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Socio-Cultural Trends of Muslims in Assam
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SOCIO- CULTURAL TRENDS OF MUSLIMS IN ASSAM

Due to Assam’s annexation in 1826 by the British the political boundary of Assam went through several changes and by successive measures contiguous hills and plains were tagged to the province. As a result the structure of Assamese society underwent changes and a new social fabric of variegated pattern emerged out of the interplay of new social dynamics. During the British regime (1826-1947) new administrative arrangements were provided and new avenues of employment and occupation were created. The old monarchical officialdom and their offices were no longer there and the British set up, in their place, a new class of officials and establishments, homogeneity in Assamese society was lost and the new Assamese society now consisted of Bengali population, Nepalee husbandsmen, Punjabi soldiers, Afghan traders, Burmese and Bhutia porters etc. Some of whom assimilated with Assamese culture resulting in formation of different categories of Muslims such as Asamiya and Miah Muslims, all of whom had different social habits but most of them adopted cultural pursuits from Assamese society.
CATAGORIES OF MUSLIM:

Muslims comprise the second largest group of people in Assam. Though the Muslims of Assam belongs to the same religious faith, they reflect observable difference from other Muslims, on unevenness in term of caste, clan, culture, language, occupation, education, geographical distribution, political participation and ideology.

The Muslims of Assam are not a single similar community. Preferably they are a group of several identifiable distinctive ones. We may categorize them as: Asamiya Muslims, Miah Muslims, Muslims of Barak Valley & other group of Muslim is North Indian Muslims living in Assam.¹

NORTH INDIAN MUSLIMS LIVING IN ASSAM:

The North Indian Muslim migrated to Assam during the later stage of colonialism and more after independence, mainly from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in search of a livelihood. They are mainly engaged in occupation for which local skill and enthusiasm have been inadequate. Their main occupations are largely traditional, includes Dhunias, Dhubis, Kasais, Hajams, Tailors, Masons and Carpenters. Another occupational group has now become visible among them which are engaged in the business of re trading, vulcanizing and repair automotive
tires and tubes. Their employees are largely drawn from their own kinship network. Their mother tongue is Urdu and their position is absolutely insignificant in Assam's demographic composition. They are numbered only 6258 in 1971 (Census of India 1971). This group of Muslims in Assam has neither assimilated with the Asamiya Muslims nor with the Asamiya Nationality. Their interaction with the rest of Assamese society is mainly confined to their occupational and business activities. However, they are learning gradually to communicate in the Asamiya language.

(i) ASSAMIYA MUSLIMS:

The Assamiya, Muslims are categorized into many groups that is Syed, Shaikh, Mughals, Pathans, Maria, Mahimial etc. Syed who are called the descendents of Prophet Mohammad. The Sheikh who constitute the bulk of population and the Marias, the descendents of captured Muslim soldiers. The Syed claim to occupy the highest social status. Then come the Sheikhs to be followed by the Marias. They all belong to the Sunni sect.

The ordinary Mohammadans of Assam call themselves Goria, an indication of their claim to have come originally from Gour, the ancient capital of Bengal. They are also known as Thalua Musalman which
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means local Muslims & Goria. Their mother tongue is Asamiya. This community has emerged gradually over a long period of time and included

i. Decendents of Pathan/Mughal soldiers who were left behind as prisoners of war and those who decided to stay back in Assam after the wars were over.

ii. Medieval technicians and artisans brought by the Ahom king from various places from northern India.

iii. Preachers of Islam.

iv. Local conversion during the medieval Ahom period.\(^5\)

Asamiya Muslims may be presumed to be the first batch of Muslims migrated to Assam. It had occurred even before the arrival of the Ahom who ruled Assam from as long as six hundred years. Due to this historical background they had become an inseparable component of medieval society and polity.

Assam was invaded several times by the Mughal emperors with a view to annex Assam but they failed because of Ahom king, who succeeded in defending the Mughal invasion. The musalmans who were war prisoners were in later period rehabilitated in the different part of the Brahmaputra Valley. They did not bring their wives with them and
had chosen to marry here. Their descendants act exactly in the manner of the Assamese, and have nothing of Islam except their name, they inclined towards the Assamese culture first and then towards to the association with Muslims.

The emergence of the Muslim for the first time in the early part of the 13 century when a Muslim General of Qutubuddin, Mohammad-Bin-Bakhtiyar Khilji led an army to this region. After that other invaders came to Assam but they did not succeed. It may perhaps be assumed that a few Muslim soldiers preferred to live in Assam instead of going back with their defeated leader. In the middle of 16 century Turbak attacked Assam with a Muslim Army (1532), but he was killed in the battle field and some soldiers were captured and were taken as prisoners by the Ahom King. Later they settled in different parts of Assam. They were working on brass metal. “Tradition says that they were at first ordered to cut grass for the king’s elephants, but they were found unfit for this work. Then they were employed as cultivators, but their ignorance of agriculture was so great that they carried mud to the paddy seedling instead of ploughing land and planting the seedling in it. They were then left to their own devices and took to working in brass metal, an occupation of their predecessors, who were known as Marias.”

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“The ancient Mohammadan capital of Bengal Maria may be a corruption of this word. (Maria’s frequently pronounced g as m) or the term may have reference to the way in which they fashion Thei wearers by beating; Mariba means ‘to beat’ in assamese.\(^9\)

They contributed much in making utensils of brass. They had their own language but gradually they assimilated with Assamese. They first settled in Kaliabar of Nowgaon district. According to a recent report there were 55 villages of Maria but they were economically very poor in comparison to other community in Assam. The Government of Assam categorised them as other backward community in Assam.\(^1^0\)

A Muslim saint, Hazrat Shah Milan who popularly known as Azan Fakir came to Assam from Baghdad approximately 1635 A.D. He was a Syed. He elevated Islam in Assam. Many local people were converted to Islam because of his influence.\(^1^1\) He acquired remarkable status in Assamese society not so much through his preaching of Islam as from his identification with the culture of the land. Moreover, he created in Assam a suitable atmosphere by promoting the unity between the two religious groups that is the Hindu and the Muslim. The Zikirs formulated by him in Assamese language and sung in the tune of Hindu religious hymns attracted a large number of followers representing
secular groups and communities. Today *Zikirs* are looked like a unifying force in the Assamese society. All the more the credit goes to Azan Fakir for having taken initiative to preach Islam in Assam. In fact, he had procured a designation by exhorting the Muslim of Assam to render Azan before the prayers even though the Ahom king Prataph Sinha initially instructed to stop this practice. *Zikirs* composed by Azan Fakir including Islamic Tenants and norms and some in the tune of *Namm-kirtans* of the prevalent *Mahapurusia* religious sect. The Ahom king also brought skilled weavers and sculptures among the Muslim community who were war prisoner during various reign. There was no discrimination suffered by Muslim during the Ahom reign.12

At various socio cultural levels the Assamese Hindus and Muslims interact freely. Many socio-cultural elements at folk level, of the Assamese Hindus and Muslims are very similar.13 The male folk use the dress during *Ojapali* dance, to have been borrowed from Islamic culture. A section of people believe that *Ojapali* singers were at one time Muslim by religion. The influence of Mughal dress appeared in the dance of *Sutradari*. There is similarity in between the tone of Shankardeva’s religious hymn and Azan Fakir’s *Zikirs* which is indeed striking. The influence of Muslims is clearly visible in Assamese song and music and singing of *Qawali, Ghazal* and *Jari* became familiar in
Assam through the Muslims. Besides the use of certain type of clothes were also due popularity earned by tailors imported from out side the state during the Ahom regime. The shrine in Hazo is an indication of brotherly relations between the Hindus as well as the Muslims. Another Muslim saint Boga Shah from Uttar Pradesh had secured the prominent place in Assamese society. The social and matrimonial female dress is known as “Mekhla Chaddar” has been a uniting link between the two religious groups.14

The Asamiya Muslims are linguistically, culturally, socially very close to the Asamiya Hindus. Their dress pattern, food habits day to day behavior, housing and settlement patterns, interior arrangement in the household are indistinguishable from the Asamiya Hindus. They are assimilated and relatively well accepted and largely well treated in the Asamiya society or nationality.

DRESS:

The traditional dress of men consists of Dhoti, Lungi, Payjama, Kamiz while caps are common among older people and one must use it to perform the religious prayer (Namaz). Modern attire consists of trousers, shirts and coats. Red Shirts are not allowed to the man while the women can use the red clothes. Makhla (lower garments), Chaddar
(upper garments) are worn by women folk including blouse. The silk 
*Makhla Chaddar* is gradually preferred in the time of marriage. In the 
Assam valley these clothes are generally home made. A curious article 
of dress is a large hat ‘Jhapi’ which serves as a protection against the 
sun and rain and is made of leaves and split bamboo and decorated with 
colored cloth. These hats are circular in shape. The dress of the middle 
classes does not differ materially from that of the ordinary villager. In 
the Assam valley beautiful silk and cotton clothes are woven by the 
wives and daughters of the well to do families. Boots and shoes are the 
exceptions and the richer people also wear wooden clogs and wooden 
sandals are also used in village.

**HOUSING:**

The house of the ordinary villagers consists of three or four small 
dwellings and ill-ventilated rooms, built round three sides of a court-
yard. The walls are usually made of reeds plasters over with mud, the 
roof of thatch supported on bamboos, the floor of muds. The villagers 
some times sleeps on a bamboo *Machan* or platform and sometimes on a 
mat on the floor, but the middle classes have bed, chair, table etc in their 
houses. Mohammedan mosques are usually small brick structures and
consist of an open quadrangle with covered arcade at the west end but in
some the remoter part of the provinces is held in a thatched hut.\textsuperscript{16}

**FOOD HABITS:**

They were also non vegetarian. Rice, spilit, peas vegetable and
fish is their staple food. They used to take three meals in a day. Sak and
vegetable consumed by all consisted of leaves and standard streams.
They took meat, curd, oil for cooking and instead of they formally used
Potash procured by burning plantain leaves. Chewing of pan was
common to rich and poor alike.\textsuperscript{17}

**MARRIAGE SYSTEM:**

Marriage is a civil contract among them. Marriage takes place in
the brides house. The Vakil (lawyer) in the presence of witness conveys
the view of the bride to the bride groom regarding the mohorana and the
groom consents. The Mullah/Imam (head of the mosque) perform the
Nikha and ask Dua (blessing) for the couple. The marriages rules are
based on Quranic sanctions. Polyandry is not permitted. Monogamy is
the usual practice while polygamy is socially acceptable. There is no
Pardha or Burka system covering the face is observed by married
Assamses Muslim women. They covered their head with *Chaddar*
(upper garment) known as ‘*Urni*’. There is no marring symbol.\textsuperscript{18} The
Syeds prefer to marry in Syed’s families. *Ali, Hussain, Ahmed, Khan, Malik* are used as the surname of the Assamese Muslims. Ahom title such as *Baruah, Hazarika* and *Saikia* are also used by them. They consider themselves as the superior to the Muslims.

**FAMILY SYSTEM:**

The families of Muslim are patriarchal. Divorce is permitted. Remarriage is permissible. Early marriage is not practiced in between Assamese Muslim and other Muslims, but now it is practiced between the Assamese Muslims and other Muslim like Mymensinghia or North Indian Muslims or among Muslims who live in Barak valley. The head of family is father and after death his eldest son occupies his position. The sons inherit the equal share of the property. The daughters are not entitled to any share in father’s property. At the time of festival or any other occasion, the entire family joins to make it a success and villagers are invited at social function such as marriage or death. The women do not take any active part in political or religious or ritual activities. They are not allowed to pray in mosques. But now the spread of education has enabled them to come in politics and also in government offices.
BIRTH CEREMONY:

After the birth of a child on the day of 7th or 14th or 21st shaving of hair and paring of nails of the body are done and these are buried. Money or Silver is given to the poor on this occasion. Name ceremony Aqīqa is an important ritual which is performed on any day after birth of a child. The male child has to undergo Khutna or Musalman (Circumcision) before he is ten years of age.

BURIAL SYSTEM:

They bury their dead. After the Dafan (burial) they performed Tiloni (social custom which performed by offering varieties fruits) on third day like their Hindu neighbors, Dua on tenth day and Sradha on fourteenth day (Social custom which performed by offering food). The household does not prepare food in kitchen for three day till the Tiloni is over. The household offers Payash (Rice cooked with Milk) to the villagers on the day of Tiloni. On the 14th day a feast is arranged by the household in which all the relatives and friends of the deceased take part.

OCCUPATION:

Land is main economic resource of the community. They depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Some of them also depend on
sharecropping. There are some wage earners among them. Weaving is confined to the women of the indigenous Muslim families. The transaction is made in turn of cash.

Some elderly men are chosen as the leaders of the community who is called *Mena* (informal village leaders). The Assamese communities also have a Gaon managing community which deals with issues relating to the Muslims of villages. The informal village leaders are the members of this Committee. The Mosque of the village is managed by this Committee. The Gaon Managing Committee organizes a number of community development activities, such as repairing of the village paths etc. The Committee imposes a cash fine on any person who is unable to take part in such community development activities. The Committee’s funds are spent on the management of mosque. The Committee also settles internal politics and household disputes.\(^{20}\)

Apart from hospital facilities, they rely on indigenous medicines and amulets for their ailment. They depend on streams, rivers, dug wells, ring wells and tube wells for the supply of clean drinking water. In urban areas they depend on the facility provided by the Government for drinking water. Electricity is used by most people in urban areas and some in rural areas. All the rural and urban villages of Assamese
Muslims are connected by *Pucca* (Gravelled) and *Kachha* (Ungravelled) roads. They receive the benefits of the various schemes and development programmes instituted by the government in the post-independence period and gradually their socio-economic statuses are changed.\(^{21}\)

Without interference they maintained their own religious identity with Assamese society. They play a vital role in the field of Assamese language culture and society.

**MARIA:**

The word ‘*Maria*’ has been derived from as Assamese word ‘*Mar*’ or ‘*Mariva*’ means to beat on ‘to strike with a stick’.\(^{22}\) These section of people make the brass utensils.\(^{23}\) They have their own language but gradually they assimilated with Assamese. Kaliabar of Nowgaon District was their first place of settlement. According to a report there are 55 villages of Maria Muslims in Assam. But economically they are poor in comparison to other communities in Assam. Therefore, the Government of Assam has categorized them as other backward community in Assam.\(^{24}\) They are also found in Kamrup, Darrang, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh and Sibsagar District of Assam. They are non-vegetarian. Rice is their stable food. They take all
kind of vegetables and fruits which are locally available. Social division is not found in this community.

MARRIAGE SYSTEM:

Their marriageable age is between 28 to 30 years for males and between 18 to 25 years in case of female. Monogamy is the common form of marriage but polygamy is also permissible. During the Nikah both parties arrive at an agreement about the fixation of money. At the time of divorce it is to be paid to the bride. Remarriage is permissible. In case of male he can marry at any time either through negotiation or mutual selection, but, in case of female, she has to wait up to Iddat (three menstruation periods). After Iddat, she can marry through negotiation or through her choice. Joint family and nuclear family both systems are prevalent. Property is equally divided among the sons. If a married daughter demands the parent’s property then she gets 20% of the remaining property. Father is the head of the family and after his death; his eldest son becomes the head of the family. Women take part in manufacturing of light brass materials. They also bring firewood from nearby forest.
BIRTH CEREMONY:

Before the birth of a child, there is pre-delivery ceremony observed by them which is called Hat Khowa either in sixth or seventh month of pregnancy. It is performed for the purpose of smooth delivery and good health of a baby. After the birth of a baby, family members observe pollution period (ahuj for five days). The fifth day ceremony which called Chumana is performed after the purification. Within two years, name ceremony (Akika) is performed. When a male child is born, circumcision is done within one or three years. Hajjam (Barber) is deployed for the purpose. During this ritual, villagers and relatives are invited and they present gift to the child.26

BURIAL SYSTEM:

Like other Muslims, Maria also buries the dead. After the burial of their dead body they do not cook food in their home, perform four days mourning period which is called Hakpalan (restricted periods). After four days Moulavi reads the Holy Quran. This ceremony known as Charidinia (fourth day work) where tea and sweets are served. From the fifth day they cook non-vegetarian food at home. After ten days Dahdiniya and forty days Challisa are performed and in both the occasions Mulla (Priest) reads the Holy Quran and invitees are offered
food. Their sacred holy places are mosque, Poa Mecca of Kamrup district and Mecca of Arab. There major festivals are *Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-uz-zuha, Moharram, Ramazan, Shab-e-Barat.*

**FESTIVALS:**

The major festivals of the Assamese Muslims are *Eid-ul-Fitar, Eid-uz-Zoha, Fatehaj Duaj Daham, Shabe Kadar, Shabe Barat, Mayraj.*

*Bhihu* the spring festival of dance in Assam which is not limited to a particular community or religion. It is celebrated both by Hindus and Muslims specially Goria Muslims. There are three types of Bhihu festivals, (i) 'Bahag Bhihu' or 'Rongali Bhihu' in the month of April-May when crops are started, (ii) 'Magh Bhihu' or 'Bhogali Bhihu' in the month of January when crops are harvest and (iii) 'Kati Bhihu' or 'Kangali Bhihu' at the time of October when crops are at the growing stage.

*Bahag Bhihu* is observed in the spring season. In this season nature awakes with new scenery. Varied flower blooms, new leaf occurs in plants. It is the time of beauty and natural excitement. The farmers use to dance and sing in the field of crops. The Bhihu songs are nothing but the out come of feelings with nature, description of natural beauty and worship of the nature.
During the period of *Magh Bihu* crops, especially the paddy crops are harvested. They produce various tasty *Peetha, Sandesh, Cheera-Laddu* etc. new yield of rice. The cowboys take an active part in this festival. They built huts in the paddy field and arrange picnics. This festival is also observed all throughout Assam.

During the *Kati Bihu* the farmers enlight *Chaki* (light) in the paddy field. They also enlights ‘*Akash Banti*’ (sky light) to welcome Lakshmi (the Goddess of wealth) to the paddy field. This festival is only observed by the Hindus.30

Thus all the rituals of Bihu are related with nature. They express their respect to the nature and also show their responsibility to the nature to protect it.

(ii) MIAH MUSLIM:

The other category of Muslims in Assam is known as Miah Muslims. There are 28 sub-communities of the Miah community of Assam who have harmonious association with 41 other communities. The Miah Sub-communities are Ujeni, Ranpuria, Jamalpuria, Tangaila, Maimonsingia, Pubnia, Bairbondi, Sunder, Jolha, Dhakaia, Nahilae, Nalae, Dadia, Rafadani, Uttarae, Bagnuam, Alapsiya, Baida, Teli,
Some scholars call these Miah Muslims as ‘Immigrant Muslims’ relatively, the entrance of these Muslims are new to the Asamiya nationality along with the Black Tribals (tea planters) of Assam’s tea plantation. The demographic strength of them is about 18% of the total population of Assam. At present, they are economically, culturally far behind from other communities including Asamiya Muslims and the Muslims of Barak Valley. They have tried to merge with the larger Asamiya nationality and have also contributed decisively in giving the Asamiya language an absolute and dominant majority status in Assam. They are to be recognized as different from the Bengali Muslims of Barak Valley. They settled in the Brahmaputra Valley like the Asamiya Muslims. Their migration to Assam was inseparately linked with the process of social transformation in Assam under the British Colonialism.

The Miah Muslims are adorned with their own culture. They have chosen diverse field of work and profession only to collect food, cloth and shelter in addition to motto of assimilation with other communities and religions for social harmony.
The lion’s share of the total Muslim population of Assam are Mymensinghia. They are also called Charua, Pamrua or Mymensinghia. A Writer, Saildhar Rajkhoai, a serviceman under British Government transferred to the Barpeta District in 1992, he wrote in his autobiography about the experience of the char people. According to him, Mymensinghia first came in Barpeta and settled in the Char areas of Brahmaputra. That is why they are called Charua. During that time a few Barpeta businessmen sold their land to them and some Businessmen sold khas land to them by fraud. Besides landlords granted their own land to this people on the pretext of earning revenue.33

OCCUPATIONS:

They are mostly agriculturist by profession. 76.2% of Char people are agriculturist while 17.6% of them are daily wage labourers (mainly on agriculture) and others are small traders (4.3%) service holders (1.7%) and only 0.2% of them have small cottage industries.34

The people who hailed from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) in the 1st half of the 20th Century, were originally Bengali speaking people. In Assam they are recognized as Pamrua Bengali. These people identified themselves as the religious minority group of Assam in Census 1931. But gradually they accepted Assamese language as their
mother tongue for the purpose of economic security and permanent settlement. As a result, the Assamese-speaking people was raised to 62% in accordance with census 1951.\textsuperscript{35}

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the people of char areas. So, their economy is based on agriculture. With the advent of the immigrants, all this was changed. They were settled and cleared the jungles for jute cultivation, but the indigenous people had no knowledge about the jute cultivation.\textsuperscript{36} These people started green revolution in Assam during the period of 1921-1931 when they cultivated about 5,42,000 areas of wastelands in the State and filled them with green crops.\textsuperscript{37}

The Census Commissioner C. S. Mullan in the Census Report 1931 told that "the people have brought in their wake health, industry and general prosperity to the whole district (Nagaon)\ldots\ldots. They have improved the health of the countryside by clearing the jungles and converting wilderness into prosperous villages. Their industry is agriculturists have become proverbial\ldots\ldots. Their love and care of cattle is also an object of lesson to others. Government revenue has increased."\textsuperscript{38}
Besides this, they also reared cows, buffalos, goats, sheep, ducks, hens, etc. The products of them along with milk, curds, eggs, ducks, chickens, goat, sheep etc. were sold in the neighbouring markets. These people cultivate various kind of crops throughout the year i.e. pulse, mustard seeds, jute, sugarcane, potato, ginger, onion, garlic, gourd pumpkin, cucumber, brinjals, tomato etc. For their efficiency Sailandhar Rajkhowa, the then Deputy Collector, Barpeta admired them voluminously.一般 women were not allowed to the paddy field but they kept themselves busy in agricultural works as well as in household works.

The standard of living of these people was very low. Most of them lived in ordinary thatched houses. 79.1% of the people live in small huts which are made of locally available materials like bamboo thatch hand hola (solid part inside fibre of jute plants), only 1.2% of them lived in pucca concrete houses and 19.7 % of them lived in Assam type non-concrete kuccha houses.

MARRIAGE SYSTEM:

Three systems of marriage are practiced in all the Miah communities. These are the traditional Munchi system, in which the Munchi of society performed the Nikah (Marriage) orally with Khutbas
as per Islamic laws in presence of person of society and next the Kabin system in which the registered Qazi, according to Islamic law registered the name of the bridegroom and marriage is performed according to Munchi System and final, the court marriage, in this category, marriage is registered purely on the basis of Islamic law. But in Miah Society the former two system are generally practiced.\(^4\)

Before the marriage, there are other functions followed both by the Bride and the Groom i.e. turmericing, oiling, mahendisation. Though, it is not Islamic rituals but almost all of them performed these functions before marriage. The bride is dressed with Saree, Blouse, Petticoat, Orna or Churni on the marriage day. The groom is dressed with Trousers, Punjabi or Sherwani and Hat or Tupe or Pagri. The ornamentation is another important event in the marriage ceremony. The groom gives to bride ornaments including Nalak, Necklace, Payal on foot, Bangles, ring on ears, Tikli on head, ring on finger etc. Besides, in poor family, the groom must give the nalak weighing one ratti of gold to the bride. Polygamy is practiced in their society, in this system a man can have more than one wife, but majority of people are satisfied with one marriage.\(^5\)
DRESS:

The traditional dress of male are *Lungi* (a loose cloth worn at the waist), *Punjabi* (a loose shirt) and a *Tupi* (a Cap). These combinations are generally worn by the cultivators, *Munchis* and *Moulanas* (a person having vast knowledge in religion). Other than these, Trousers and *Gamcha* (a kind of towel) are also used by a few of this community. They also wear long pant and shirt and use cap at the time of Namaz (Prayer). Women generally prefer Saree with Blouse and Petticoat and girls use to wear Salwar Kamiz with orna (Apron), frock. Some Women also use Borkha (an Apron that covers whole body). Nowadays, some of the Miah girls and women have learned to wear Mekhala Chadder. 

HOUSING:

Majority of the Miah live in the char areas, therefore, they use mainly the *Munja* or *Kashia* or *Kaisa* (Saccarum Munja) or *Ulu Kher* (Saccarum Sp), bamboo and jute fiber for the construction of their house. For roofing and walling they used the Munja and Ulu is used only for roofing. Jute stem or Munja is mainly used for wall construction. The boundary of the courtyard is made by jute stem, Munja, Bamboo, or dry leave of betel nut plant. A small section of them
use tin, brick, cements, iron, rod and pin and wood for the construction of their house.\textsuperscript{45}

**FOOD HABIT:**

They are non-vegetarian, they eat beef, mutton, chicken and fishes with rice. They are habituated to feed dry fish, milk, curd, ghee and various sweets such as *Tel Pitha* (Oil Cake) *Bhapa Pitha* (Steamed Cake) *Dudh Pitha* prepared by mixing rice powder, salt and water. *Khir* which is prepared by milk and rice etc.\textsuperscript{46}

**REFLECTION OF COMPOSITE CULTURE:**

Assam is inhabited by various caste and tribes and irrespective of caste, creed, colour, religion a composite culture enriched by the Shankar- Madhav- Azan trio that helped founding composite society in the soil of Assam. Folklore is one of the important cultural aspect of them including *Biageet* (marriage song) which is sung by both bride and bridegroom party when the bride or bridegroom is taken to bathing with turmeric. *Kobigaan* (lyrical song), it is related to religious mythology and relevant stories. *Zikir* or *Jari Gaan*, this song is related to spiritualism. In the festival of Muharram, *Jari Gaan* or lamentation song is sung in memory of the tragedy of war of Karbala during the time of *Tazia* procession. *Marfaty – Murshidi Geet* which is from the view
point of religion, human knowledge is of four stages _Shariat_ (Restriction), _Tarikat_ (Means), _Hakikat_ (Reality) and _Marefat_ (Spiritual identity). It is the way of religious ordeal, path of salvation by following teaching of _Pir_ (Religious/Spiritual leader). Then _Baul Song_ which gives entertainment to both hearts and mind of them. The word ' _Baul_ ' which derived from Persian language means exploration, the exploration is spiritual one. _Bhatiali and Palligeet_, this kind of song is very popular among the people of North Bengal and East Bengal of undivided India. The descendants of char area Muslims lived in East Bengal and their main communication was water ways for their business and trades. So this kind of song tells the tales of common men’s life with their love and desperation, hopes and aspirations, weal and woe, spiritualization and material phenomenon of day to day varieties of incidents. _Bhekhulibia Geet_ (Frog Marriage song) this song is sung when too much draught causes harm to Agriculture by women and children moving around a banana tree buried vertically in a dry pond and swamp for rain. Among the festivals Eid is the important religious festival of Miah culture. Eid means joy. They celebrate two Eids in a year namely Eid-ul Fitr & Eid-uz- zuha. Eid-ul Fitr which is celebrated after the completion of fasting of the holy month Ramzan. In this festival, the distribution of _Fitrana_ (Donation) to the poor people & Eid-uz-zuha they gave _Kurbani_ of
animal like cow or buffalo or goat in the name of almighty Allah. The fleshes are also distributed among the poor person in the society. Besides these, the neighbours are invited for dinner or lunch which indicated universal brotherhood among the people. Maharram, it is holy festival. On the day of Muharram they keep Roza (fasting) in memory of Prophet Hazrat Mohammad's (Saw.) grand son martyr at war of Karbala with Yazid & read holy Quran and Hadith. The other festivals Fateha-e-Dowaz-Daham, Shabe Kadar, Shabe Barat. In Fateha-e-Dowaz-Daham a seminar is held on the philosophy and activities of Hazrat Mohammad (Saw.) in this function Quran recitation and Ghazal are also performed by competents.

(iii) MUSLIMS OF BARAK VALLEY:

As Barak Valley is a natural extension of Gangetic Bengal, more so of Surma Valley or Sylhet part of Bengal, so any study of social and polity formation or of linguistic or demography, folklore or of literature or cultural homogeneity of Barak Valley would remain incomplete without Sylhet because Sylhet and Cachar in their totality form a unique and single unit.

In the pre British period, numerous colonies of Bengalies came in Barak Valley from Sylhet and they had settled in northern side of the
river Barak shortly after passing the Sylhet frontier. At that time Muslims also came into Cachar. At first they cleared the land for staying purpose and paying rent to Cachari Raja.  

Muslims formed more than the half of the population of the Surma Valley and one ninth of Assam. Sylhet was conquered by Afghans in the 14 century and then by the Mughals. Gradually more people followed the religion of their own ruler.

There were seven endogamous groups i.e. Syed, Chowdhary, Talukdar, Kiran, Maimal & Hajam. Syed were expert in theology. Both Chowdhaury and Talukdar were considered as zamindar class. They occupied most of the arable land. The Kirans are engaged in agriculture, the Maimals are fishermen, and the Hajam are barbers. The Badyars are engaged in the castration of animals. Both Chowdhaury & Talukdar identified themselves as the higher class in the society. Allen mentioned that the case list made at the office level had no binding force upon anyone.

The government followed the neutral policy regarding the social and religious concern of the people and allowed matter to be settled and adjusted themselves by natural course of events. This trend was visible among the Muslims in Surma Valley where the proverb ran 'Last year I
was a Jolah, this year I am a Shiekh, next year if prices rise I will be a Sayed'. For the assumption of the title Sheikh in 1921, the number of Mahimals had fallen to thirty percent of last census total while those of Jolahs were stood at only 7000 in 1911. At this, many of the Muslim people gave up their title 'Sheikh' as protest, when enquired about their caste or race, the Superintendent of Census writes, "many answered either none or Musalman and we have no alternative but to tabulate them as unspecified".

In Surma Vally, there prevailed caste system. The existence of a large number of Hindu Zamindars as arbiters of social customs prevented the relaxation of traditional caste rules and this rule also prevailed in Muslim society. A Muslim high official did not give or offer a chair to his Dhubi counterpart, if this lower caste people arise to his place; he would be offered a small wooden stool. In the Surma Valley, Muslims had kept full faith on the principle of their own religion and were not so much affected by Hindu customs and traditions. Yet during the small pox epidemics they were said to have performed the worship of Sitala Devi (Snake Goddess) subscribing funds for the purpose.
EMERGENCE OF BHAKTI AND SUFI CULT:

Bhakti cult and Sufism grew and spread in India in general and Bengal in particular almost simultaneously. Love and catholicity were special characteristics of both the system. Bhakti cult was of the indigenous Hindu origin where as Sufism came from outside. But socio-economic condition of India at the time at one side and close similarity between the two systems on the other drew people of India towards this or that system irrespective of caste and creed. Sufism was base on the original Islamic simplicity, directness, equality and brotherhood and it enriched them with love and tolerance which are its special characters, patronage of the newly established Muslim Rule also helped to attract the lower class people of Bengal more towards Islam than to Bhakti cult. Muslims were influenced by Bhakti cult. Thus we find that both these humanistic system influenced both Hindus and Muslims simultaneously. These also had an effect on the life of the people of Barak Valley. In two ways: Bhakti Cult or Vaishnavism mingled with Sufism and other prevailing system and gave birth to the religion of the Bauls and Sufism blended with Vaishnavism and other system constituted to the upliftment of this new religion at one hand and on the other hand it gave birth to a new form of Islam which Dr. Enamul Haque calls the Folk Islam.58
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The main elements of the Baul Cult are Sahajia Vaishnavism and Sufism. Guru Cult, acceptance of the human body as the essence of the universe, guest after the Sahaj or Easy absolute in the easy way which are acquired from the Vaishnavism and Buddhism. But these Sahajia concepts have undergone a change under the influence of Sufism. The Vaishnavism raised the human love to the stage of divine love. This aspect of love is taken from Sufism. They long from their own one who is no where else but in their own body. This Cult stands as an admixture of Upanishad, Shaj and Sufism.  

According to Dr Enamul Haque the new form of Islam or Folk Islam is the belief and practice of a big section of Muslims of Bengal who were converted by the Sufi saints from the fold of the Tantrik Buddhists and downtrodden Hindus, but could not be educated properly according to Islamic principles. They were influenced by Bengali culture. They regard the Sufi saints or peers as the manifestation of God, ascribe to them many divine powers and build over their graves where they light candles and make offerings. Traditions grew in course of time that Hindu made offerings in the shrines of Muslim saints whether real or imaginary and Muslim remembered Hindu deities on different occasions. Thus Ban Durga of the Hindu's become Ban Bibi Fatema, Dakshin Ray. The deity of tigers becomes Ghazipeer and Kalu Shah.
Matsyendranath became the peer Masandali and Satyanarayan got his counterparts in Satyapeer whom the Hindus also revere equally.60

These features of the socio-religious condition of the Hindus and Muslims of greater Bengal were fully present in Barak Valley also. Shrines of Shah Jalal, his disciples and other saints are still revered by both the communities. Push Sankranti is also followed both by Hindu and Muslims in some places and though the worship of ‘Aai’ does not prevail among them, yet tradition of begging rice from door to door by the night chanting ‘Balo re aai Mangal’ etc is common among Muslims and Hindus. The term Lakshmi is commonly used by both communities. Carrying of coarse rice as the Symbol of Lakshmi by the Muslim bride to her father in-law’s house after marriage is still prevailing in some parts of Barak Valley. Muslims observed some Hindu customs connected with funeral like Pitri Dasha and Matri Dasha which have no place in Islam.61 We can say both culture i.e. Hindu and Muslim are inter linked with each other.

FOLK CULTURE:

Folk literature, especially Folk songs are very popular in Barak Valley. Barak Valley’s rich store of Folks songs composed by both Hindus and Muslim composer include Baul, Murshida, Marifati and
Vaishnavite love songs besides Dhamail, Bhatiali, Jhumur, Marriage songs and Sari etc. Hindu-Muslim philosophers are present in almost all kinds of songs. Out of numerous composers the widely known names are Shitalong Shah, Augum Shah, Durbin Shah, Ibrahim Tashna, Hasan Raja, Ali, Raimohan Dina Bhananda, Radharaman Dutta, Afzal Mohammad etc. These and other folk composers and singers have contributed a lot in the mixed culture of Barak Valley created by the interplay of Bhakti and Sufi Movement in this area. In these songs we find the presence of Radha-Krishna and Allah Rasul side by side as we find the Dargah and Kalibari co-existing peacefully at different places of Barak valley extending from old Cachar to the borders of Mymensing.

FOOD HABITS:

They are non-vegetarian they eat all types of meat including beef and Buffalo meat. Rice is their staple food. Vegetable like split peas and beans are eaten. Mustard oil is their medium of cooking. Various root and tubers like potato, garlic, onion are taken. Vegetables like ground nut, pumpkin, brinjal, cabbage, cauliflower, ladies finger are taken. Among fruits mango, banana, jackfruit, orange, pear and pineapple are eaten. A cultivator in both the valleys usually takes meal in three times
a day. The well to do family in both the valley consumes more or less the same as the cultivators through differed in quality.

Matikalai and Musur was the food of peasant arahur and but was taken only to rich and middle classes. Rarely Ghee was used, but curd is taken in large quantities. Sweet meals are prepared not only with milk but also with powder grain along with Gur or sugar. Tea is the common drink in the morning.\(^{65}\) Pan or Betel-leaf, Supari or Betel nut and tobacco form a large number of the monthly expenditure of every family.\(^{66}\)

**DRESS:**

Musalmans used Jack boots and Red flannel shirts with courier bag slang from their shoulders. A cultivator following his plough dressed in waist cloth and tweed shooting jacket. Poor people were tied two wide Mashroom shaped leaf umbrellas on their head at the time of rain. In Barak Valley, women basically wear long cloth (Sari) covering the whole body. The Musalman peasant used a closely fitting cotton skull-cap.\(^{67}\)

In Barak Valley, Burkha system (an apron that covers the whole body) prevailed in some sections of Muslim people. Other than these, girls used to wear Shalwar-Kamiz with Orna (apron), frock. The male
also wear Shirt, Pant, Punjabi etc. All section of people in urban and rural areas of the state wear ornaments made of gold and silver pewter, brass, black metal, glass etc. According to their economic and social status. Golden ornament on the foot is not worn by them. The gold ornament such as Hem-Har for neck, Kundal for ears and Nupur for feet were used among the Muslim women of Assam.

OCCUPATION:

In Cachar there was less cultivable land awaiting settlement. The local authorities had to throw open the whole of Daleshwari river and parts of Barak river, Sonai, an Inner Line reserves for the pressure on the soil following the increase in population. Hence the people had to compete for land and they brought Bills and Chars under cultivation. The opening of the Assam Bengal railway and development of steamer communication had done much to expand trade and as a result, there was a considerable increase in the size and importance of the Bazars and Huts. The result of this had been seen as the Deputy Commissioner wrote in 1912, “very few persons are met with now a days with naked body , the ready made coats , shirts which are turned out by the repeatedly increasing tailors and shops in the town and other important centers, have secured customers in every part of the district. Shoes and
Boats have also been introduced to a large extent and the imported umbrellas have nearly replaced old Sun shades made of bamboos and leaves…it was found that only ten percent of the total population and only ten is heavily indebted. The Cachar Mirasdar who is generally a well fed and well dressed person is materially improving both in property and civilization.  

In both the valleys the material condition of middle class was not satisfactory. The rising prices of food grains and also the wages of labour had impact on the middle class with fixed income. On the other hand they had no cultivable land of their own. So the middle class in both the valleys gradually diverted their attention to commercial enterprises for which they had formerly little or no interest whatever.  

The land revenue policy introduced by the British in Cachar brought gradual changes in the socio-economic structure of the valley. As soon as the colonial rulers made an analysis and introduced some measures in the arena of land revenue in the Barak valley through several experiments then their eyes turned towards the extraction of new source revenue. The resultant development was the innovation of tea plantation which was succeeded by the emergence of other revenue resources like Ferry, Fishery, Salt brine, Forest etc.
The professional fisherman in Cachar was a section of musalman people called Mahimals.\textsuperscript{73}

\textbf{HOUSING:}

A middle class family or well to do families built a house either a semi-brick or a substantial mat. The house is well decorated with a mat, a thick strip cotton carpet \textit{Satranji}, a wooden stread bedding, some tin or wooden boxes, brass and bell metal cooking and eating utensils basket etc. the poor people or cultivator built huts by themselves.\textsuperscript{74} The majority of improved houses are of the Assam type which is built with cement plastered walls with CIS roofing or pucca walls of burned bricks with CIS roffing.\textsuperscript{75} When they first entered the new house, the Muslim arrange a \textit{Milad Sharif} (Religious party) with a wish to averting any impending evil.\textsuperscript{76}

\textbf{MARRIAGE SYSTEM:}

Muslims marriage is on the basis of contract so the Muslims of Barak valley performed marriage on Quranic law. There are several custom prevailed before the marriage. They built bamboo gates with an arched top which is decorated with a piece of red cloth.\textsuperscript{77} The custom of \textit{mahendhi} ceremony singing a wedding song prevail there but \textit{uptan} ceremony (termarisation) are not prevalent in Barak Valley. At the time
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of marriage the bride is promised a fixed amount of money or Mahar. The bride groom gives a few pieces of jewellery and clothes to bride at the time of marriage. Polygamy is permissible but the instance of polygamy marriage is not frequently seen in Barak valley. Divorce is also permissible among them. 78

FAMILY SYSTEM:

It was male dominated society. The elder males receive more respect from younger people. Son inherits the property equally after the death of father and daughter occupies property equal to half of the portion of one brother. The guardianship of family transfers to the son.

BIRTH CEREMONY:

After the birth of a child naming ceremony is performed. On this particular day the Mullah/Priest selects a name for the baby from scriptures. In case of boys before attaining maturity circumcision must be performed. 79

BURIAL SYSTEM:

The dead body is buried after washing, wrapping with new white cloth Kafan. On the fourth day a prayer called Charam and on the 40th day Chalisa another prayer are performed. 80 Their major, festivals are Eid-ul Fitr & Eid-uz-zuha, Fateha-e-Dowaz-Daham, ShabeKadar, Shabe

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Barat and Muharram. The social functions and ceremonies have changed their observances considerably and some new social ceremonies enter into the society. Like the Christian, the Muslim in upper classes also follow the Birth day, Marriage anniversaries, Farewell to parting person.

GAMES:

Despite all these there are some sports activities prevalent in Assam including Barak valley & Brahmaputra valley. There were many traditional games to be practiced in the society. Boat race is popular among the people of Char areas. Dewani (leader) system is strictly followed. The boat is made with the Sal wood and architect with peacock called Mayur Pankhi Boat. Minimum 35 pairs of paddlers known as “baisar and three rudder men (hail men)” are required on a 65 head boats. On each boat remain one or two encourager’s persons. Rasitana or tag of war is the popular game among the cowboys, school children & cultivators. Mugi Judda (cock fight) in this game not cocks but the players have to fight with their elbow of one hand standing on a foot. Putul Khela is the game with dolls by the girls. Pulati khel played by children in this game the players stands on a line keeping their hands on back side. A mover player with a small ball touch the hand of a
player and sings the stranger "aam phal (mango fruits) jam phal (black berry fruit), a sita phal (a kind of citrus fruit)" and escape the person having small ball in hand. After this the player having small ball will run away and the other player will try hard to capture him. If they are able to capture him then the person will be treated as a thief. Like wise the thief used to touch at least one player. Inability is liability to expel the thief from the game.

*Panith Mathit* is another game played by children. For this game, the player should stand on a straight line to cross over line by a jump following the command of a narrator. Normally the front of the line is name *Panith* (in water) and the other side is called *Matith* (soil), if fail to synchronise the command of the narrator, then the player will be declared out. The last successful person wins the game.\(^{83}\)

*Lathi Khel* is another famous game in Muslims of Assam. It is specially played at the time of exhibition of Tazia in Muharram.\(^{84}\)

The other game *Gulachi* is played both by boys and girls in grazing field. For this game makes a large ‘home circle’ and about 100 meter away a small ‘bou circle’. The game is held between invaders and defence group having equal players. One player of the invader’s group is called ‘Bou’ (bride) take his position in the bou circle. The player of the
defense group remains scattered in the field and guards the Bou. The aim is to bring the Bou from the Bou circle to the home circle without breaking his initial uttering loudly the word ‘Gulachi’, if successful gets a point.

*Kitkut* is the game which is played by the girls in a rectangular court horizontally divided in five equal compartments and then interior one is divided into two equal houses. The game starts from the first compartment by pushing a piece of earthen plate with the help of one foot.

*Chor Police* (Thief & Police), it’s a collective game actively involving at least four participants. A police man ought to detect the thief with the help of other. An old game with its own set of vocabularies requiring application of intelligence and apt use of commands.

*Randha-bati* (kitchen practice), a game exclusively of the young girls, played by the involvement of four members. Each player representing a particular member like mother, daughter, baby and helping hand. The game consists in staging a mock household theater with all essential activities limited using minized utensils.
Kari Khela, is played with four pieces of Kari (a hard shelled sea animal) which are to be held within the tight grip of the plum and thrown on a space field ground by each participant. If the four numbers represent head, 16 numbers will go to the credit of the player without activity. If three represent tail, the participant will pass the game to the next and one or two represent either head or tail, the participant will be required to heat the remaining two Karis with finger stroke successfully gaining point at each. When one of the three or four participants reach the point 100, he or she will win and entire process will have to restart. This game is played both by male and female children.

Ful-gutti, this is played with four pieces of round stones that could be held within the palm of hand. This is played by the girls only. This game consist in throwing the stones up and catching it repeatedly followed by rhythmical of verse (cora) and the way to whole raiser of verse uttering and stone throwing activity.

Kana-Masi (Blind-folding), this game is played by both girls and the boys, where one among the participant is blind folded with a handkerchief and is placed in the midst of arena. He or she is to chase others and if could catch hold of one and could identify him or her, he or she will be released leaving that particular participant to play the blind
chasing the others. This game is also accompanied by chanting of rhymes.

*Flower game*, this game is mainly played by girls. It requires about five participants; one among them will blindfold another with her hands, sending others away at a distance within the earshot. Prior to it she would be required to give fictitious floral names to the others placed at the distance. Now she would call once by that name, e.g. Red Rose and she will come to tap on the forehead of the girl. If on receiving the tap she could identify that flower by her real name, wins her freedom and the identified girl will be blindfolded.

*Naudi or Dair*, this is a typical game played among ten participants on the ground, code is drawn with a strike and players are made to stand in the defense line to prevent the opponent group to enter and successfully make the incoming move and outgoing move. Three or four defense line with single person in each and double the number of intruders. If the defense could touch the intruder without crossing the boundary line, the intruder will be declared out. Out of about five participants if the majority could make successful journey to and froe their ground will be declared winner.
EDUCATION:

The traditional Muslim educational institutions are known as Madrassa are increasing with the gradual growth of the Muslim population in Assam. Madrassa education is an old practice originated in the early period of Sultan Dynasty. In India it took institutional form in Mughal period. All the administrators or officials in Mughal period were educated in Islamic or Hindu religious institutions. During the British regime, Madrassa education was set parallel with that of the formal educational system.\(^{92}\)

In 1826 Assam came under the British who could establish their sway in this north-eastern region of India because the Ahom rulers were tired by internal dissention and failed to save their subject from the ravages wrought by repeated Burmese invasions.\(^{93}\) These repeated invasion destroyed the old educational institutions and the need arose to lay the beginning of a new pattern of education in conformity with the requirement of the new regime.\(^{94}\) In Assam, educational institutions like Patshalas for Hindus, Tools for Brahmins and Upper class Hindus, Madrassas for Muslims and the Satras for Vaisnavits.\(^{95}\) Religion constitutes a distinct phase in their culture. People naturally inclined to
religious scriptures, they learned the alphabets and the methods of reading.

The Muslim people were confined to Maktab education i.e. they were inclined towards Quran & Hadith. In 1889-90, there were 13 Arabic Schools with 271 pupils and 132 elementary Maktab schools with 2331 pupils. Rewards and prizes were provided by the Governments to promote these specialized forms of education.

The Madrassas and Maktabs became eligible for subsidies under grant-in-aid rose after the resolution of 1904. These schools were required to teach the lower primary course with their special subjects. As a result, the number of public Madrassas reduced to 3 with 750 students from 39 Public Madrassas with 3059 students and many Madrassas & Maktabs were turned into Primary Schools.

A Mohammedan educational conference which was held in Shillong in October 1914, suggested that replacement of Persian by Arabic in High Schools, introductions of a new course of studies in Madrassas, up gradations some Madrassas into full Senior Madrassas and the introduction of the usual primary course, in full or in part, in the Madrassas without necessarily abandoning their Islamic characteristics. In the year between 1915 and 1930 the Mohammedan
education was re-organized and also abolished the first and second Madrassa examination. An attempt was made to give equal status to Madrassas and the primary schools by uniting the Islamic course with Islamic teaching in Junior Madrassas.

Another Mohammadan conference held in 1930 suggested that, the institution of Title classes in the Madrassas and the establishment of Anglo Persian classes in the Madrassas and the adoption of the more liberal policy in granting scholarship to Mohammadan policy, adoption of the principle that the cost of teaching Islamic course should be changed into public fund and recommended expansion of Maktab education. The Government took keen interest in the Muslim education, as a result the High Madrassa course was introduced in the three Madrassas including the Government Madrassa which were affiliated to the board of intermediate and secondary education at Dhaka. The number of public schools offering Islamic course of studies also increased, in 1933-34, such schools numbered 259 in the Assam Valley and 374 in the Surma Valley. Increase in the number of such schools could be realized in its true import if it were remembered that in 1915-16, such school numbered 114 only in the whole of Assam. Due to the revision of the curricular and the establishment of new schools, four type of Madrassas came into existence, the Senior Madrassa imparting
higher Islamic education, Middle English Madrassa where English as a separate subject in the revised courses of studies and Middle Madrassa following the old course and the unrecognized Madrassas maintained by the private bodies.\textsuperscript{103}

Thus, Muslim Education received special attention comparatively less advanced sections of the society. The number of Muslim students increased 15.8% in 1937 in all grades of school. But this figure fell far short of the general rate of progress which was 25.6% for all school and 23.5% for recognized school.\textsuperscript{104}

It can be said that there were many steps taken by the Government for the advancement of the Muslim people. With the invention of the British the Muslim gradually changed the mode of thinking to accept modern education. At present some section of Muslim people purely believes in modern education and technical education, other section of Muslim people believes in both Islamic & general education and a few sections of people prefer Madrassa and Maktab.

But the education of women was sadly neglected in Assam. The daughter and wives of some enlightened family received lessons at home on rudiments of reading & writing. But education of women was in general considered as dangerous and no one could marry a girl if she
could read or write. The American missionaries took steps and they set up a few elementary schools for girls. The first school of this type was started by Mrs. Cutter at Sadiya in 1837 followed by Mrs. Brown at Sibsagar (1840), Mr. Bronson at Nogaon (1843) and Mr. Barkar at Gauhati (1850).

Miss. Orel Keler, an American missionary remarks in 1886, “We could only gain access to many of the higher caste by teaching some kind of needle work. Now we are actually made welcome and get a hearing, most opposition from higher castes, Brahmins, Musalmans though there”.

The public was not concerned for the spread of female education and at the close of 19th century the number of private institutions for boys rose to 91 and girl was nil. Muslim community is male dominated. Majority of females engaged in domestic activity, like preparation of food, management, nursing etc. Even after independence the percentage of Muslim educated women is less than other communities.

Thus the socio-cultural profile of Assam underwent considerable changes. The development of the administration in Assam brought about fundamental changes in the Assamese society. The Assamese society which was homogeneous and vertical in structure now became
heterogeneous in composition and parallel in style. Society in British Assam was cosmopolitan in composition and catholic in outlook. The new society of Assam upheld a variegated pattern of culture. Centering round the new urban areas people now took to new modes of living, social gatherings, festivals and recreations. Life had now more diversions and comforts.
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