districts. Hindi and Bodo are the two other popular language of the state.

Historically both Assamese and Bengali developed out of Sanskrit language as early as in the 7th century A.D. Their direct ancestor is Magadhi Apabramsha. Magadhi was the principle dialect, which corresponds to the Eastern Prakrit. East Magadhi was spoken prachya Apabramsha also spread to the east keeping north of the Ganges and reached to Assam. Each of the
descendants of Magadhi Apabramsha viz. Orya, modern Bengali and Assamese equally connected with the common immediate parents.

Assam is the second largest Muslim populated state in India (in terms of percentage) only after Jammu and Kashmir. Muslim contribute about thirty present of the state population. They are historically concentrated in the South and West Assam in large numbers. Five of the six Muslim Majority districts of Assam lie in these regions and also the other districts in this have significant percentage of Muslims. Interestingly in Assam it is found that, wherever Muslim political structure once developed, has high percentage of Muslims living there. Besides, the southern and western region, central Assam (mainly in the districts of Nagaon and Morigaon) has significant Muslim populations.

Muslims are looked merely as invaders and intruders in history and now suspected as immigrants. This twist and criticism however, in turn led the curiosity of some writers and historians to explore the Muslim history in the state and their relation with power. But unfortunately most of the works carried out by them are neither comprehensive nor insightful. Their writings unveiled a small part of Muslims total history in Assam. For instance someone may writes on Assam or specifically on Muslims, but they would either forget or ignore regions other than Brahmaputra Valley. So their studies are confined to Brahmaputra valley only. It becomes a fact

that so far nobody has made any such move on any specific period to explore the history of Muslims of Assam. A systematic study from the 13th century, which is the starting point of their history, is crucial in the contribution of both Brahmaputra and Barak Valley's Muslim history.

The history of Muslims of Assam is important for a comprehensive history of Assam. In fact, the way history of our country is incomplete without reference of Assam. A history of Assam is also incomplete without the reference of the Muslim history. In Assam Muslim community is nitrogenous in character.. unlike other religious groups, of the state, they are also divided culturally, ethnically and linguistically.1

A systematic study of these groups, in the light of various sources and conditions is necessary, for the sake of a comprehensive history of the State and Muslims on particular. Actually historical processes of conversion in to Islam, settlement of Muslims from outside and the geographical variance of the state paved their division. It is a fact, neither at single point of time Muslims had entered Assam, nor the locals belonged to Hinduism and tribal faith embraced Islam at a time. Muslims arrived and settled in different places at different stages of history. Similarly the conversions to Islam occurred at various point of times. The newly settled Muslims (13th to 15th A.D.) of Turk, Afghan, Arabic, Persian and other backgrounds, mingling with

the newly converted Muslims, and Non Muslims paved the way for the enchantment of language, polity, economy and society of Assam. Thus local languages and dialects became filled with new words used by the adventurer. Both Assamese and Bengali languages are fraught with Arabic and Persian words. So Muslims added new dimension to Assam, what every new community develops certain trends and cultural diversities in the society and polity of that land, which in turn enrich the existing one.

The history and cultural heritage of each and every community of a place express the composite nature of that place and its greatness. Assam for its reach diversity in religion, language, ethnicity and culture forms a distinct and interesting identity in the history and heritage of India. The legacy of Muslims is a significant part of it. So their history is imperative to develop a comprehensive history of Assam. And finally of course a study of the past of Assam's second largest community Muslim will definitely help to develop better understandings among different ethnic groups.

The first contact of India with the Islamic world dates back to the early part of the seventh century A.D. When Harshavardhana was reigning over Northern India. About this time, that is during the Caliphate of Umer, the Arab Muslims explored land approaches to India and made many raids along the borders of Sindh and Baluchistan. The first Muslim fleet appeared in Indian waters in 636 A.D. But the expedition were suspended owing to Umar's strong opposition. Their maritime commerce, which also started
during this time with India, continued to flourish with it many Arab Muslims entered and settled along the central coast of the country. After examining the views of different scholars about the first settlements of Muslims in India, Dr. Tara Chand observes that 'the Musalmans made their advent in South India on the western coast as early as the eight century, if not earlier, and in the tenth century on the eastern coast; they soon spread over the whole coast and in a comparatively short time acquired great influence both in politics and in society.'

The Muslim settlers in south India received their treatment from Hindu rulers and their subjects. They were granted freedom of faith worship. Consequently, they could build mosques in their settlements and openly practice their faith and it is probable that they even entered into the missionary efforts for the propagation of the religion. A political unrest owing to the decay of Chera sowers, and the religious upsurge of the Saiva Adiyars and Vaishnava Alwars at this period, greatly disturbed the minds of the people in south India. It is natural that under such conditions some Hindus should feel attracted by Islam appearing there at the time, with its simple formula of faith and democratic theories of social organization. In fact we find that the appreciation for Islam, at that time increased among the Hindus increased to such an extent that before the first quarter of the ninth

1. Saikia, Dr. M.K. Assam Muslim Relation & its Cultural Significance., p.1
2. Tara Chand Influence of Islam on Indian Culture., p.p. 31,
century hardly ended, the last of the Cheraman Perumal king of Malabar became a convert. This appreciation for Muhammadanism in India appears to have continued even after the Arab conquest of Sindh and Multan during 712-713 A.D., because we learn from Mas'udi, who visited India in the early years of the tenth century, that the then Gujarat King respected Islam and granted religious freedom to his Muslim subjects.

After this rather length discussion about the response of the Indian people to Muhammadanism in the early period of Indo-Islamic contact, we have now to see how the Indian culture and religion were accepted in the Arab land during the period under review. It seems that Indian culture and religion made their way into the Arab land long before the rise of Islam. The eastern region of the Muslim Empire, that is Khorasan, Afghanistan, Sistan and Baluchistan were Hindu or Buddhist till they merged into the fold of Muhammadism. The relationship with India seems to have continued even after the rise of Islam there. The lands of early Caliphate were said to have been the meeting grounds of Eastern and Western thoughts and culture, including those of the Hindus and the Buddhists, and many Indians were employed in the financial departments of the Ummayads at Basra which was one of the important centres of Sufism in the early period of its development. Yahiya ibn Khalid the Barmakide minister of Harun-al- Rashid, is said to

1. Elliot and Dowson, History of India, Vol.I, P.27
have possessed a treatise on the various schools of religious thoughts in India. The Barmakides were happened be the descendants of Baramak a superintendent of a large Indian monastery (Vihara) in Balkh. It is said that the Muslims translated the Buddhist works in the second century of Hejra. Apart from these, some of the accounts compiled in the period from the ninth to the eleventh century by several Arabic and Persian scholars like Al-Jahiz, Yaqubi, Al-Idrisi and Al Biruni, reveal how Hindu religion and culture were honoured in the Arab land in the said work, which in its turn served as a source of information about Indian religious sects period, Al-Jahiz clearly states that from India Muslims received “that book called Kalilah-wa-Dimnah. 1

Though the Arabs were great advocates of war and missionary work for the cause of Islam, ' even in the predominantly martial period of their history,' they were, as M.N. Roy points out, “far from being barbaric bands of fanatical marauders, spreading pillage and rapine, death and destruction in the name of religion. It was probably for this that even after the annexation of Sindh to the Muslim empire in 712 A.D. There was no change in Arab's attitude towards Indian culture and religion. It rather seems that after this event the Arabs utilized better scope to learn more about Indian

1. Tara Chand, Influence of Islam on Indian Culture, p.66
thought, culture and science. Like their counterparts in South India, the Arab settlers in Sindh took keen interest in Indian religion, culture and science. It has been said that Indian medicine, mathematics, Astronomy, Folk lore, religion, etc. revealed new sources of knowledge to them. They were impressed and influenced to such an extent that they carried the revealed treasures in these branches of Knowledge not only to the Middle East, but transported them to Europe. ¹ Although a certain portion of India was conquered by the Arabs as early as the beginning of the eight century of the Christian era, and although Muslim Dynasties were ruling at Mansura until A.D. 976 and at Multan to a later date yet India in general was free from the sway of Islam until the beginning of the eleventh century when Muslim invaders made their appearance from Afghanistan. The foundation of a Muslim empire in India may be said to have been laid by the Ghaznavides, and Mahmud of Ghaznin is the first Muslim conqueror of India, in the strict sense of the term. His successive campaigns ranging from A.D. 1000-1026, mark the beginning of new era in Indian history and his formal annexation of Punjab in A.H. 412 (A.D. 1021) as an integral part of his dominion may be considered as the first step towards the consolidation of a Muslim empire in India. The circumstances under which he annexed the Punjab have been described thus:
"In the year A.H. 412 (A.D. 1021) he led an expedition to Kashmir and besieged Lahkut for a period of one month. As it was more strongly fortified then before, he was unable to take it. Therefore he abandoned this plan and marched towards Lahore. The army was dispersed throughout the neighbouring country and succeeded in capturing an enormous booty. On this occasion the Nabira-i- Jaipal was very weak and powerless so he fled and took refuge with the Rai of Ajmere. The Sultan captured the city of Lahore, and having assigned it to a reliable Amir and the rest of the Punjab to capable officers, he turned his attention from plunder to the establishment of regular government. A garrison of the victorious army was posted there and the "Khutba" was read in his name. Then he returned to Ghaznin in early spring. From this time begins the rise of the Muslim power in India. After the death of Mahmud when his successors had lost their possessions in Persia and Central Asia and Afghanistan, they had to fall back upon the kingdom of Punjab and thus founded Turko-Persian dynasties. This paved the way for others to come in later times and establish their supremacy over the length and breadth of the country.

The conditions under which Persian language and literature was introduced into India and development there, are mainly political. It is with the growth of political power of the Persian speaking people and the gradual establishment of their permanent rule over the country, that Persian language and literature gained a strong footing in the land and thus developed under
the patronage of the reigning monarchs. The history of the development of Indo-Persian literature is invariably bound up with the rise of the Muslim power in India.

It is wonderful phenomenon in the history of the world wherever the banner of Islam is carried a great transformation in the religious, social, and intellectual activities of the conquered races immediately follows. The history of the spread of Islam and the expansion of the Muslim empire amply testify to this fact. Persian had to undergo a great transformation after its conquest by the Arabs. The Arab conquest had not only overthrown the tottering House of Sassan but also brought about a complete change in the religion, society, language, culture of the country, which no foreign conquest ever could do. So Noldeke remarks: "Hellenism never touched more than the surface of Persian life; but Islam was penetrated to the core by Arabian religion and Arab ways. Although the successors of the great Arab conquerors could not entirely overthrow the religions of India and supplant them by their own, they gradually brought a considerable number of the population under the banner of Islam. This religion had indirectly produced a great influence on the theological conceptions of the Hindus. The Hindus, coming in direct contact with Muslim thought, evolved a set of ideals which almost approached the monotheistic principle of Islam, as opposed to their strict polytheism. The approach of the later Hindu reformers are more or less a manifestation of this lasting impression which Islam has made on their social and religious fabrics.
The influence is felt more in the North than in South India. The less rigid observance of the custom of untouchability in Northern India than in South India is greatly due to the constant presence of a faith which actively insisted on the equality of man before the eyes of the creator. Besides these relations on the religious and social institutions of the Hindus, it has also impressed its mark on the Indian languages by contributing a large number of Persian words to the native vocabularies. In course of time, this influence became so paramount, that an entirely new language has grown up in the country known as "Urdu" or camp language. It is formed out of Persian and an indigenous language called Braja- Bhasa which in later times became the Lingua-franca of India. This is one of the first modern Indian languages spoken by a large number of people, both Hindus and Muslims alike. It has also produced an extensive literature.1

There are several forces internal and external, which contributed to the development of Persian literature in India. The adoption of the Persian language by the Turko-Persian rulers of the country as the language of the court and bells latter necessitated its study by the native population in order to gain a footing in the business of the state and to enjoy other facilities which were open to them; and knowledge of Persian on those days, was considered as a sign of refinement & culture, just as English is in Modern

times. With the advent of Muslim rule a large number of Persian scholars emigrated to India, and irruption of the Mongol horde from Central Asia and their destructive and ruthless incursions into Persia in the thirteenth century, compelled many a learned Persian to seek asylum in India. These emigrants and refugees made India their permanent home and formed the nucleus of Indo-Persian culture and scholarship. They brought with them a heritage of a highly gifted race and planted it on the fertile soil of India. That is why India could produce eminent poets, historians, divines and mystics, who if not superior, are at least equal to famous poets or historians of contemporary Persia.¹

In the 1st century A.D., Kabul was the capital of trade of the vast region. Goods and products of India used to be exported to east and west via Kabul. During that period not only Indian commercial items used to pass via Afghanistan but also Indian culture spread throughout the region. From Afghanistan, Buddhism expanded to China and then via China it reached Korea and Japan. It was in this era when Silk Route connected east and west of the world, Ariana or Afghanistan of that time used to be the conjunction point of different nations and their cultures.

The emergence of Kashan dynasty and their migration from Central Asia to Afghanistan and their conquest of India, paved the way for the

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promotion of a civilization influenced by the Greek, Central Asian and the remnant of Achamenian civilizations to India. Due to its geographical position, Afghanistan could combine the Arts and cultures of different nations in its own way. Such a combination with an especial effect of Indian civilization, led to funding of a great civilization the signs of which are seen in different fields of art and culture of that era.

The kingdom of Kabul Shahan in Kabulistan and parts of Punjab used to be the conjuncture between Ariana and India during the first Islamic centuries, until their downfall in the beginning of Ghaznavides reign. From the sixth to the end of the 18th century, Afghanistan called Khurasan and due to organizational interaction between Afghanistan and India, a lot of cultural works in the different fields have been created. Almost all the Muslim emperors and the royal families who laid the foundation of Sultanates in India came from Khurasan of the Islamic era (present Afghanistan). With the arrival of these conquerors and later under umbrella of the Sultanates they founded immense ideological and cultural reciprocations occurred between us.

In the 8th century A.D., Barmaki dynasty whose fore-fathers were the custodians of Maw Bahar, the famous temple at Balkh and who later came to power during the era of Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad endeavoured to pass on Indian culture to Arab lands. They got Sanskrit books and treatises translated in Arabic, especially those written on medieval sciences.
Afterwards, Barmakis built a Hospital in Baghdad and employed Indian doctors in it. At the order of Yahiya Barmaki, the first translation from Sanskrit into Persian of medical work Shanaque; was accomplished by an Indian scholar from Balkh.¹ Later, the translation of Panchatantra (Kalila Wa Dimna) in the Persian left a permanent mark on Dari literature. At the time of Mutasembelellah Abbasi, Mohammad Bin Yahya Barmaki and Omran Bin Musa Bin Khalid Barmaki came to Sindh as rulers and tried to promote the Islamic culture and learning there.

In the mid of 3rd century of Hejra, corresponding to 9th century A.D., Yaqoob Lais from Nimroz province located in the south west of Afghanistan, ruled over Sindh and his brother Umro Lais governed that territory. The rule of these two brothers in Sindh further contributed to the introduction of Khurasani civilization and culture in that territory.

The arrival of Ismaili sect from Khurasan to Multan and Sindh in the 4th century A.H. left its cultural effects there. In the 10th century A.D., Sabuktagin and later his son Sultan Mahmud Ghaznawi tried to expand Islam into India. In the wake of their endeavours in India not only Islam but also the Persian Dari literature reached India from Khurasan. In a short period of time this language and literature was so rooted itself in Punjab and northern Indian region that Lahore used to be called “the small Ghazni.” Great poets

¹. Raheen Sayed Makhdoom, Afghanistan and India Through the Ages., p.2
like Masoud-e Saad Salman and Rozebeh Nokati were born and grown up in Lahore. Gradually, Lahore earned the prestige of being second capital of Ghaznawids. Likewise, Abul Faraj Rooni was born and brought up in Roon in India. It is worth mentioning that in the 5th century Hejra, corresponding to 11th century A.D., and poets born in northern India in the outer region of Khurasan. The arrival of various strata of people - scholars, sufis, poets and writers - from Khurasan, gave a fresh look to the Indian cities of Punjab especially to Lahore and Multan.

Ghoris also paid special attention to Lahore. As a result of the attention paid by these two Khurasani dynasties that came from Ghazna and Ghor to India. Dari language developed to considerable extent in India. Thus, great writers and poets of Dari - Persian language and literature emerged in India. The impact of Indian culture is seen in their writings. In the beginning of Ghaznawid era, the impact of India in the works of Khurasani poets is found as well. They have referred to temples, forts, historical places, nature, climate and some products of India in their works.

The impact of Indian philosophy and sciences is found in Khurasan from the third century of Hejra especially when the well known scientist and astrologist of Khurasan, Albomasar Balkhi, came to Banaras for learning Indian mathematics, geometry and astrology from Brahmans. He then took these sciences to Islamic lands. The influence of Indian philosophy in
Khurasan and later in the Fars and Arab world is visible. For instance believing in transmigration and special type of pantheism originated from Indian thoughts had influenced Abu Mansoor Hallaj.

During the reign of Sultan Mahmud-e-Ghaznawi, Abu Raihan Al Biruni, the famous scholar of Ghazni, came to India, a land of great civilization, and stayed here for some years. Biruni had familiarized himself with history and culture of India during his sojourn there. He had interaction and exchange of views with the Indian scholars. Biruni's deep interest in the history and culture of India is revealed in his writings, especially in the book called "Malihend". Biruni's contribution to introducing India to the Muslim world and later to the west, after translation of his work in European languages, is tremendous. He mentions Indian sciences in his book "Qanoon-e-Masudi" and in another work Alsaidina he gives valuable information about the Indian herbs. In the same era, Gardizi also in his history has allotted a chapter to Indian sciences and religions. Hakim Naser Khosraw in his book called Zadul Musafirin wrote about the Indian wise men that "they are tremendously pious, not liers, not swear for false and they have a book to which they presume as the God's Book. I have heard so many such things from these wise men."

Interaction and cultural exchanges between Khurasani's and Indians witnessed a rapid development to the extent that a good number Indians became popular in Dari poetry. The cultural exchanges and learning of
persian/dari by the Indians especially during the Lodhi's reign is more significant than before. Sultan Sikandar Lodhi paid an especial attention to learning of persian by non Muslims.

From the beginning of the Khurasani rule in India, persian became the language of administration. And later for centuries men of literature and science used Persian- Dari for exchange of ideas. From Khurasanis arrival to India- until the next eight centuries- persian was a literary language. Books on history, dairies, biographies, poem collections, mathematics, astrology, administration, warfare, Medical sciences, etc. have been written in this language.¹

During the Khilji rule, Persian literature had a significant progress in India. Jalaluddin Khilji, who was involved with art and literature, had a special liking for artists, poets and his kingdom was the hub of persain literature and poetry. And thus, poets, musicians and writers from Khurasan and Transoxiana ( Mawaraunahr) came to India. The poets and writers of Khurasan, who lived in India, loved the country and its people. One of those was Amir Khusraw . He called India his motherland and a paradise. Khusraw preferred India over the rest of the world, even over his ancestral land, Khurasan. He specially admired the winter in India and preferred it over the winter of Khurasan. Similarly, he used to say that the summer in India is

¹. Sayed Makhdoom Raheen, Afghanistan and India Through the Ages,. p.11
better than the harsh winter in Khurasan. Khurasan has no fresh fruit like guava. He says music of India is not found anywhere else in the world. Indian melodies touch the heart and effect men and animals as well. Amir Khosraw praised the Indian traditions and culture, with an emphasis on the Sati tradition. He admires the courage of the Indian women who embrace fire to death on the demise of their husbands. Hindu's familiarity with Persian- Dari language started from the time they were employed in the administration of Khurasani rulers. During the reign of Sultan Mahmood Ghaznawi, in addition to Hindus serving in the army, many of them lived normal lives in Ghazni. Out of the known Hindu personalities one was, as referred to earlier, called Tilak son of Jisi. He was a man of vision. Moreover, he was a good looking man with a full knowledge of Dari- speaking, reading and writing. He had a special position in the government of Sultan Masood, to the extent of drums (Nagada) used to be played at his door. Likewise, Hindu officers- Naath, Sunder, Bijia Rai and so on- worked in the administration of Ghaznawids.1

Up to the 16th century A.D., Persian was spoken in the elite classes of Hindus. Words and compositions of Persian poems influenced Hindu poets.

During Sultan Sikandar Lodhi, a Hindu called Bahman recited poems in Persian. Later, the number of Hindu Persian poets and writers in Kashmir

1. Sayed Makhdoom Raheen, Afghanistan And India Through The Ages, p.12
increased. One of them was a man called Bhodi Bath who had memorised Shahnama and recited it with his attractive voice. The impact of Dari language in the advancement of other Indian Languages is significant. This impact is not only seen in North Indian languages, which have Aryian origin, but also in the Southern and Eastern India like Telegu, Kannada and Bengali, Oriya, Assamese and so on. In the Indian languages, Kashmiri comes second to Urdu, influenced by Persian. Sixty percent of Urdu terminology consist of Persian words. Similarly, Punjabi, Bengali and Assamese languages have benefited a lot from Persian.

During almost eight centuries, from Yaqoob Lais and Sabuktageen to Babur and Sirshah Suri, hundreds of thousands of people from Afghanistan migrated to India, including scientists, artists, and professionals. They brought culture and traditions of Khurasan to the sub-continent. With the downfall of powerful Sultanates, like Ghaznawids, Ghoris, Khiljis, Lodhis and other Khurasani dynasties, the military and administrative individuals of these dynasties established local governments in various parts of India. They had made great contribution to the Hindi-Khurasani common culture and traditions for long years.

Babur Shah was deeply attached to Kabul and lived there for long time. He loved the city to the extent that based on his introduction his body was brought to Kabul for burial. Thousands of people from Khurasan, particularly from Kabul, came with him to India. Babur Shah and his family,
were not considered as outsiders in Afghanistan.

During Mughal dynasty, from Humayoon and Akbar to the later Mughal kings, in addition to poets, writers and scholars of Khurasan, writers and poets from other Persian speaking lands came to India as well. The inflow of such a bulk of writers, poets and scholars to India was basically because of insecurity and probably they faced in their native places. Moreover Timuri rulers welcomed them with open arms. As a result, fifty one Dari poets came to Jalaluddin Akbar's court and were warmly welcomed and profusely patronised, and at least fifty poem collections were made at that time. The way Safawi's ruled in Isfahan facilitated such migrations to India. Mention has been made in the Tarikh-i- Aasham that any body who came to this country, never returned unless death overtakes him. That is why an outsider does not know very much about Aasham and its people. The Rajas of this country are proud by reasons of the numerical superiority of their followers and retinues and large possession of their properties, treasures and a big army. They love to be surrounded by brave soldiers and gigantic elephants. The present king of this country is Raja Jayadhawaj Singha titled Sarki (Swargadeo). The Saki (Swargi) is a Hindi word, which means sky (heaven). There is corrupt and mystified belief in this regard that one of the forefathers of this Raja was the sovereign ruler of the angels. He descended from the sky by a golden ladder and got engaged in organizing important affairs of this country. As he found this land so beautiful and prosperous that
he declined to return to his original abode. In short, this idiotic and hopeless Raja surpassed his forefathers in pride, hypocrisy and influence. For a small mistakes committed by the people, he renders the community helpless. And for a petty fault he begins a series of cruelty on them. As a result (due to his cruelty) his wife did not give birth to a male baby. He considered himself very unfortunate for not having any successor in the form of a son like his forefathers. He became distinctively notorious being unable to produce a son. Perhaps he has forgotten the proverb, “this kingdom after my death belongs to anyone who will capture it by sword”. Though he is a follower of Hindustan yet he does not bow down before any idol. He considered himself as the greatest manifestation of the Divine Creator.

About Revenue and Tax Collection of Assam as described in the Tarikh-i- Aasham

معطر اگر بدستور ممالک محروسه عمل نمایند یحتمال با مالی که آز رعایا ستاتند و فیل که از صحراء گیرند و سایر محصولات چهل و پنج لک روپیه بحصول برسد خراج از رعایاستند در ان ملک داب نیست از هر خانه فی سه نفر یک نفر بخدمت راجه قیام نمایند و اگر تهاوند در انجه بدان مامور شوند واقع شود بدون قتل بچه‌ی دیگر تنبیه نیابند لیکه این امر را جه در میان آن قوم بم رتبه کمال است و در جمعی از منه دست تصرف سلسلی از دامن آن ولایت کوتاه بوده و یاى غله 1

1. تاريخ آسام؛ شهاب الدين طالش؛ 66
This country is governed in the pattern of the Mughal administration, it would fetch revenue of forty-five lakh of rupees annually including the tax collected from the public and income from the elephants caught from the forest. But collection of taxes from the public is not among the customs of this country. One person out of three from each family is under the service of the Raja. In case of any mishap due to negligence of the employees the minimum punishment given by the Raja is death. Therefore, the order of the Raja is implemented with full sincerity and severity.

Foreign Nationals are not allowed to enter Assam

Hej biyaghe an milk ra pyi seer saxhete aboab dojul o xorouj byrger ba de an dieb dinieg o paay seathe
ash az zordj bimallay dii gur lang ne dizegy ra gaarnen ke bmelek shan de ayd o ne kesi ra az meerd
xouj ra kahtnd ke bra'id deyl az deftory ke de diebabe mneker shed har sal yekskeriby jemeli byunon tajart
byromode rajhe qreby bgwahate dr serhd xoud
amnedi o tlela o mishk o jweb o deflal o sayaj o parche abrishmi aorndid o be nemp o shour o
gogreed o berkhi dii gur az mutue hned ke mredm gowahi anja mi bernde mauxooshe kered refetendi bjalme
shkeri ke yserhde an mmlket daxal. shd az kshor rorow xaror geshet o qafelal ke de an serzime qdem
nehad rhal aqamal bser nszal hdm aned xert dr sansaj aaym ager byqcd turej o ttefr shrkeri uzam an
xethe shd cheun yserhde an milk mi reyd-mfehoran jend defue shxonj br an mi zendne ager shb mceosou
ayishan rasebah nhalaj shi demid reyaliay ser raha ra kochpene bykohstan mi bernde o saakn dary o
naxeq naris de an xodol nemi geshanetk o mredm shker az xrem o ahtiajet qagel shed emaalsk pr mealk
mhteml br etneh zkar o bowadi mxfوه mhhteri br bishay ay xonxwarg bi manbu u dyi kered bywst milk.
No foreigners ever ruled this country in the past. A stranger never put his foot of domination on this land. The entrance and the exit points are very narrow for the outsiders. Likewise the inhabitants of this country are shy of a trip to other countries. The Raja neither allows foreigners to enter Aasham, nor does he permit his own subjects to go out of his kingdom. Before the conflict that took place between Aashamese and us, a group of Aashamese used to come near the border of Gowahati once in a year, with the permission of their Raja to carry out business. They brought products like gold, musk, aloe-wood, peeper, Sazaj and silk clothes and bartered them for salt, sulphur, brimstone and some other Indian goods imported by the traders of Gowhati. In short, any invader who entered the boundary
of this kingdom could hardly go back alive. Any caravan that set foot on this land took abode in the world of no return. In the former times, if invaders set out to occupy Aasham they faced frequent raids carried out by the local inhabitants on the borders itself. If their night raids did not yield the desired result, then they moved in to the hills along with the entire population. They did not leave any sign of habitation in that area. The opponent totally unaware of this dreadful strategy, on reaching the heart of the country after crossing the treacherous and terrible rivers, dangerous forests full of bloodthirsty thorns, faced cold freezing weather besides incessant rain and annihilation. Once the rain water started rolling down from the hill to surround the enemy. It is said, “For a damp mud a single drop of water is enough to bring disaster”. So when the rains fall on the damp earth it was not possible for horses to advance. As a result the careless opponents surrounded on all sides by the locals finally lose morale to fight or to defend themselves. Due to lack of strength they become disabled and in a very short time either got killed or taken prisoner. In this manner, a large, powerful and dignified armed force, caught in a horrible whirlpool were decimated in the depth of river.

- In this desert every thorns is like a finger, which guides the people.
- And every chirping of a nightingale is familiar.

نوشی حسین شاه نامی از سلطانی بنگلاده با بست ززار پیاده و سوار و نوا و بین شمار بان دیار در آدم و راهی از ملک بر آمد

بکوهستان رفت حسین شاه برس خود را با آن چندان بنشیند آن حود و نگاه داشته می خود به بنگلاده معاونت نمود چون ایام برناست و راه آمد

مسند غریب را جه از کوه پایین آدم بلطف اهل ملکت که سر بچه اطاعت پسر حسین شاه در آورده یوند شاهزاده را قل نمود آن پیامره و
Once Hussain Shah, one of the Sultans of Bengal invaded Aasham with twenty thousand cavalry, foot soldiers, and countless Nawars (warships). The Raja of Aasham left his country and left to the mountains. Hussain Shah having left his own season arrived and all the mountain and league with the officers (who had earlier submitted to the son of the prince proved ineffective in a very short time. All of them were either killed or taken prisoner. It is said that one group among the inhabitants of this country having Muslim names, are descendants of those prisoner of war.

Any body who came to this country, never returned unless death overtakes him. That is why an outsider does not know very much about Aasham and its people. The people of Hindustan describe the inhabitants of this land as magicians and consider them as beings out of pale of human race. They believe that this land is a land of magic, which prevents him from returning home.
The Rajas of this country are proud by reasons of the numerical superiority of their followers and retinues of the possession of their properties, treasure and a big army. They love to be surrounded by brave soldiers and gigantic elephants. The present king of this country is Raja Jayadhwaj Singha titled Sarki (Swargadeo). The Sarki (Swargi) is a Hindi word, which means sky (heaven). There is a corrupt and mystified belief in this regard that one of the forefathers of this Raja was the sovereign ruler of the angels. He descended from the sky by a golden ladder and got engaged in organizing important affairs of this country. As he found this land so beautiful and prosperous that he declined to return to his original abode.

In short, this idiotic and hopeless Raja surpassed his forefathers in pride, hypocrisy and influence. For a small mistake committed by the people, he renders the community helpless. And for a petty fault he begins a series of cruelty on them. As a result (due to his cruelty) his wife did not give birth to a male baby. He considered himself very unfortunate for not having any successor in the form of a son like his forefathers. He became distinctively notorious being unable to produce a son. Perhaps he has forgotten the proverb, “this kingdom after my death belongs to any one who will capture it by sword”. Though he is a follower of Hinduism yet he does not bow down before any idol. He considered himself as the greatest manifestation of the Divine Creator.
Assamese Society as Described in the Tarikh-e-Aasham

The entire population of this country does not follow any particular religion. Whatever eatable things they received from anybody they consume these without any consideration of caste, creed and religion. They perform every kind of work, which is good according to their individual opinion. They eat food prepared by everyone, be he a Muslim or a non-Muslim. They eat every kind of flesh except human flesh. It does not make any difference to them whether the animal meat they are eating is Halal (slaughtered ritually) or not. They are not used to taking oil in their dishes. If by chance their food gives smell of oil they refrain from consuming it. The language of the country is entirely different from the language of the people who live in the countries.
Male and female members of the Aasbamese Society as described in the Tarikh-i-Aasham:

The males of this country are very bold and courageous. They know how to overcome the difficult situation. All of them are good fighters and bloodthirsty too. They are brave and fearless both in killing and losing their own life. They are unparalleled in trick, falsehood and unfaithfulness. Being beautiful and charming and having delicate body, black complexion, long and black hair, attractive hands and legs, are some special characteristics of Aashamese women.

From a distance they look very beautiful and charming, but seen from close quarters they lack grace and beauty. The wives of the Raja and also the general public do not cover their faces before anybody, and they move about the bazaar with uncovered head. There are only a few persons who have close quarters they lack grace and beauty. The wives of the Raja and also the general public do not cover their faces before anybody, and they move about the bazaar with uncovered head.

The wives of the Raja and also the general public do not cover their faces before anybody, and they move about the bazaar with uncovered head. There are only a few persons who have
public while going before Raja and Phukans kneel down and sit down with folded knee and keep their head lowered looking to the ground. The males of Aasham shave their head, beard and moustache. If some one is found violating this norm, he is put to death charging him for following the custom of Bengal.

The Raja and Phukan travel in the Singhasan and the well off and the chiefs on the Doli (Dola). The Doli looks very funny and is made of wooden board. A wooden chair tied on the back of an elephant is called Hauda.

Wearing clothes, trousers, shoes, tying turban and sleeping on the Charpays are not among the customs of this country. They generally put coarse cloth on the head, a Chadar on the shoulder and tie Lungi at the waist. The rich persons wear a kind of half coat during the winter. This coat is like our Yaqubkhani one. But those who hold a high position in the society sleep on bed instead of Charpay. The inhabitants of this country eat lots of Tamul (betel nut) along with raw Supari. ¹

The people of Aasham are very expert weavers and knit beautiful clothes of silk and velvet. They are also expert carpenters and make very decent and comfortable furniture such as box, cot, Diwan and chair from a single piece of timber without sawing the wood. Some of the cots are made by expert carpenters from one block of wood are found in the place of Raja.

1. Asif Mazhar. Translation, Tarikh-i- Aasham, p.p-54-55
It was two Zerya wide (one Zerya is equal to 104 centimetre). The leg was also made of the same block of wood without cutting it separately.

The Aashamese make war boats in the same manner as Kose of Bengal and have named in Bechari. The only difference between these two types of boats is that in the kosa the bow and the stern are made separately, whereas in the Bechari both its top and base are made of single flat wooden board. They used rare piece of timber in making Bechari in comparison to kosa does not move fast. Besides, various kinds of small and big boats are also found in this country. Once, an official Waqey Newis reported from Gowahati in the month of Ramazan that around thirty two thousand and Bechari and Kosa boats were spotted till filling this report. The number of boats reported by the Waqeya newis was much greater than those inhabitants who were killed by the victorious army. Most of these boats made of the Chambal wood (Sal), were in the possession of the local people. The chief feature of the boat made from the Chambal wood is that if by chance it sinks due to heavy load then it does not lodge in the deep water. Our friends have experienced this so many times as it happened. The locals Aashamese also accept this account as true. The people of this country are very swift and skilled in firing gun and cannon. They prepare finest variety of gunpowder. They obtain materials required in its composition from the royal estate.

1. Asif Mazhar. Translation, Tarikh-i- Aasham, p.p.56-57
The type of buildings constructed with brick, stone and mud are not found in this country except some gates at Kahargaon and some places of worships. All the people of Assam both rich and poor construct their houses with wood, reed and grass. The ancient inhabitants of this country are divided into two communities—Aashami (Ahome) and Kalita. In every sphere of life the latter has upper hand. But in the field of warfare the case is totally opposite.

Six to seven thousand Aashamese guard the palace of the Raja round the clock. They are known as Jodang (Chaudabg). They are very faithful, main executioners and devoted servants of the Raja.

The main weapons used by the people of this country are: the gun, the matchlocks, the cannon, the pointed and not very pointed arrows with iron heads, Daos, long spears and bow made of bamboo. At the time of war entire population of the country including professionals, indigenous people, new settlers, Hindus and Muslims, all willingly or unwillingly take very active part in the battle. They attack the enemy unitedly like the tigers of the forest and crocodiles of the deep water in their clamour and noise and compel them to leave the battlefield. Majority of the Aashamese would like to be always in the forefront in the battlefield. But those courageous soldiers who fight bravely and valiantly with the enemy with their sword and arrow are mainly indigenous people of that country. They consist of twenty thousand young men only. Most of the times they prefer to go for battle and raid on the night
of a Tuesday. They considered Tuesday night as very auspicious. Those who get defeated while fighting or always remember this proverb, "life is precious than death" and repeat hastily after throwing down the arms which they had brought for battle.

The Aashamese bury their dead with some of their patrimonial properties keeping the head towards the east and leg towards the west. The noble and high-ranking officers prepare funeral vaults (maidams) for their dead and also put some utensils made of gold and silver, carpet, dress materials and eatable items necessary for a period of several years inside it. They also put wives and servants of the dead person inside the same crypt after having killed them. They fix the head of dead person tightly with a strong wooden poles. One lamp with plenty of oil and torch-bearer is placed alive into the valut (maidams). The job of the torch-bearer is to look after the lamp so that it cannot get extinguished. Later on when ten such crypts were excavated valuable items worth nine thousand rupees were found in them. It was very surprising to discover one golden pendant from the grave of a queen as old as eighty years. Surprisingly the pan leaves (betel) of that pendant were still green. Though the writer did not see the pan leaves himself, he had heard about it from Payande Beg, an appointed Waqeya Newis, and Shah Beg, who officially supervised the excavation process, in the presence of Nawab, who is above all the titles. The Darogha of treasury, Rasmi Big to whom the pendant was handed over to testify the truthfulness of the
statement said that whatever they saw was truth. Meanwhile the truthfulness of the statement said that whatever they saw was truth. Meanwhile the truthfulness and falsehood of this report fell on the head of those who prepared this report.  

The Muslims who were earlier made prisoners of war, married local women according to their choice. Their off springs now have accepted the manners and customs of the Aashamese people. They are Muslims in name only and had nothing to do with Islam. They are more inclined to be associated with the local people than the Muslims who had settled down earlier thereby leaving the land of Islam performs Namaz, observe Roza with full devotion and religious zeal. But they were not allowed to call Aazan and read the Quran aloud.

About the city of Garhgaon

Four doors are constructed with mud and stone around the wall of the capital city of Kahargaan. The distance from each of these doors to the King's palace is three Karoh. Very high, wide and durable roads have been constructed from the gates to the King's palace for public use. The entire city is fortified with cane fields. The width of the cane field was around 2-3 karoh. The capital complex is built without any proper planning. The

1. Asif Mazhar. Translation, Tarikh-i- Aasham, p.60
residential houses are constructed haphazardly giving a very ugly look. Some people even have constructed their houses in the cane field near the road. Everyone has a garden and cultivated land in front of his house. The cultivated lands are between the road and the house. The cultivated lands are thickly inhabited. There is also a Bazaar near the bank of the river where none of the traders other than the pan sellers sit. ¹

The inhabitants of this country do not buy any foodstuff from the shop. They cultivate and store everything in their houses sufficient for one year. They do not like to buy and sell any eatable items too. This capital city, Kahargaon occupies a very large area. It seems that this habitation consists of so many villages. There is a wide road around the king's palace. The bamboo fences and a ditch surround this road. The ditch is deeper than the height of a land is always full of water. The compound of king's palace is spread over one karoh and fourteen jarib of land.

The Soolang of the Aashamese king:

The audience hall of the king's palace locally known, as Soolang, is 120 cubits in length and 30 cubits in breadth. It is supported by 66 wooden posts. Every wooden posts was 4 Zera (around 104 centimetre) in thickness. The posts were polished in such a manner as if it was carved out

¹. Asif Mazhar. Translation, Tarikh-i- Aasham, p.60
with the help of machine. Though the people of Aasham claimed that these posts have been prepared with the help of machine but the reason and logic do not fit in to support it. The other crafts and novelties used by the carpenters in decorating these wooden posts of the king's palace are beyond the description of the writer of the 'Tarikh-i Aasham'. There is no one in this universe that can construct, design or decorate wooden houses like the people of Aasham. This palace is decorated with different varieties of wooden trellis work. Highly polished brass mirrors are fixed outside and inside so beautifully that when the rays of the Sun fall on it the eyes become dazzled from the flash of its beam. It is said that around twelve thousand men worked for one year to complete this palace. At one end of the palace four parallel ring pillars having nine rings have been raised. Whenever Raja wished to stay in that palace the thorn is placed in the middle of the said four pillars. Then a beautiful Shameana made of fine cloth is stretched out through these rings and the Raja sits under it. The drummers beat the drum and the Dand (Daba) player plays the Dand. This Dand is a kind of round and flat drum made of brass. This musical instrument is exactly like another musical instrument called Gharyali. When the Raja mounts on the horseback, Phukans take over as the guards; a drummer beats the drum and dand player plays the Dand. The great poet Mulla Dervish Harvi who has refined the sword of Persian language and literature said that the musical instrument, Taas Ruyin, mentioned in the Shahnama of Firdausi, is a variation of this Dand. But only
God knows the truth. There were other beautifully decorated, big and wide wooden houses too in the compound of the Raja's palace. No one has ever seen or heard about this type of houses. But alas! Until their country was not annexed with the imperial kingdom the non-believers could not have luck to see all these fine piece of works without falling into the stay of the Raja. The Bhukans also lived in stylish and well-built houses near the Raja's palace. Those Bhukans, who have matrimonial relation with the Raja, live in beautiful houses surrounded by fresh and well laid out gardens and ponds full of clean and sweet water. It was really an enhancing and an attractive palace. Due to the heavy humidity, the people of this land do not sit or sleep on the ground; but they prepare Machan (platform of wood) and live on it only.