EPILOQUE

It may be noted that Mughal advent into the Mongoloid states of Koch Behar, Kamrup and Assam definitely played a major role in shaping the growth and development of Assam's society and culture. No doubt, the territorial expansion of the Mughal empire into Assam resulted in the increase of Muslim settlement and population in the region and in course of time the Muslim population in Assam grew enormously, so that it constituted an important fraction of the Assamese population and thereby contributed to the enrichment of Assamese society. In the present work therefore an attempt has been made to study the nature and extent of the impact of Mughal contact on the Koch and Ahom kingdoms and to describe the subsequent changes, growth and enrichment of the polity, society and economy of the region.
Muslim inroads into Assam dated as far back as the 13th century whereby we have the invasion of Kamarupa in 1205 A.D. by Muhammad Ibn Bakhtiyar Khilji a general of Qutub-ud-din Aibak. This invasion paved the way for the subsequent Muslim invasions of the region. Hence, Assam from the initial years of the 13th century to the last part of the 17th century witnessed a period of successive and recurring Muslim invasions of the region. The objective and purpose of these invasions were varied. At times the invasions were despatched for the purpose of expanding and extending Mughal control over the region. At others they were sent for the purpose of acquiring commercial interest as well as for the spreading of the tenets of the Islamic faith. Since the Muslim invaders were bent upon the spreading of Islam in the region, therefore the success of the Muslim invading force resulted in the construction of mosques in the conquered territories and at the same time they also effected the conversion of the indigenous inhabitants to the Islamic faith. It is recorded how Bakhtiyar won over a chief of a local Mech tribe who guided him during
Bakhtiyar’s Assam expedition, this person was said to have embraced the Islamic faith and was named Ali Mech. Similarly during the invasion of Ikhtiyar-du-din Uzbak Tughril Khan. Kamarupanagar came to be occupied by the Muslims whereby Tughril Khan got constructed a mosque there, and instituted the reading of the Khutba as well as the Friday Namaj or religious services. As mentioned earlier during the invasion of Assam by Alauddin Hussain Shah, the Bengal Sultan, a large colony of Afghan warriors was established at Koch Hajo resulting in the significant increase of Muslim population at Hajo and whereby we have the influx of Muslim saints in the area, resulting in the construction of a mosque there by Ghiyasuddin Auliya whereby after his death he was buried near the mosque and his burial place came to be venerated by the people of Assam till the present day. Hence these repeated Muslim incursions, no doubt resulted in the expansion of Islam in the region, they paved the way for the creation of a class of local converts to the Islamic faith and at the same time encouraged the Muslims to settle in the region.
Meanwhile the period from the 16th century onwards is marked by the policy of expansion into Assam initiated by the Mughals. The Mughals were able to extend their control over parts of the region. Initially they were able to occupy Koch Hajo though for a short time, nevertheless they were able to introduce their own system of administration. The Mughal occupation of Kamrup brought them into frequent contracts with the Ahoms. This Mughal occupation of Kamrup is significant in the sense that from this time the flow of Muslims settlers in large numbers to western part of Assam, particularly to Koch Hajo and in small numbers to the Ahom territory began in a regular and continuous manner. Consequently it has greatly enhanced the Muslim population in the region. In course of time Mughal political institutions and Muslim settlement grew enormously in the region. In course of time as a consequence of the liberal policy of the later Ahom rulers coupled with their realisation of the need of the hour to augment their strength, their took place the importation of many Mughal families into Assam by the Ahom rulers. These Muslim
settlers came to be employed in the state production system. In course of time the number of Muslims employed in various departments of the state appears to have grown sufficiently large. These Muslims comprised of the war captives of the Ahom who stayed on in Assam as well as the Muslim artisans. In course of time these Muslim settlers were granted an almost equal status with the indigenous inhabitants of the region. Thus the Muslim population of Assam came to identify themselves with the general populace. They came to display their loyalty and dedication to the country which they have adopted as their home and in course of time they were able to acquire the admiration and confidence of the indigenous inhabitants as well as the Ahom monarchs, whereby they came to be entrusted with responsible jobs in the state and in course of time they contributed in augmenting the country’s potential for economic social and cultural development.

The Mughal contact with the Koch and Ahom kingdoms certainly brought about many changes in the political and
administrative set up of the region. The repeated conflicts between Assam and the Muslims resulted in Mughal infiltration into the politics and internal affairs of the region. The Mughals came to play an important role in the political set up of Assam especially after the Mughal occupation of Kamrup or Koch Hajo whereby they introduced the Mughal administration in the region, whereby for the purpose of enabling land settlement in the region. Jahangir deputed Ibrahim Karaori who then introduced the Pargana system in Kamrup. Similarly the entire territory of Koch Hajo was divided into Mughal administrative units known as Sarkars and Parganas, entrusted to the care of officials such as Quanungos, Faujdar and Thanedars. At the same time for the realisation of higher amount of revenue the Mughals introduced the system of land measurement and survey especially in Kamrup whereby land came to be classified into three categories namely, Kheraj, Nisf-Kheraj and Lakheraj. It was under the Mughal revenue system that the officers like Choudhury, Patwari, Thakurias, Talukdars, Menas were appointed for the purpose of
revenue collection. This introduction of the Mughal system of administration is significant in the sense that not only the administrative set up of the region underwent enormous and drastic changes, nevertheless, it went a long way in modifying and developing Assam's economy during the period under study. For it is known that immediately after the battle of Itakhuli when they enforced their administration over the conquered region, they however, retained the Mughal system of administration whereby the division of revenue units, i.e., Pargana, Sarkar, Taluk were retained as before. The system of collection of revenue in cash as against the extraction of personal services was retained. Hence it may be said that the Ahom system of land survey and measurement, payment of revenue in cash and kind was but a replica of Mughal administration.

Another point worth mentioning is the enrichment of the social and cultural life of Assam brought about by its contact with the Mughals. This contact resulted in the termination of the policy
of isolation followed by the early Ahom monarchs. From the time of Rudra Singha, there took place the influx of Mughal influences on all aspects of social and cultural life of the people of the region. Major Mughal influences were seen in the diet of the Koch and Ahom kingdoms. We have the popular use of salt, introduction of the use of spices, tobacco, opium, sarbat (palm wine), the chewing of perfumed betel leaf with dried nut (Bangla Pan) and many others. These items were previously unknown to Assam prior to Mughal advent into the region. As a consequent of Mughal contact certain innovation were seen in the dress sense of the people. We have the introduction of Mughal costumes such as Turbans, Pajamas (trousers), Ijar (drawers), Chauga (shirt), and Chapkan (coat). The Mughal contact with the Assamese people no doubt contributed to the enrichment of Assamese language and literature. Assamese language came to be saturated with Persian and Arabic words, added to this there was the growth of literature more noticeable is the Muslim influence on the Assamese ballads, however the most outstanding and sustainable contribution of the
Assamese Muslims to the popular literature of Assam is the compilation of the Zikirs and Zaris but above all Muslim contact widened the scope of the art of chronicling and resulted in the growth and enhancement of Assamese historical literature or the Buranjis. As a result of the massive employment of Muslim artisans in various capacities, notable Islamic influences could also be seen in the realm of art and architecture in Assam, whereby the temples and other buildings of Assam bear the imprints of Muslim decorative art on masonry construction comprising of rounded pillars (gamboja), carved door frames, decorative writings with intricate designs of geometrical patterns floral representations etc. Besides the introduction of mortar as a cementing substance by the Mughals enabled Assamese art and monumental works to became more sustainable. As a result of the Assam’s contact with the Mughals, painting as an art in Assam underwent significant changes. It in a way came to bear much resemblance with the art form of Mughal India. Notable among the medieval paintings of Assam were the ‘Chitra Bhagavata’, the illustrated manuscript of
the Hastividyarnava the latter of which two painters were appointed to illustrate the manuscript namely Dilbor and Dosai the former being a Muslim. In most cases these paintings of medieval Assam in both their style and character depicted influences of the Mughal style of painting. Added to this the contact of Assam with the Mughals undoubtedly resulted in the enrichment of Assamese music. The development of Hindustani music in Assam should also be attributed to the Mughals certain musical instruments such as Tabla, Pakhowaj Sarud, Rabab, Tambura came to be used in Assam after its contact with Mughal India.

However it is important to note that in spite of the fact, that the division of the society in Assam was not as rigid as in other parts of India, nevertheless, the liberal nature of Islam appealed to the sentiments of the commoners in Assam, especially those belonging to the lower divisions came to realise the burden of ritualism, hence this paved the way for the emergence of the Vaishnaivite movement led by Sankaradeva in the 16th and 17th
centuries, which is said to have been influenced by the Islamic principles of social equality and liberty and which brought about considerable changes to medieval Assamese society.

It may also be mentioned that to a certain degree the Muslim population too were very much influenced by some aspects of the social and cultural life of the people of Assam. The freedom enjoyed by the Hindu womenfolk in Assam comparatively had an important bearing on the improvement of the position of the womenfolk in Assam. Though the system of Purdah was prevalent among the Muslims, nevertheless Persian Chronicles maintained that the Muslim womenfolk in Assam during the middle of the 17th century moved freely in the streets and market places without covering their faces. This contact furthermore enriched social relations between the Muslims and the Ahoms, a good instance is the contraction of marriage alliances between the two. This in a way certainly created an impact on the policies adopted by Ahom rulers for they were said to have followed a liberal policy toward
Islam and the Muslim counterparts during the period under discussion.

Commendable contributions were made by the Mughals in the economic life of the region. Since time immemorial Assam's economy was largely based on Agriculture. The Muslim population in Assam acquainted themselves with the indigenous system of agriculture, being settled in colonies or villages established for their settlement by Ahom, rulers, the Muslim settlers took to agriculture and contributed as a Paik to the agricultural production in the region. It may be mentioned that the Mughal occupation of Kamrup and Koch Hajo brought to an end the rule of the feudal lords or the Bhuyans in different parts of Assam whereby they were replaced by revenue officers. Besides, contributing to the agrarian set up of the economy, the contact of Assam with the Mughals contributed in the development of several crafts and industries in the region. The art of weaving and embroidery became popular in medieval Assam after the Muslim
inroads. The Muslims also introduced tailoring in Assam and there flourished a particular Muslim clan called Gunakatiyas who were experts in embroidery. Muslim influences were seen in the realm of painting, dyeing, wood carving whereby we have the inculcation of Muslim designs on the doors and windows of buildings and temples seen especially in the palaces of Rangpur and Gargaon. The Ahom king Rudra Singha was the first to introduce shoes for the Ahom aristocracy and to have brought families of shoe makers and skin washers called Muchiyar. Assamese Chronicles also record the importation of artisans from Mughal India for the production of brass articles and articles of bell metal. During the period of study there existed also what is known as the Paik or Khel system which was in many respects similar to the Mughal Mansabdari system. Added to this the period of Mughal contact with Assam also witnessed the existence of lucrative trade which to be specific flourished in the region by the 17th century, resulting in the growth of trade centres namely Goalpara, Rangamati Hajo and others. On the whole the Mughal
contact definitely brought about striking developments in the realm of coinage and finally it resulted in replacing the barter system prevalent in the economy of Assam by a monetary one.

Thus as a conclusion we may say that the contact of Assam with the Mughals has definitely widened her horizons and broadened her vision. The initial hostility slowly and gradually disappeared and made way for the spirit of toleration, understanding and accommodation which pervaded the Assamese minds till the present day. The Muslim settlers have come to identify themselves wholeheartedly with the region they then called their home and thus with the passage of time they continued in rendering their dedicated service to the land and coupled with the various innovations introduced by them they contributed in their own way to the development of the material culture of Assam and added to her refinements.