CHAPTER – VI

IMPACT OF THE MUGHAL CONTACT ON THE
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE OF THE KOCH
AND AHOM KINGDOMS

The Assamese society which represented a conglomeration of various religious and ethnic groups, imbibed within it a considerable number of Muslim population. As discussed in the previous chapters, from the 13th century we have the advent of the Muslims into Assam and as a consequence of the political conflicts between the Muhammadan powers and the rulers of Assam, there was the gradual growth of the Muslim population in the region. In course of time the Muslim population became part and parcel of the Assamese society and thus in this chapter an attempt has been made to analyse the contributions made by them
in enriching medieval Assamese society and culture in various ways, for instance, in the dietary habits, dress sense, literature, language, art, architecture, painting, music and other aspects of life of the people in the region. Also it may be added that this impact of the contact was not one sided and to a certain degree we find that the Mughals too were very much influenced by some aspects of Assamese culture.

It may be noted that the Muslim settlers when they initially settled in Assam not only did they have to adjust themselves to the climatic conditions of the region nevertheless they also were said to have adopted the dietary system of the Assamese people. As it is in the present day, the use of chira or fried and flattened rice, ‘Sandah’ a kind of flour from fried rice, laru a kind of balled sweetmeat from rice and pitha or cakes made out of rice comprised a part of the main meals for both Hindu and Muslim families. The Muslim on the other hand, introduced many food items to Assamese dietary system such as polao, khichri, kabab,
The Musalmans were also created with the introduction of fruit pickles (achar) and various other items like khichri, polao (peas polao) which according to B.K. Barua were said to have been popular among the Aristocratic sector of the Assamese society.\(^3\) Again the Persian chronicles mentioned that the Mughals were fond of spicy food and prepared them by using spices such as almond, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, raisin, saffron and many others.\(^4\) This type of food preparation is at present quite popular in Assam.

The Assamese chronicle also mentioned that in the beginning of the 17\(^{th}\) century tobacco was first brought to Assam by a Mughal trader,\(^5\) this implies the introduction of the habit of smoking tobacco in Assam by the Mughals. It is also said that the use of smoking pipes and hookahs among the Ahom royalty and nobles was a result of the Mughal influence.\(^6\) Persian chronicles further mentioned that opium was freely sold for Rupees 3/- per pipe at the Ahom capital, similarly the Assamese chronicles
mentioned about the sale of opium in the Ahom capital for Rupees 16/- per tola. Meanwhile E.A. Gait supported this statement by pointing out that there are records to show that the Ahom ruler Gaurirath Singha was an opium addict. The Muslims were also said to have been addicted to country liquor which was generally prepared from fermented rice and which came to have invariably been popular among some section of the native people and it was invariably termed as ‘Laopani’, ‘Haj’, etc. Added to this the Mughals knew the use of wine prepared from the juices of fruits which they termed ‘Sarbat’. This habit became prevalent among the Assamese only after they had come into contact with the Mughals. Similarly the habit of chewing betelnut though common to the North East, nevertheless the habit of chewing dried nut with scented betel leaf (Bangla Pan) was believed to have been introduced in Assam by the Mughals. Again its use in the social life of both the communities can be seen prevalent till the present day whereby it is used for the purpose of receiving guests, for extending invitation to important ceremonies held in one’s home,
for seeking compromise among disputing parties and in many other ways.\textsuperscript{10} Again it is mentioned that till the 17\textsuperscript{th} century salt was not commonly used by the Assamese people.\textsuperscript{11} The use of unrefined salt was prevalent only among the aristocracy whereas the common people substituted its use by that of an alkaline known as \textit{Khar} or \textit{Kharani}. Shahabuddin Talish mentioned that the Assamese traded with Bengal once a year and exchanged their goods for salt.\textsuperscript{12} Later King Rudra Singha opened Assam for trade with the Mughals whereby salt came to be imported into Assam.\textsuperscript{13} Hence from that time onwards it came to be commonly used by the people of Assam.

Owing to constant strains of repeated Mughal incursions, the Ahom rulers were said to have curtailed the use of all sorts of luxuries, for the purpose of diverting existing economic resources for economic growth of the region so as to strengthen its defence potential. Hence as a result of the implementation of such a policy, the production of fabrics were left in the hands of private
individuals, and in spite of the fact that certain legislation were made by Momai Tamuli Barbarua the economic and social reformer of Assam pertaining to this industry, nevertheless they were implemented with the intention of seeing to it that production of clothes were undertaken only to meet the basic necessities of the people for clothing. It is said that the common citizens allowed to use only a churia or dhoti as a waist garment comprising of a single piece of loin cloth and a cheleng as an upper garment which could also be used as a shirt. Nevertheless, it was only during the period of the late 17th century especially during the reign of the Ahom King Rudra Singha that one can notice the various innovations in the dress sense inculcated by the Assamese people as a result of their contact with the Muslims. During this period under study we notice the introduction of Mughal costumes and dresses by the Ahom rulers. King Rudra Singha being influenced by the dress sense of the Mughal aristocracy, created a class of officers called ‘Bairagi’ to keep him informed of the foreign dress sense and ornament especially that of
the Mughal aristocracy. He was also said to have insisted on the use of Mughal costumes in his court such as turbans, *pajamas* (trousers), *ijar* (drawers). He was also credited with popularising the use of a garment which resembles a shirt known as a *chauga* and a kind of a coat called *Chapkan* among the Ahom aristocracy. Similarly he was said to have introduced turbans and other Muslim types of dresses as presentation items which were at first refused by his ministers. Assamese chronicles mentioned that the later Ahom rulers continued to wear the Mughal dresses introduced by Rudra Singha. The paintings of the Ahom courtiers by Dilbar and Dosai in the Sukumar Batkahs treatise or elephants called *Hasti-Vidyarnava* represented Muslim officials of the court wearing turbans and other dresses as did their Hindu colleagues. However, the use of Mughal type of dresses did not remain confined to the court, it soon came to be used by the commoners whereby the indigenous stage actors dancers such as the Ojapali dancers continued to use these costumes and head gears in their varied performances. The influence of the Muslim
dress sense was also seen to have prevailed even among the womenfolk in the Ahom court. The use of embroidered cloth known as Kharchippi and Kingkhap was said to have been in vogue among the ladies in the Ahom court only after their contact with the Mughals.\(^{18}\)

The practice of the use of tailored clothes was also an innovation brought by the Mughals into Assam, since the use of tailored clothes was not in vogue among both the Assamese aristocracy as well as the commoners during the early medieval period. The stitched cloth must have represented the lower garment or lungi used by the Muslims as depicted in the painting of the Sahapari Upakhyan. However among the Assamese, it came to be used as a lower skirt called Mekhela by the ladies. Assamese chronicles also mentioned that King Rudra Singha introduced the knowledge of footwear in Assam. He was said to have imported some families of shoemakers from Bhati or Bengal and settled them in Assam he was credited with the introduction of
Poijhar a kind of footwear resembling those used by the Mughals, for the Ahom aristocracy. The Mughals also brought to Assam the knowledge of the use of cosmetics. Assamese chronicles mentioned that the Mughal traders imported Agar wood from Assam for the purpose of producing Atar which is a kind of a perfume. Ahom rulers were also said to have imported a section of Muslims known as Atargharias for the purpose of producing perfumes for the royalty.\textsuperscript{19} Hence the knowledge of the use of scents and perfumes such as Atar, Ar, Itr as well as flowers such as roses and Hashnashena are said to have come to Assam with the advent of the Muslims.\textsuperscript{20} The famous Assamese painter Dilbar in his painting portrayed King Siva Singha and his queen holding a rose in their hands.\textsuperscript{21}

The Assamese society like any other society of India during the period under study was composed of various social divisions, in spite of the fact that this division of the society was not as rigid as that which was prevalent in other parts of the country.
Nevertheless it can be truly said that the coming of Islam and the Muslims to Assam certainly created an impact in the social system prevalent in the region. The very liberal nature of Islam appealed to the sentiments of the commoners in Assam especially those belonging to the lower divisions where they became drawn towards Islam. Islam with its liberal nature certainly made an impact in Assam whereby people came to realise the burden of ritualism. This paved the way for the emergence of the vaishnavite movement led by Sankaradeva in the 16th and the 17th centuries which brought about considerable changes to medieval Assamese society. M. Saikia mentioned that “the speedy expansion of this movement appears to have been an inevitable result of prolonged suffering of the people under the aggression of a professional priestly class and the pressure of ritualism which gained great importance in the society”. This movement is said to have been influenced by the Islamic principles of social equality and liberty. Hence it was able to draw within its fold people belonging to different castes and tribes including some Muslims of
low social status. Most notable among the Muslim followers of the movement was Chandsai, or Chand Khan who became the disciple of Sankaradeva. Similarly Ajan Fakir a notable Muslim Pir was attracted towards the neo Vaishnavite movement of Sankaradeva whereby he was so deeply influenced by the Vaishnava devotional songs that he composed the Zikirs and Zaris.

However, it is important to note that the impact of the contact of the Muslims with the Hindus of Assam was not one sided and to a certain degree we find that the Muslims too were very much influenced by some aspect of the social and cultural life of the people of Assam. In spite of the fact that the caste division in Assam was less rigorous as compared to that existent in other parts of India instead of being affected by Islam on the contrary the casteless Muslim society came to be deeply influenced by the Hindu social structure whereby there came to exist certain distinct groups namely the Sayeds, Sheikhs and Mariyas. Added to this
as compared with the rest of the country the Assamese Hindu women folk were found to have exercised greater degree of freedom in the society, this had an important bearing on the improvement of the position of the Muslim womenfolk in Assam. The census report of 1911 points out to the increase in the female literacy rate in Nagaon, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur which comprised a large number of Muslim population. This fact goes to prove the level of advancement achieved by the Muslim communities of the region. Moreover though the system of veiling the face or Purdah was found prevalent among the Muslim womenfolk especially those belonging to the aristocratic families, nevertheless from the Fathiyah-I-Ibriyah we came to know that the Muslim womenfolk in Assam during the middle of the 17th century moved freely in the streets and market places with bare heads.26

The Muslim contact with the people of Assam furthermore enriched social relations between the two and a good instance is the contraction of marriage alliances between them. This was seen
to have taken place especially among members of the royalty. For instance, Nilambar the king of Kamata was said to have married Gaurama a Muslim princess of Gaur. Similarly Sultan Hussain Shah the ruler of Gaur was said to have given his two daughters Harmoti and Dharmoti in marriage to Swargadeo alias Dihingia Raja. Again the treaty of Ghilajari Ghat concluded in 1663 A.D. between the Ahoms and the Mughals contained a provision whereby the Ahom ruler Jayadhvaj Singha was to sent his only daughter Ramani Gabharu to the Mughal court, she was later married to Ajamtara the third son of Aurangzeb. However, it is important to note that marriage relations between the Hindus and the Muslims was not confined to the royalty alone. It was said to have prevailed among the other classes of the society. Similarly many Muslim war captives and migrants who settled in Assam entered into marriage relations with the Assamese womenfolk.

Such social relations between the Muslims and the Assamese people certainly created an impact on the policies
adopted by the Ahom rulers. For they were said to have followed a liberal policy towards Islam and their Muslim counterparts during the period under discussion. Records provided that later Ahom rulers extended help in the form of land grants to Muslims. A.J.M. Mills in his ‘Report on Assam’ mentioned that the later Ahom rulers granted Pirpal land for the Muslim Pirs of Assam as well as to the Dargahs, Khankahs and other renowned mosques in the region. In 1780 Lakshmi Singha the Ahom ruler, granted revenue free lands in Kamrup to an Assamese Muslim Pir named Anwar Haji Fakir. Similarly the Assamese chronicles mentioned that Gadadhar Sinhga granted a plot of land measuring 30 bighas to Ajar Fakir and erected in his honour a monastery at Savaiguri Chapari on the banks of the Dikhow river. S.K. Bhuyan also mention that King Rajeswar Singha allotted certain number of Muslim Paiks for rendering services to the Dipteswar temple at Kamrup. This goes to show that the Musalmans in ancient Assam though small in number as compared to the Hindu population in the country yet they had ever been considered an
important part of the country's population and enjoyed privileges not lesser than their Hindu brethren in social or religious matters.  

The Mughal contact with the Assamese people contributed greatly to the enrichment of Assamese language and literature. The most notable impact of the Mughal contact on Assamese language and literature was the fact that Assamese language became saturated with Persian and Arabic words. The starting point of the use of Persian words were first seen in 'Prahlad Charit' an Assamese religious work of the 14th century within by Hem Saraswati whereby he used the word Nafr to mean servant. This was the starting point of the flow of such words in Assamese vocabulary. The Vaishnava pilgrims are said to have introduced many Arab and Persian words in their writings such as Sahib (master), chakar (servant), chakari (service), hajar (thousand), haramkhore (illegal gratification). M. Neog in his 'Guru Charit Katha' a work written in Assamese has projected in detail the use of Arabic and Persian words in the early literary works of the
Vaishnava saints. Similarly the Ahom rulers made use of certain Arabic and Persian words pertaining to administration, revenue etc such as ‘Umraos’, ‘Nawabs’ and ‘Hazaris’. Even in the common colloquy of the people there is also a distinct impression of the use of person Arabic vocabulary which is best seen in certain popular sayings such as ‘Dhan Daulat’ (wealth and resources) ‘Nimakh Haram’ (an ungrateful person). It maybe noted that this encouragement given to the use of Persian and Arabic words was indeed a work of the Ahom rulers for as S.K. Bhuyan mentioned, “there were ten to twelve houses or institutions for Muslim children at Gauhati and more than twenty at Rangpur for teaching them Persian”. Besides this the Ahom rulers were said to have sent students for Islamic education in different parts of India and had maintained in their courts a group of Persian transcripts for the purpose of translating correspondences and letters written in Persian.
The Mughal contact with the people of Assam also resulted in the enrichment of Assamese literature. Muslim influences can be seen on a few of the popular Assamese ballads. The ‘Jana Gabharu Git’ is one such ballad which is still popular amongst the ‘Mariyas’ (Muslim braziers) of the Eastern Brahmaputra Valley. However this ballad could not be said to have been a creation of the Mariyas in spite of the fact that they came to Assam from Eastern Bengal, for this Ballad is equally popular among Assamese Hindus of Eastern Bengal. Similarly another Assamese ballad known as the ‘Phulkonwar Aru Monikonwar’ is very much identified with another ballad known as ‘Kalu Ghazi Champawati Pachali’ which was composed by Abdul Gaffar of Bengal in the 18th century. Similarly we have another similar ballad known as ‘Chikan Sariyahar Git’ which narrates the story of how a Muslim damsel was made the bride of one of the Assamese kings. This ballad was very popular among the Assamese Muslims for they were known to have women folk tales round the name of Chikan Sariyah. The ‘Sat Nawabar Git’ is also one of the Assamese
ballads of an Islamic origin. It relates the advent of some Nawabs into Assam. Since these Assamese ballads contained tales of romance and adventure showing close affinity to some of the folk songs and ballads of East Bengal and Bihar therefore it is very probable that these ballads grew under the influence of such Muslim ballads.

The greatest contribution of the Assamese Muslim to the popular, literature of Assam is the ‘Zikirs’ and ‘Zaris’ which were composed in the period of Ahom rule. They were composed by the Muslim Pir, most notable among those who compiled the Zikirs were Azan Pir, Chandsai, Sheikh Farid etc. These Zikirs and Zaris side by side with the preaching of Islam sing the glory of Sankaradeva, Madhavadeva and Bhakti and in their form, style and expression resembles the Assamese folk songs and neo Vaishanava poetry. In their composition no doubt they resembled the ‘Bargits’ or devotional songs of Sankaradeva, but is form and expression they are more in line with the ‘Deb-Vicharar Geet’ or
Philosophical songs. The Zikirs and Zaris succeeded in ensuring a harmonious blend between Hinduism and Islam and remained an important part of modern Assamese literature.

King Rudra Singha the Ahom monarch was credited with enabling the entry of Mughal influences into Assam in a forceful manner. These influences could be seen not only in the dress sense of the Ahom nobility during the period under study, but also in the realm of literature he appears to have introduced many changes as a consequence of the effect of Muslim influences. During his regime Indian Persian literature found its way into Assam. It is believed that he learnt about some non-Assamese romances such as ‘Madhumalati’, for he introduced the ‘Baramahi Git’ in his Chandraketu – Kamala’s episode.\(^3\) Added to this the “Madhumalati’ which was composed by the Sufi poet Manjhan bears some resemblance to an Assamese literary work known as ‘Sulochana aru Madhavar Itihas’ of Dina Dvijavara which make it possible that the latter was to some extent inspired by the author of
‘Madhumalati’ similarly there is considerable resemblance between the ‘Mrigawati Chanita or Shahapari Upakhyan’ an Assamese romance literary work with the ‘Mrigawati’ of Qutuban another non Assamese work for the former was composed based on Islamic themes coupled with the use of Persian and Arabic words by its author.40

No doubt the method of compiling history was prevalent in Assam from the beginning of Ahom rule nevertheless their contact with the Muslims widened the scope of the art of Chronicling and resulted in the growth and enhancement of Assamese historical literature or the Buranjis. The Padshah Buranji was written during the period 1670-1682. It was edited by S.K. Bhuyan and is in itself a historical account of the Mughals in Assamese. Added to this we have the ‘Fathiya-I- Ibriyah’ an account of Assam written by Shihabuddin Talish the official historian of Aurangzeb who came with Mir Jumla to Assam in 1662. Next we have the ‘Alamgirnamah’ written by Munshi Muhammad Cazim which
gave a detailed analysis of the Ahom Mughal conflict in the 16th and 17th centuries. Besides these we also have the ‘Maasir-I-Alamgiri' written by Muhammad Saqi Mustaid Khan the ‘Tuzuk-I-Jahangiri' which is an autobiography of Jahangiri, the ‘Baharistan-I-Ghaibi' of Mirza Nathan Ispahani, the ‘Riyaz-us-Salatin of Munshi Ghulam Hussain Salim, and the ‘Tabaqat-I-Nasiri’ of Minhaj-us-Siraj. All these taken together have contributed greatly to historical studies in Assam.

During the period of the later Ahom rulers we find the massive employment of Muslim artisans. These were incorporated into guilds of masons and artisans known as the ‘Khanikar Khel’ which was placed under the charge of a ChungRUNg Phukan. The chief function of this department was the construction and repairs of buildings. These Muslims were engaged in various crafts such as the stone engravers or the ‘Silakutis' who were engaged in decorative work on stone slabs to be inserted on masonry construction and also in the carving of designs on the walls and
panels of buildings. The best instances of the implementation of such Mughal artisans and Mughal art forms in Assam could be seen in the Talatal Ghar and Ranghar at Rangpur; Ghanashyam and Jay Dol at Jaysagar, Siva Dol and Devi Dol at Sibsagar and Karrenghar at Gargaon.

As a result of the employment of Musalmans in various capacities in the department, notable Islamic influences could be seen in the realm of art and architecture in Assam. The salient characteristics of the Muslim types of decorative art or masonry construction which comprised of rounded pillars, carved door frames, windows, calligraphy or decorative writing with intricate designs of geometrical patterns and floral representation, the domes and minarets wearing the shape of inverted pitchers could be well traced in some buildings and temples of medieval Assam. Some of these motif could also be seen in the Kamakhya temple which was reconstructed by the Koch Kings in the 16th century whereby the door frames of the front hall of this temple contain
dome shaped curves on the top, decorated with small curves linked together. Similarly the entrance gate of the Hayagriva-Madhava temple at Hajo is also decorated with small domes in the shape of inverted pitchers. Some of the best instances of the inculcation of the Mughal art forms by the Ahoms could be seen in certain buildings such as the Talatal Ghar a palace at Rangpur, the Ranganath temple at Sibsagar. Of the numerous stone bridges the one at Namdang is the biggest and it is believed that King Rudra Singha imported workmen from Bengal for the construction of this bridge. King Gadadhar Singha was also said to have employed Muslim architects for the construction of the pillars of the entrance of the temple at Gargaon with stones and mortar. The Assamese Chronicles mentioned that king Rudra singha employed Muslim artisans for the construction of the Talatal Ghar a building for housing the royalty and a temple known as the Ghanashyam Dol. Further H.K. Barpujari ‘The Comprehensive History of Assam’ contained a chapter on the ‘Architecture of Assam’ whereby the author P. Sarma maintained that this temple
represents the fusion of both Hindu and Muslim influences for the inner part of the temple resembles a mosque whereas its outer one resembles a temple. Added to this the Mughal contact with the people of Assam not only added to the enhancement of Assamese existing Art and Architecture but as a result of the various improvement and innovations introduced by the Mughals it enabled Assamese art and monumental works to become more sustainable. For it is a fact that before the advent of the Mughals the people of Assam had no knowledge of any cementing substance for building purposes, and buildings and temples were erected by simply piling pieces of stones one after the other. However, the Mughals introduced the use of the cementing substance and mortar came to be use for cementing bricks instead of stones, therefore it added to the longevity of such buildings and monuments.

The influences of the Muslims can also be seen in Assamese paintings. During the medieval period with the advent of the
Mughals, miniature painting came to form an important feature of Indian art and in the 18th century this miniature paintings consisted of the culmination of Persian art form into the realm of Mughal painting and according to Percy Brown these paintings represented scenes from actual life, hunting, combat, mythological stories, durbar scenes, representation of plants and animals as well as bearing religious stances.49

In Assam the specimens of old paintings so far available were the products of the painters of the Vaishnava monasteries and painters of the court of the Koch and Ahom kings in the 18th century. Most of these paintings served as illustrations of manuscripts. There are certain references to the paintings done by Sankaradeva, as to have possessed some similarities with the paintings of the Mughal rulers of Delhi however none of these works are available now. The ‘Chitra Bhagavata’ a famous illustrated manuscript is considered a good, e.g., of medieval painting of Assam. K.K. Handique in his introductory notes to
'Chitra Bhagavata' observes that the paintings pertain to the school of Rajput Mughal art and according to Harinarayan Dutta Barua, Mughal influences are very much reflected in the paintings. However it was the regime of Siva Singha which marks the remarkable development of Assamese painting in the Ahom court under Muslim influences. Most notable among them were, the miniature of 'Hastividyarnava', 'Dharma Purana' and 'Gita Govinda'. These painting both in their style and character depicted influences of the Mughal school of painting. The 'Hastividyarnava' was compiled under the orders of king Siva Singha and his wife Ambika Devi whereby two painters were appointed to illustrate the manuscript namely Dilbor and Dosai the former being a Muslim. Similar paintings in the manuscript called 'Lava-Kushar Yuddha' bear indelible marks of the influence of the Mogul school of painting.

The process of the importation of Muslim artisans continued and reached its highest mark during the reign of Rudra Singha the
Ahom ruler, who is believed to be very liberal in this respect and whereby owing to his keen interest in the development of art and architecture in his kingdom he resorted to the policy of importing families of painters and artisans from Mughal India and settled them in his capital. He also was said to have patronised the development of art by sending Assamese boys for receiving training in various arts outside Assam. This patronage given to the development of painting was however continued by other Ahom rulers such as Siva Singha and Rajeswar Singha and Muslim artisans continued to be supported by the state.

The contact of the Mughals with the people of Assam led to the enrichment of Assamese music. The Muslims in turn were deeply influenced by the local Hindus especially the Vaishnava saints and pilgrims. Many Muslim Pirs compiled Zikirs with the objective of reorganising the Assamese Muslim society by regenerating their faith. Thus the Zilirs and Zaris which formed the devotional. Songs of Ajan Fakir is a notable example of the
development of music during the period. It is important to note that the Zikirs of Ajan Fakir were very much in harmony with the ‘Nam Kirtan’ or congregational prayers of the Vaishnavas and therefore we may say that not only did the Zikirs projected the harmonious relationship between Islam and Hinduism especially with Vaishnavism preached by Sankaradeva but in fact it also projected the influence of the latter on the Muslims. The Zikirs sings the glory of the religious preceptor or Guru in conformation with the concept of guruship prevalent in Vaishnavism.\textsuperscript{53} The Zikirs also in their subject matter resembles the Bargits or the devotional songs of the Vaishnava saints. However the Zikirs in their line of expression bears much resemblance to the ‘Deh-Vicharar Git’ or devotional songs of Assam as well as with other folk songs such as the Bairagigeet and others. The Zikirs bears much resemblance to the congregational songs or ‘Nam Kirtan’ of the Vaishnava saints. The Zikirs like the Nam Kirtan were sung in groups coupled with dancing and clapping of hands accompanied with rhythmic movements while glorifying Allah and Islam. The
Zikirs also bears much resemblance to the Ojapali or the songs on Hindu religious themes whereby in such performances the Oja or leader of the group would start the song thereby expressing the narrative and the Palis or followers would sing together coupled with rhythmic body movement.\textsuperscript{54}

Added to the Zikirs we also have the compilation of the Zaris or Marshiyas which are songs depicting sorrow and misery relating to the tragic tale of Karbala. During the rule of Shah Jahan in Delhi one Muslim Pir named Dara was said to have visited Assam with his followers and composed many Zari songs.\textsuperscript{55} The Zaris were very much popular among the Muslims in different parts of the world and in course of time they also gained popularity among the Hindus of Assam. Assamese chronicles mentioned that in some parts of Western Assam, some sort of a religious song known as the ‘Marfati Geet’ was commonly sung by the Muslims of the area bearing influences of the Vaishnava congregational songs.\textsuperscript{56}
The period of the Ahom ruler King Rudra Singha witnessed the enrichment of Assamese music. Being a great lover of music, he came to be intensely influenced by the Hindustani music whereby during his reign we have its importation into Assam. It is recorded that he imported and settled a large number of Hindustani musicians in the country. The Assamese chronicles mentioned that he sent Assamese artists to Delhi and other places for training in Indian music as well as for learning the use of various musical instruments used in those places. These musicians on their return not only popularised Indian music but also imparted training to other Assamese in the use of musical instruments, like ‘Rabab’, ‘Tambura’, ‘Pakhowaj’, ‘Tabla’, ‘Sarud’ and others. Rudra Singha was believed to have himself composed songs such as the ‘Thumri’, ‘Ghazal’ etc. The ‘Pakhowaj’, is believed to have been introduced into Assam for the first time during the reign of Rudra Singha. Its somewhat degenerated form came to be known as ‘Pasaunj’ or ‘Dholok’. For the purpose of promoting Assamese
music Rudra Singha reorganise the local musicians and allotted them different ranks such as ‘Gayan’, ‘Bayan’, ‘Pad-Gowa Oja’ etc.60

The influence of Hindustani music on Sattriya or Vaishnava music is evidenced by the use of musical instruments like the ‘Rabab’, ‘Nagara’, ‘Pakhawaj’ and others by the Vaishnava musicians. The Nagara is a musical instrument which was said to have been beaten at the doors of the courts of the Muslim rulers and officials as well as during Nahbatkhana. This instrument was very much used in the Assamese temples during the period of the Ahoms.

Besides these we can also trace the influences of the Assamese Muslims in the growth of Assamese folk songs such as the ‘Nawariyageet’ or songs sung during the sowing seasons, the ‘Nichukanigeet or children’s songs, ‘Ainam’ or the songs sung to please ‘Ai’ the goddess or mother of pox and most notable are the
songs sung during the Bihu festival known as the Bihu Geet. All these songs hinted at the presence of Islamic influence. Thus the Muslim contact have greatly led to the enrichment of Assamese music and have widened the use of musical instruments in Assamese music.
1 Syed Abdul Malik, Zakir Aru Zari, Gauhati, 1958, p. 163.
5 B.K. Barua, Ibid., p. 122.
8 A.L. Srivastava, Medieval Indian Culture, New Delhi, 1971, p. 25.
9 E.A. Gait, Ibid., p. 144.
13 Assam Buranji, Harkanta Barua Sardar Amin, Gauhati, 1962, p. 64.
15 L. Gogoi, Tai Sanskritir Ruprekha, Calcutta, 1984, p. 56.
16 A. Saikia, Dress and Ornaments of the Medieval Assamese Society, Dibrugarh University, p. 60.
24 E.A. Gait, History of Assam, p. 146.
25 Ibid., p. 441.
26 Assam Buranji, Ibid., p. 20.
27 Assam Buranji, Harkanta Barua, Gauhati, 1962, p. 47.
32 E.A. Gait, *op.cit.*, p. 46.
34 M. Neog, “Two Assamese Ballads”, *Journals of the University of Gauhati*, Vo. 11.
48 Syed Abdul Malik, *op.cit*, Introductio, pp. 48f.
52 *Satsari Assam Buranji*, S.K. Bhuyan (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp. 54f.
54 L. Gogoi, *op.cit.*, p. 15.