SANSKRIT CULTURE IN ASSAM, VARIOUS SANSKRIT WORKS
COMPOSED IN ASSAM THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES

AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE:

Sanskrit, the age-old vehicle of Indian culture, has a very long and continuous
history from ancient time to this day. In this age-old process of its development
every part of the country has its own contributions. Assam can rightly boast of her
contributions towards the rich treasure of Sanskrit literature. In the ancient and the
medieval period, present day Assam was known as Prāgjyotiṣa - kāmarūpa. This can
be established by various evidences found in the Raghuvamsa (Raghu). Mahābhārata
(Mb), Samudragupta’s Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription (4th century A.D.) and the
Satapathabrahmana (SB).

Prior to having an assessment about the Sanskrit culture in Assam throughout the

1. “The kingdom came to be known as Kāmarūpa during the Puranic times based on the
   legend that Kamadeva, the god of love, the Indian Cupid, who was destroyed by the
   fiery glance of Śiva, returned to life in this country”, - EHK., p. 10.
2. cakampe tirpalauhitye tasminprāgjyotiseśvaraḥ
   tadgajālaṇataṁ prāptaḥ sahā kālāgurudrumaiḥ. - Ragh., IV. 81.
   tamīśāḥ kāmarūpaṇāṃayākhaṇḍalavikramam
   bheje bhinnakaṭairnāgairanyāṇuparudha yaiḥ. - ibid., IV. 83.
3. Mb. (Sabhāparvan), XXVII, 17, 18.
4. samatata – davāka – kāmarūpa – nepāla– kartṛpurādipratyantrapatibhi. ............
   - Samudragupta’s Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription, line 22.
5. SB., IV. 1., IX. 4
centuries, it will not be irrelevant to keep in mind the geographical boundary of Kāmarūpa. According to the KP, the region on the east of the river Karatovā up to the seat of Goddess Dikkarvāsinī is known as Kāmarūpa. It is twenty Yojanas in breadth and one hundred Yojanas in length and triangular in shape. It is black in colour interspersed with innumerable hills and hundreds of rivers. Of course, the KP is keeping silence on the northern and southern boundaries of the land. The Yoginiṇīmātra (YT) gives a detailed description mentioning the four limits of Kāmarūpa as it existed during the rule of the Pāla Kings. This famous Tantra-work holds that the land Kāmarūpa was extended from the Kāncanādri in Nepal to the confluence of the Brahmaputra on the west from the river Karatoya to the seat of the Goddess Dikkarvāsinī on the east. Towards the north there is the mountain Kāṇja and on the west there is the river Karatoya. The river Dikṣu (Dikhaud) in the east and the confluence of the Lākṣā and the Brahmaputra on the south demarks this land.7 It may be observed that the YT here repeats the description of the KP with the inclusion of Kāncanādri on the north and the confluence of the Brahmaputra with Lākṣā on the south. Thus, Kāmarūpa may be said to have included the Brahmaputra valley, Bhutan, Rongpur (in Bangladesh).

6. KP., 38.114.
7. nepālasya kāṃcanaḍrīṁ brahmaputrasya saṅgamam karatoyāṁ samāśrītya yāvaddikkaravāsinīṁ uttarasyāṁ kuṇjagiriḥ karatoyātta paścime tīrthaśreṣṭhā dikṣunadī purvaśvāṁ girikanyake daksīne brahmaputrasya lākṣāyāḥ saṅgamāvadhi. kāmarūpa iti khyātaḥ sarvaśāstreṣu niścitaḥ. - YT., I. XI., 16-19.
Cooch Behar, the north-east of Mymensingh (Bangladesh) and possibly the Garo hills.

The history of Kāmarūpa can be determined from the time of the first king Mahiraṅga Dānava. At that time Kāmarūpa was divided into four parts, namely, (a) Rataṇapīṭha, between the Karatovā river and Svarṇakośā, (b) Kāmaṇḍapāṇi, between the Svarṇakośā and Kapil, (c) Svarṇapīṭha, between the Puṣpīkā (Rūpānī) and Bhairavī and (d) Saumyapīṭha, between the Bhairavī and the Dikrāng river.

The history of Assam has been divided into three periods, viz. the Ancient period (up to 12th century, A.D.), the Medieval period (13th-18th century A.D.), and the Modern period (from the beginning of 19th century A.D.). This classification of periods has been maintained by the writers of the history of Assam in general and by the writers of the history of Assamese literature in particular. The same classification can be retained in respect of Sanskrit literature also as various significant features of these three periods are found to be reflected in Sanskrit works composed in Assam.

There are various epigraphical and literary evidences which stand as testimony of the ancient Assam's contributions towards Sanskrit literature.

Epigraphical evidences:

Several passages in the inscriptions indicate that the kings of Kāmarūpa were sincere patrons of a number of Sanskrit literary works. That the learned men of

8. AHA., p. 11.
ancient Assam enjoyed the patronage of many a king, can be known from the epigraphic records. The capital of Vanamāla called Ḥaḍapēśvara, has been said to be the abode of the virtuous as well as learned men (sādhuvijāvajanaṁdhīṣṭhāna). Various branches of learning, namely, the Śruti, Śmṛti, Nyāya, and Mīmāṁsā have been studied and taught in ancient Assam or Kāmarūpa where there were many villages inhabited by Brahmins who were instrumental in the teaching of Sanskrit.

During the period between the 4th and the 13th century A.D. which can be termed as the golden period for Sanskrit learning in Assam, many Stone-pillar and Copper-plate inscriptions are found to have been composed. Among them Umāchal rock (5th century A.D.) of Surendravarmā is the earliest. The literary activity of the period becomes more distinct from the highly ornate and poetic Prāṣastis of the epigraphs. Many of these Prāṣastis may be termed as the specimens of literary forms belonging to this period. The various metres employed therein are handled with exhibition of great skill. From a study of these Prāṣastis, it appears that their composers were not only familiar with the other famous works of classical Sanskrit literature but they were influenced a lot by the classical Kāvyā style. This is evidenced by their adoption of many passages from the works of Kālidāsa, Bāṇabhaṭṭa and others. As an instance, passages from the Raghu of Kālidāsa are found in the Nowgong Grant of Balavarman. The Dubi Copper Plate of Bhūskaravarmān (First
quarter of the 7th century A.D.) states that the king Mahendravarman performed a
number of sacrifices like the great Indra. Here the expression Alamkṛtaṇa, Sulalitapadaṁ and Sarvamārgaṁ Kavyaṁ show that Alamkāraśāstra was
thoroughly studied in Kāmarupa and the expression Lalitapadaṁ shows that the
concept of Padalālitya was not unknown to them. Thereafter the same plate
clearly states that there took place the study of not only four Vedas but some other
subjects also. The Puspabhadra Copper Plate Grant of Dharmapāla (1st half of
12th century A.D.) states that there is a village called Khyātipali where curling of
sacrificial smoke rose up to the sky and wherein the chanting of the four Vedas by
the Brāhmaṇas took place everyday. The same Copper Plate again states that
Mīmāṁsā, Śruti (Vedas) and Smṛti (Dharmaśāstra) - the three important branches of
learning were duly studied in ancient Kāmarupa.

Having taken all these into consideration, it can be pointed out that from the
4th to the 13th century A.D. there had been extensive sanskritic study in Kāmarupa.

---

17. Tē ca raja karatubhirmahendravat. Dubi Copper Plate of Bhāskarvarman, V. 24
18. nānāsāstrarthatattva-śrutavitatadhiyo yena - vādittamucchaustadvaccālaṁkṛta
   susphuta lalitapadaṁ - sarvamārgaṁ kavyaṁ--------, Dubi Copper Plate of
   Bhāskarvarman, V. 74.
19. IAA., p. 32.
20. yena vyākaraṇodako nayativiṁ śāmkhyorunako - mahāṁ .............. visālākulaḥ,
   Dubi Copper Plate, V. 55.
21. khyātipalyabhidhamastī ------ homadhūmavalaye - viyadgati .............. vācālayati,
   Puspabhadra Copper Plate Grant of Dharmapāla, V. 9-11.
22. mīmāṁsā nayamāṁ salikṛtamatiḥ cānakyamāṇikyabhuvvamsottungamaṇiḥ śrutismi -
   tipathapradhānapāṇthavrataḥ, - ibid., V. 14.
The pages of the inscriptions make it clear that there were some kings like Bhāskarāvarman, Purandarapāla and Dharmapāla who were themselves poets par excellence. Prasthānakalasa, the writer of Nidhanpur Plate of Bhāskarāvarman and the Khonāmukha Copper Plate of Dharmapāla and also of Subhaṅkarapāṭaka Copper Plate of Dharmapāla, was expert in Padalalītya and Prasādagunā. The king Dharmapāla, a poet of great repute, is said to have composed the first eight verses of his Puspabhadra Grant. There resided Bhāgavatī and Sarasvatī in his speech and he was regarded as Kavicakrālaśaṃstotaraḥ i.e. the chief of the band of poets.23 The Guwahati Grant of Indrapāla describes Purandarapāla, father of Indrapāla, as a man expert in Arts, a valiant hero and a good poet.24 The tradition of writing inscriptional poetry continued till the first quarter of the 19th century A.D. It is worth mentioning that it took place mostly under royal patronage. Because there were four main royal dynasties which are said to have ruled Prājayotiṣa - Kāmarūpa since the 4th century A.D. Sanskrit in Assam is supposed to have flourished during these four dynasties.25 These dynasties are as follows:

a. The Bhauma-Varman dynasty founded by Naraka

b. The Śālastambha dynasty founded by Śālastambha. It is also known as Mleccha dynasty (last part of 7th century A.D.). Balavarman, Harjjarā and Vanamāla were some of the noted kings of this dynasty.

23. Puspabhadra Copper Plate Grant of Dharmapāla, V. 8.

24. Asidurdhārāråddāśa bhoktāsucih kalākūsālaḥ
tasya purandarapālah sūnoḥ sūrasca sukavisca.

- Guwahati Copper Plate Grant of Indrapāla, V. 11

25. Prācyayotiṣa, p.5.
c. Pāla dynasty founded by Brahmāpāla (later part of the 10th century A.D.) Some important kings of this dynasty are - Ratnapāla, Purandarapāla, Indrapāla and Dharmapāla.

d. The fourth dynasty is founded by Vaidyadeva or Vallabhadeva.

Of course, the rule of these royal dynasties in the state came to an end at the end of the 12th century A.D. or in the first part of the 13th century A.D.

Literary evidences:

Apart from the above-mentioned epigraphical records, literary products on various branches of learning, namely, the Sruti, Smṛti, Jyotisa, Purāṇa, Tantra, Ayurveda, Vyākaraṇa, Chanda, etc. prove the rich heritage of Sanskrit learning in ancient Assam through the ages. We propose to present a discussion on them with the consideration of their dates, namely, ancient, medieval and modern period.
PART – I

I. VEDIC STUDY IN ANCIENT PERIOD

During the age of the ŚB the Vedic culture was said to have crossed the river Karatoya. The study of the Vedas and performances of the Vedic sacrifices were carried on in Kāmarūpa. The prevalence of Vedic culture among the Brahmins of ancient Assam is noticed in the inscriptions. The two Copper Plate inscriptions issued by Bhaṅkaravarman are the earliest record to show not only the Vedic study but composition of Sanskrit poems also. Bhiṅjaṭa, a benevolent Brahmaṇa, has been described as a scholarly person who studied Yajurveda. His son Indoke acquired expertise in the Vedic studies to whom one village was donated by the king. It shows that Assam was not lagging behind in Sanskritic learnings. The king Susthita-varman was said to possess the knowledge of the Vedas, philosophy and other scriptures.

Sacrificial deeds as performed by the Hindus of ancient Assam are also referred to in the inscriptions of ancient Assam. Sacrificial ceremonies were performed to remove sins and also on the expectation of a pious life. It is mentioned that these

26. ŚB., IV 1.
27. babhūva ṣaṇḍilyakulapradipo vedaṁthavidbhijjaṭanāmāmadheyah
    sāṅgaraḥ yajurveda-madhūnāvān yastyāgī ṣucirdevagunopapannāḥ
    - Tezpur Copper Plate of Vānumāla, V. 30.
28. sūnustayaorvedavidagrajanma indokanmāgaṇṇavān varisṭha
    tasmau dadau śṛīvana-māladevo gṛāmam samātāpitṛpuṇyahetoh
    - ibid., V 32
29. Dūbi Copper Plate of Bhaṅkaravarman., V. 50.
ceremonies were held to wipe out the sins of the Kali age. The king Ratnapāla has been described as the maker of houses for the learned persons having proficiency in the Vedas and the sacrificial houses with Yūpas (the post to which the sacrificial animal is tied up). In the rock inscription at Bargāṅgā (middle of the 15th century A.D.), Bhūtivarman has been mentioned as the performer of the Vedic Asvamedha sacrifice. In the KP (9th century A.D.) also there is the mention of the Vedas and Vedic sacrifices.

Thus, it can be gathered that Vedic studies enjoyed popularity here in Assam in ancient times and also the performance of various sacrifices sanctioned by the Vedas was in vogue in this region.

II. DHARMAŚĀSTRA (SMṚTI) IN ANCIENT PERIOD

The Smṛti is another branch of knowledge in which scholars of Kāmarūpa under the royal patronage showed proficiency. It can be pointed out that ancient Assam had made a spectacular contribution to the Sanskrit literature in the field of

30. grāmah krosaṅjanamāsti śrāvastyāṁ yatra yajvanāṁ 
   homadhūṁandhakārāndharmāṁ nāviśāt kalikalmaśam.
   - Subhaṅkarapātaka Copper Plate of Dharmapāla (Second Plate: Reverse), V. 16.
31. Guwahati Copper Plate Grant of Indrapāla, V. 10.
32. “svasti śrīparamadaivata paramabhattaraka mahārājañādhirājasvamedhayājñināḥ śrī- 
   bhūtivarmasya ------- āśramam.”
   - Bargāṅgā Rock Inscription of Bhūtivarman as quoted in the IAA., p 5
33. KP., 31. 18.
Smṛti or Dharmasastra. Some of them have so far been published and a considerable portion is still lying in the form of manuscripts. The books mentioned below on Smṛti were either compiled or composed in Kāmarūpa before the 14th century A.D.

A. Dhavalasamgraha by Dhavalacārya
B. Yoglokasamgraha by Yoglokacārya
C. Andhukasamhitā by Andhukabhāṭṭa
D. Tālparyasamgraha of unknown authorship (It is probably known as the Kāmarūpanvandha)
E. Smṛtisamuccaya (known as Ācārasamuccaya and Vyavahārasamuccaya also) was composed by Satkavi Viśvesvara who is believed to be an inhabitant of Kāmarūpa, flourished before the 12th century A.D.).

III. JYOTIŚASĀSTRA IN ANCIENT PERIOD

That the study of Jyotisa was an integral part of academic pursuit in ancient Assam can be guessed from the very name Prāgjyotiśa where Jyotisa was practised in its two aspects - first relating to the calculation of Samkrānti (meeting time of two months), the Nakṣatras (the constellation) and Grahanā (the eclipse of the sun and the moon) and secondly, Jyotisa as a science which indicates fortunes of man taking his seat here, Lord Brahmā was said to have begun the process of creation for which the city is called Prāgjyotiśa. Prāgjyotiśa may be taken to mean the city of Eastern Astrology if Prāg means former or eastern and Jyotiśa means a star.

34. KP. as stated in the CHA, Vol. 1, p. 273.
astrology, shining. In ancient Assam, Kāmarūpanivandhamyakhaṇḍasādhyā (dated 7th century A.D.), a work on Jyotisa for calculating almanac, was composed.

IV. TANTRA LITERATURE IN ANCIENT PERIOD

Tantra is a religious treatise written in the form of a dialogue between Śiva and Pārvatī, inculcating the worship of the gods and goddesses. Tantra commonly stands for a class of non-Vedic works on meditation, rituals and mystical practices. According to Tantric Buddhism there were four Mahāpiṇhas (great holy places) in India, namely, Kāmākhya, Śrīhatta, Puruṣagiri and Uddiyana. Of these four, Śrīhatta and Kāmākhya, where tranticism attained considerable developments, belong to Kāmarūpa. Kāmarūpa became an important centre of the Tantric cult during the 10th and the 11th century A.D. Tantric Buddhist texts Kaulajñānanirṇaya, Akulavīra tantra and Kāmākhya-guhyasiddhitantra have been written by Matsyendraṇātha or Miṇḍanātha (11th century A.D.). Anāṅgavajra (11th century A.D.), a noted Tantric scholar, wrote a number of Tantric works of which Prajnopañayāvimśīdayasiddhitī and the Hevajratantra deserve mention. The Vyaktabhavanugata-tattvasiddhitī was composed by Sahajyoginīcintā, a female Tantrika Yogini (11th century A.D.). Another Vajrayāna text entitled the Dākarna-vatatantra in Apabhramśa language was recovered from Nepal. It is also supposed to have been compiled in Kāmarūpa sometime during the eleventh century A.D. Another Vajrayāna text called the Kamaratnatantra attributed to Gorakṣanātha is also supposed to have been composed in Kāmarūpa. The Tantric

35. AHA., p. 15.
37. ibid., p. 279.
work *Bodhiva
tivarna* was composed by Nāgārjuna, probably the celebrated physician of Kāmarūpa in the middle of the 10th century A.D. The *Brhadgau
tsatantra* was composed in Kāmarūpa earlier than the *Yoginītantra.* It holds that medieval Assam was divided into three regions, as against four (*Ratnapītha* etc.) with a presiding deity over each namely, *Jalpīśa* (Śiva), *Kāmākhya* and *Dikkarvīśini.*
The *Tiksakalpa,* another Tantric work, deals with the worship of Tārā and the ancient geography of Kāmarūpa. The *Haragaurīśamvādu,* another *Tantra* work cum a *Dharmaśāstra,* written in both Assamese and Sanskrit, was composed in Assam. It contains an analysis of the political history of India in general and Kāmarūpa in particular.

**V. STUDY OF ĀYURVEDA IN ANCIENT PERIOD**

From the fact that a large number of Āyurvedic manuscripts have come down to us since the sixteenth century A.D., it may be inferred that the study of *Āyurveda* relating to both human beings and animals had been in existence from the remote past. The veterinary science specially dealing with diseases of elephants and horses was cultivated in Assam. This system of treating animal ailments has been in vogue since the time of the *Hastyāyurveda* by Pālākāpya.

The history of Sanskrit culture in Assam dates back to the *Hastyāyurveda* (or the *Gaja Sāstra*), a voluminous work on the treatment of elephants, by the sage.

38. Ibid., p. 278
39. DCAM., 54, p. 64.
Palakāpya. The work is assigned to the 5th or 6th century B.C.¹¹ The work itself gives an explanation of the name Palakāpya. From the similarity of the style of its writing with the Nātyasāstra of Bharata, it is held that this work was composed sometime around the beginning of the Christian era. The book comprising 160 chapters has been divided into four sections called Sthānas, namely, Mahāroga (principal diseases), Kṣudraroga (minor diseases), Salya (surgery) and Uttarathāna (therapy, dietetics etc.) The work is in the form of a conversation between Romapāda and sage Palakāpya.

The two important manuscripts of a later period, dealing with animal diseases are the Ghorāmdāna of Sāgarakharī and the Hastividyārṇava of Sukumāra. Nāgārjuna, a famous name in the domain of Āyurvedic learning in Assam, is said to have flourished in Kāmarūpa sometime in the 10th century A.D., though he is not identical with the great Mahāyāna philosopher of the same name. His name is associated with the compilation of a medical work called Yogasātaka.

VI. DRAMATIC LITERATURE IN ANCIENT PERIOD

There is enough evidence to establish the fact that Viśakhādatta, the writer of the drama called the Mudrāraksasa, hailed from ancient Kāmarūpa. Śrīharsa, the writer of the drama Ramāvali (8th century A.D.), is identified with the king Ḫaṣavarmān.


¹² पालाकप्या इति स्रीमान नामध्येयम् चक्ररसाः - HA., I.1.56, as quoted in the Sanskrit in Assam Throughout the Ages (SATA), p. 94.

EHK., p. 159.
of Kāmarūpa. So the Ratnāvatī is often stated to be a product of Kāmarūpa.

VII. PURĀNA LITERATURE IN ANCIENT PERIOD

The date of the KP is not later than 1000 A.D. Lakṣmīdhara who composed a Smṛtinibandha under Govinda Chandra of Kanauj (1104 – 1155 A.D.), quotes from the KP. On the basis of the minute descriptions of hills, rivers, places and also from other considerations, it is well established that the KP was composed in Kāmarūpa.

The Svalpamatsyapurāṇa is another Upapurāṇa composed in Kāmarūpa. The Nibandhakāras of later dates have quoted extensively from this Upapurāṇa. It is supposed to have been composed earlier than the 11th century A.D. Manuscripts are available also of three other Purāṇas namely, the Viṣṇudharmacarita, Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa and the Dharmapurāṇa presumably composed in Kāmarūpa in the 13th century A.D. The Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa was probably composed as an appendix to the Viṣṇudharmapurāṇa. This work canonised many local customs. One of such customs is prohibition of ploughing on Ekādasī, Pūrṇimā, Amāvāsyā, Saṁkrānti and Amavāsai. The Dharmapurāṇa which is often referred to as a constituent part of the Padmapurāṇa was composed in Kāmarūpa. It is said to be composed sometime between 1225 and 1250 A.D.

44. J.C. Ghosh Indian Antiquary, IX., p. 178 as quoted in CHA., Vol.1, p. 274
46. The Journal of the Assam Research Society(JARS), Guwahati, Vol. XIV. p 89
47. CHA., Vol.1., p. 277.
48. ibid., Vol. 1, p. 278.
PART - II

Though Sanskrit was studied in ancient Kāmarūpa even before the birth of Christ, yet no specimen of Sanskrit writing is available. If there were some works they were lost to posterity owing to ravages repeatedly done by agents like rats, insects, floods and fires. We have an instance of devastating flood by the river Brahmaputra which submerged everything.49 The Mohammedan and the three Burmese (Myanmar) invasions (1818-1826 A.D.) might have also contributed to the loss of manuscripts. The manuscripts containing 240 Barīṇas composed by Śaṅkaradeva are said to have been irrecoverably lost due to conflagration.50 It is, therefore except a few medieval Sanskrit works, the existence of works produced in early ancient period is only a matter of circumstantial evidences.

The neo-Vaiṣṇava movement had influenced Assam greatly in its contribution to Sanskrit literature in medieval period. The neo-Vaiṣṇava movement was characterised by the replacement of Sanskrit by the vernacular languages as the medium of propagation of Vaiṣṇava cult. Assam was not an exception in this regard. Yet the utility of Sanskrit literature could not be totally discarded. The followers of the neo-Vaiṣṇava cult came forward to compose works in the form of translation or adaptation of the relevant Sanskrit works. We find bilingual pieces of both Assamese and Sanskrit, for example, the Aṅkīyānīs of Śaṅkaradeva. The inscriptions of the earlier period were entirely in Sanskrit. Sanskrit continued to flourish because scholars received patronage from the rulers, some of them had erudition and

49. SATA., p. 93.
poetic talent. Sukladhvaja, the author of Saravatā, a Sanskrit commentary on Jayadeva’s Gitagovinda, is referred to as “Mahāpandita Sukladhvaja”. King Rudra Simha studied the Sāstras under Kavirāja Cakravartī. Sutras (monasteries) and their religious heads (Gosāins) played an important role in the promotion of Sanskrit studies. Bhattacharja as the chief abbot imparted lessons to innumerable disciples.

I. STUDY OF PHILOSOPHY IN MEDIEVAL PERIOD

That Darsana was studied in medieval Assam can be known from various sources. King Vaḍādatta53 is said to have studied the four Vedas with their Āṅgas and all the Vākyas54 and Pramāṇas55

Mahendravarmā, father of king Nārāyanavarman, is said to be conversant with the Sāmkhya philosophy.56 The intellect of Bhāsvara, the son of Naravāhana, was said

51. ibid., 215, p. 100.
52. Candrakānta Vidyālamkāra Smrtigrantha, p. 132.
53. nṛpatmajo vajradharaprabhāvah śrīvajradattah kṣitipath mahātmā 
adhitya sāṅgāñśca turo'tha vedān vākyam pramāṇam sakhilam yah
- Dubi Copper Plate of Bhāskaravarman, V 4
54. vākyas may imply here ‘āptavākya’ which includes the smṛtis, itihāsas and
purāṇas also, considered as authoritative evidence. – Kāmarūpaśasanāvalī, p 152
55. pramāṇa means nṝyaśāstra and vākyas means purva and uttaramāmaṁsā
- Asomar Vaisnav Darśanar Ruprekha, p 37
56. tasmād janayadātmaṁ atmaṁ vidāh suvratā bhvau sthitaye
nārāyanavarmanāṁ janakamivaḥdhiṅgasāṁkhyārtham.
- Nidhanpur Copper Plate of Bhāskaravarman, V 13
to be nourished by the *Mimamsā* system of philosophy. Mahābhāhu could wipe out the least of blemishes by the study of the *Mimamsā*.

*Tantra, Nyāya, Mimamsā, Sāṁkhya, Yoga, Vaiśeṣika, Smṛti* etc. are said to be the indispensable course of study in the YT. The knowledge of various schools of philosophy of the authors of the books composed in Kāmarūpa is really appreciable. Nīlamvaracārya claims himself as a *Pañcita* in *Nīyayāstra*. Puruṣottama Vidyāvagīśa’s knowledge of *Nyāya* and *Paññīya* philosophy is evident in his *Pratyogaratnamālāvyākaranā*.

The *Amsāprakāśīkā*, a commentary on the *Viṣṇupūrāṇa* by Nīlamvaracārya shows that the commentator was an erudite scholar of Indian philosophy possessing enviable command over the *Advaita* system. In the opening verses of his *Sraddhabhāṣyam* and *Amsāprakāśīkā*, Nīlamvaracārya puts the meaning of the third

57. “…*mimamsanayamāmsalākritamatiḥ caṇakyamanāukyabhūrvamśottungamaṇiḥ*…”

*Puspabhadrā Copper Plate Grant of Dharmapāla*, V 14

58. *tābhyaṁjñayat sutah śrīmān mahābāhuriti visūrataḥ*

*mimamsabhyāsaniḥśesadosasprositamānāsah*.

- *Khanāmukh Copper Plate of Dharmapāla*, V 21

59. *nāṇāmataśmrtaipurāṇavidāṁ vidivāṁ jñātva ca gautamanayāṁ saha jaṁmāyāṁ*

*srīkāmarūpa padharanāpitamanditena vāgīśvarena racitorucironibandhah*.

- Last verse of the *Sraddhabhāṣyam*, manuscript no. 261, Kāmarūpa Sanskrit Sanjīvanī (KSS) Sabha Collection.

60. *Prof. B.K. Barua Commemoration Volume*, p. 120
and the fourth Sūtra of Vādarāyaṇa respectively.61 The first three introductory verses of the Hastāmalakapāṇījīka, a commentary on the Hastāmalakastotram of Śaṅkaračārya composed by Dāmodara Misra, are enough to confirm his adherence to the Advaita philosophy.62 Mahendravarman, father of king Nārāyaṇavarman, was said to be a wise man having spiritual knowledge (ātmavidah) and his son Nārāyaṇavarman was compared with the king Janaka of Mithilā in wisdom of the true nature of the supreme soul (janakamīvādhigatasāmkhyārtham).63 This shows that Advaita philosophy was very much popular and widely studied in Kāmarūpa. The KP gives the proof of prevalence of Advaita system of philosophy in Kāmarūpa.64 The philosophical contents of the KP is at par with the philosophy propagated in the BP and VP, which are on their part based on the Advaita system of Indian philosophy. Nārāyaṇa Sarvajña who flourished in ancient Kāmarūpa prior to the 12th century A.D., has followed Advaita system of philosophy in his commentary on the Manusamhitā65 (MS). Rādhāmohana

61. brahmadharmaprakāśārthā yasyāṁ vedarāsāyāḥ
   śabdhirāngairyutah śvasā brahma tacchreyase′stu.
   - Śrāddhabhāṣyam, manuscript no. 261.KSS
63. Nidhanpur Copper Plate of Bhāskaravarman, V. 13.
64. sa viśuṣṭuḥ puruṣaḥ purāṇastasmin samastāṁ ca vibhāti tadvat.
   tato brahmaṁ liṅe tu paramātmapi saśvate.
   jagat sarva krameṇaiva tadrupatvāya gacchati.
   nirādhāraṁ nirākāraṁ niḥsattvam niravagraham
   ānandamayamdvaitaṁ dvaitaṁ navisaṁsenaṁ
   na sthūlam na ca sūkṣ maṁ yaj jñānām nityāṁ nirānjanam
   ekamāśiṣit paraṁ brahma svapraakāśaṁ samantataṁ.
   - KP., 25. 81-82
65. “evam viśvasyopaḍānaṁ prakṛtiṣaktiyuktāḥ paramātmavaṁ darsitāṁ............
   - Manvarthavivṛttiḥ, 1.7
Gosvāmī Bhaṭṭacārya has stated in his commentary on the Tattvasandarśana that there were two schools of Advaitavādins - one of them is called Bhāgavatas, the other is called Smārtas.66

The above discussion leads to sum up that the Bhagavatism based on the Advaita philosophy prevailed in ancient Assam earlier than the 11th century A.D.

II. TANTRA LITERATURE IN MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The Hararūāsamāvāda (earlier than the 15th century A.D.), a tantra sutra Dharmasūstra text of Kāmarūpa, was written in both Assamese and Sanskrit. It contains an analysis of the political history of India in general and Kāmarūpa in particular. The YT composed in medieval Assam occupies a prominent place in the Tantric literature. The work was compiled in the 14th century A.D., but there were interpolations from time to time up to 1676 A.D.67 It is divided into two parts: Purvakhaṇḍa (First Part) containing 19 Patañgas and Uttarākhanda (Second Part) consisting of 15 Patañgas. The first part is concerned with Puranic and Tantric matters and the second part is mainly concerned with the holy places and the customs of Kāmarūpa. From the 1st to the 11th Patañgas, there is description of guru, vidyā, mantra.

---

66. "bhāgavataḥ smārta ityadvaitavādīsampradāyadvayaṁ. tatra bhagavatsampradāyāṁ yāntargataḥ. śrīdharasvāmi, tasya vaikuṇṭhanāthpradhanataya………….…………. Tattvasandarśana of Śatśandarśana, p. 81, which is quoted in the Prof. B.K. Banner Commemoration Volume, p. 122.

67. DCAM, No. 54

68. SATA, p. 116
and mālā. The Paṭalas from the 12th to the 14th contain descriptions mainly on the socio-political affairs of Assam. In the Paṭalas from the 15th to the 19th, Kumārīpūjā and different myths are described. The second part of the YI is devoted to Kāmarūpa, Saumārapīṭha and the places of pilgrimage in those Pīṭhas. The YI gives a detailed description mentioning the four limits of Kāmarūpa.69 Among others, it gives a vivid description of Hayagrīva-Mādhava at Hajo70 and of the surroundings.71 The YI follows the KP in the description of Naraka story, the places of pilgrimage, the rivers and hills etc. of ancient and medieval Assam. It is important as a source for the cultural history of Assam.

III. KĀVYA IN MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Śrī Śaṅkaradeva (1449-1568) and Śrī Mādhavadeva (1489-1596), the leading Vaiṣṇava apostles of Assam, were great Sanskrit scholars. Works of other writers were in most cases, either based on Sanskrit literature or had the background of Sanskrit literature. Of course, scholars like Ananta Kandalī clearly expressed his unwillingness to write anything in Sanskrit language by declaring that although he could compose fine verses in Sanskrit, yet he had composed in Assamese ‘Padas’ so that women and illiterates also could have the advantage of understanding and getting pleasure.

69 YT. I. XI. 16-19.
70. kāmarūpaṁ vijāntīḥ trikoṇākāramuttamarṁ
   _tDāne caiva kedāro vāyavyāṁ gajaśāsanaṁ
dakṣiṇe saṁgame devi lākṣāyaḥ brahmaretasāḥ
   trikoṇameva jāntīḥi surāsuranamaskṛtam. - ibid., I. XI. 22-23.
71. ibid., II. IX. 3-5.
by listening to his compositions.72

Sankaradeva composed various Sanskrit works and Sanskrit compositions. He had composed six plays (nāts) whose subject-matters were taken from Sanskrit works. His first drama Patnāpraśṭa contains two Sanskrit verses, his Rukminīharaṇanātī contains forty-one and the Kātyāyadamananātī has twenty-four Sanskrit verses including its Nāndī verse. The Keligopāla contains twenty-five while the Pārijātaharaṇanātī contains forty-five Sanskrit verses in simple metres. The Rāmaṇīya, the plot of which is taken from the Rām (l. 18-77) contains forty Sanskrit verses.

Mādhavadeva was an erudite scholar in Sanskrit. Half of the Assamese verses of Nāmaghośa are the translation of various Sanskrit treatises.

Vaikunṭhanāth Bhaṭṭācārya (1558-1638 A.D.), popularly known as Bhaṭṭadeva, the first Assamese prose writer, composed many Sanskrit works like Śrīmadbhaktīviveka, Saranamalika, Śrīmadbhāgavatādīhikaraṇa and the Bhaktisāra. In the first chapter of the second Skandha of his Bhaktīviveka, the author’s concept of Kṛṣṇa as God is expressed in lucid Sanskrit.73 His Assamese translation of the Gītā speaks highly of his Sanskrit learning.

72. śloka sanskritē āmi likhibāka bhāla jāni
   tathāpi karibo padabandha
   strīrājaḷa jata jānoka parama tattva
   śravantata miloka ānanda. - Madhyadasam as quoted in the CHA. Vol III p 261

73. vande govindamśanamindirānandavardhanam—
    vrndārakaganaṁairvṛtam. - Śrīmadbhaktīviveka, 1.2 as quoted in the SATA. p 177
Ananta Kandalī (16th century A.D.) also composed two Sanskrit Prakaraṇas called the *Kalpadruma* and *Nītiratna*. The poet Karnāpūra composed the *Kāvya* called the *Pūrṇāsharana* under the royal patronage of king Naraṇārāyaṇa. The story is although taken from the Harivaṃśa and the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (BP), the poet had added the description of the Kāmākhya, Umananda and Lauhitya here. Śrīnātha Dvija composed another work called the *Vivasūṃhacarita* under the royal patronage of Prāṇānārāyaṇa (1633-1666).

The *Cittāmodakāvya*, a collection of one hundred Sanskrit poems, was composed by Śaṣṭhikādāsa, presumably in Assam. The poet is supposed to be a native of Assam. The subject-matter of *Cittāmoda* relates to various activities of Kṛśṇa. Here the poet tries to unfold the miracles of Kṛśṇa in a dignified manner. The gradual development of Kṛśṇa’s life has been portrayed according to ancient scriptures like the *BP*. This *Kāvya* deserves to be regarded as an important datum in respect of the cultural history of Assam, particularly the neo-Vaiṣṇava movement (15th – 16th century). It is said that a *Kāvya* called the *Kīcakavadha* was composed by an unknown poet of Assam in the 14th century A.D. Puruṣottama, the author of the *Prayogrataśmr̥ṅīla* quotes this work to illustrate some of his points. The name indicates that this *Kāvya* had the plot from the *Mb*.

**IV. NĀṬAKAS IN MEDIEVAL PERIOD**

Vidyāpaṇcānana composed a Sanskrit drama called the *Śrīkrṣṇaprāyana* with materials taken from the *Udyogaparvam* of the *Mb*. This drama follows the technique

74. *Cittāmodakāvya*, p.17
of the Aṅkīyānāṭī, i.e. the 16th century Assamese Vrajaṅvalādrama, of Ṣaṅkaradeva. He composed it under the command of King Pramatta Simha (1744-51). Dharmadeva Gosvāmī under the patronage of Ṛhom king Lakṣmī Simha (1769-80 A.D.) composed a Sanskrit drama named Dharmodaya. It is a symbolic drama showing the rise of Dharma and the fall of Adharma. This is an allegorical drama in imitation of the Probodhacandraodaya. It was staged in the royal court of Rangpur, the capital of the Ṛhom kings, on the occasion of re-installation of Lakṣmī Simha on the throne in 1770 A.D. after the Moamaria rebellion.

The three Sanskrit dramas composed in the 18th century A.D. in Assam can claim to have a conspicuous place in the Sanskrit dramatic literature. These three dramas now appear in one single volume entitled Rūpakatrayam. The Kāmakumāra-karaṇa of Kavicandra Dvija is a Sanskrit drama of six acts, based on the story of abduction of Aniruddha during the reign of Śivasimha (1714-44 A.D.). Here the plot of the drama is taken from the Harivaṃśa and the BP. This is composed after the pattern of Aṅkīyānāṭī of Ṣaṅkaradeva.

Written in 1799 A.D., the Vighnesṭajanmodaya is a Sanskrit drama of three acts by Gaurīkānta Dvija who is known as Kavisūrya Vipra also. The plot of the drama is taken from the Gaṇapatiḥaṇḍa of the Brahnavatvariapurāṇa and the author retells the story of the birth of Kārttikeya and Ganesa following the Purāṇa chronology.

The Saṅkhacūḍavadha was another Sanskrit drama mixed with Gīnas (song) in Assamese on the killing of the demon Saṅkhacūḍa, by Dina Dvija in 1802 A.D. The dramatist follows the story described in the Prakṛtīḥaṇḍa of the Brahmavatvari-purāṇa and does not deviate from the original.
V. SANSKRIT PROSODICAL WORKS IN MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Sanskrit scholars exhibited their interest in writing works on the science of metre also in the medieval Assam. The Vṛttamālā (VM) is a work on Sanskrit prosody by Kavikarṇapūra, who adorned the court of the king Naranārayaṇa (1540-1584 A.D.) of the Kocha dynasty. He composed it at the instance of king Malladeva, well-known as Naranārayaṇa and at the advice of his (the author’s) preceptor.75 The VM deals with a few varieties of select metres which are more frequently used in Sanskrit poetry. The author clearly states that his work is primarily meant for the youngsters.76 It defines and illustrates metres of both the classesse namely, Vṛttā and Jāti. As in some other works on metre, herein also a certain metre is defined first and it comes to be followed by an illustrative verse. The author is found to have quoted from so many poetical works of previous poets for illustrating various metres. The VM is found to make significant impact upon the later prosodists of Assam. This book is referred to in the Vṛttamāṇjařā authored by Dhīresvaraṇāśa (1851-1918 A.D.), another noted prosodist of Assam. Though not voluminous in size, as Kavikarṇapūra deals with a few select metres only, the VM maintains its singularity in various ways. So this work can be called as a valuable contribution on the science of metre.

75. kavīṇa kaṇapūreṇa gurusarṣaṇaṅkaṃtaṃ karmāṇi
   malladeve mahāpāle vṛttamāḷeyamārcai. - VM., 92.

76. ibid., 3.
VI. SMRTI LITERATURE IN MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Most of the Smṛti works were composed in medieval Assam. Āṅgīrasasamhitā, containing about 4000 verses which deal with matters of Dharmaśāstra, was compiled probably in Kāmarūpa before the 14th century A.D. Nīlāmvarācārya (13th century A.D.) supposed to be the most earliest among the Smṛtinivandhakaras, deserves special mention for his scholarship as well as for the number of works he had written. About a dozen works on the Dharmaśāstra in the name of this scholar are available. He is credited with Kālakaumudi, a digest on the Dharmaśāstras dealing with auspicious moments for religious performances. Such are the subjects in this book: Masabhedanirūpanam, Adhimaśaniṇirūpanam, Sayanādininirūpanam, Cāturmāṣ-yavratam etc. The Candraprabhā is a digest on Smṛti dealing with impurity and expiatory rites. His important commentary is on Kātyāyanasraddhasūtras known as Śrāddhabhāṣyam or Śrāddhaprakāśa. The work is divided into five parts and each part is called Kānda. Vedacārya assigned to a period between 1250 A.D. and 1500 A.D., composed the Smṛtiratnakara. A manuscript of this work has been preserved in the India Office Library, London. Kavibhārati (earlier than the 15th century A.D.) composed the Makhapradipa. It deals with the size and measurement of Mandala, Kunda, Mandapa.

79. kalpa smṛti vedapurāṇa sammatanyalokya sastranimakhapradipakam nirmātyasau mandapa kundamandalam. dyudbasakakam 'yākavibhākatatisudhīh.
The *Varṣapradyāpā* (earlier than the 15th century A.D.) by Śrīdhara Bhaṭṭa is a treatise on the *Dharmasūstra* relating to religious performances of all the year round.\(^{80}\) It, among other things, prescribes certain days for washing the clothes as well as prohibition of washing on certain *Tithis*\(^{81}\). The unknown author of the *Smṛtipadma* which deals with *Prāyaḍutta* (purificatory rites), is assigned to the 14th century A.D. Vrajrakandali (earlier than the 16th century A.D.), author of the *Prāyasūtrānfūpana* is said to be from Upper Assam.\(^{82}\) Ratnakaramiśra (16th century A.D.) is the author of the *Smṛtaśāstra*. Both the *Tiyabhānaṃkaumudī* and *Tiyahānaṃkuṭi* of Pīṭhabhāsā-siddhāntavāgīśa are works on *Jyotiṣa* in a sense. Besides, Śrīharamiśra (17th century A.D.) is the author of the *Smṛtikuntaka* and *Kalāpcandra* is the author of the *Śrīভāvān*candrika. Mahādeva Bhaṭṭacārya (17th century A.D.) is the author of the *Puspapradyāpā* (dealing with flowers, prescribed or prohibited on various religious performances) and of the *Adbhutavāra* (dealing with evil omens). Candrakandali (18th century A.D.) is the author of the *Śrīṭinavantika*. Then Kaviṛājamīśra (18th century A.D.), author of the *Śuddhīcandra* and Kṛṣṇaraṇa Nyāyavāgīśa (16th - 17th century A.D.), author of the *Śivarātrivrataprayogāh*, came to Assam from Bengal as a *Sāktagura*.

Mahāmahopādhyāya Dāmodaramiśra who described himself as the royal preceptor, composed the *Gaṅgāyālam* (1438 A.D.) which is also known by the names like *Śrīśūgarā, Śrīśūgarāsāra, Śrīśūjītyūra*. This work composed in the Saka

80. prathamaṃ māsanāṃ sarṅkṛṣṭumīlatvāt sarṅkhṛintireva nirūpyate.

- *Varṣapradyāpā* as quoted in the JARS, Vol. XIV, 1960, p 94

81. mandamaṅgalaśaṭṭhī dṛvādaśyām sarāddhavāsare
vastranāṃ kṣarasamyoğāt dahiyaśaaptamaṃ kulam - ibid., p 97

1308 (1386 A.D.) was regarded as an authority in the matter of PrayttbiUa and marriage etc. It deals with all kinds of physical impurities and sins and atonement. Another work called Darsakarmadīpikā composed by him is known from references and quotations only. Mahāmahopādhyāya Pitāmbarasiddhiṁvantāgīsa Bhaṭṭācārya (16th century A.D.) flourished in the royal court of Koch dynasty founded by Viṣva Śriha in the beginning of the sixteenth century A.D. A galaxy of scholars and poets adorned the court of Naranārayaṇa. Pitāmbara was one of the brightest gems in this court. He was the most prominent Smṛtinibandhakāra (digest writer on Dharmāśāstras) of Assam who wrote a number of works on Smṛti known as Kaumudīs. He composed eighteen Kaumudīs on different aspects of Dharmāśāstras or Smṛti. As for example—Dandakaumudī (jurisprudence), Pretakaumudī (deals with solar and lunar eclipses), Dāyabhāgakaumudī (deals with solar and lunar eclipses) etc. Another contemporary Smṛti writer of Bhaṭṭācārya was Bhaṭṭadeva or Viṣṇunātha Bhaṭṭācārya (1558-1638), a highly celebrated Vaiṣṇava apostle. He composed Saranāsāmsgraha or Saranāmālīka containing rules to be followed in the Vaiṣṇava Satras. There are score of others who wrote on Smṛti. Some of their works are now available. Of the juniors, Sambhunātha Misra (18th century A.D.) composed voluminous works on Smṛti and named them Bhāskara. The Bhāskaras are divided into twelve books and each of the books is named as Kālabhāskara (the auspicious moments for performance of religious rites), Varsabhāskara (the directory of the year), Dinabhāskara (the directory of the day, Vivāhabhāskara (the directory of the marriage)

83. kumbhe śukle munau granthamb muleśtayutake śake
cakre trayodaśātāte mīrō dāmodaraḥ krto.
etc. The name of the books indicates the subjects which the author have dealt with. He composed all these works near the temple of Jalpiśa in modern Jalpaiguri of West Bengal.

The work by Ripunjaya Bhattacarya of late medieval period of Assam is called the *Pūrṇacandra*, a treatise on *Prāyaścitta*. The *Smṛtatnākara* presumed to be voluminous work contains fifteen *Parivchedas* (chapters) and in those chapters he deals with all the important religious performances, performed by the families such as Ācāra, *Prāyaścitta*, *Saṁskāra* etc. He quotes a number of writers on *Dharmaśāstras* namely, Bhavadevabhaṭṭa and Jīmutvāhana (both of 11th century A.D.), Aniruddhabhaṭṭa and Ballālasena (both of 12th century A.D.).

Other *Smṛti* works namely, *Smṛtikalpadruma* of Ananta Kandalī, *Gṛhyapārasakara* and the *Smṛtipadma* of unknown author, the *Dhavalasamgraha*, the *Smṛtisamuccaya* etc. may also be taken note of in this regard.

**VII. MISCELLANEOUS WORKS**

Some works on devotion are found to be composed in Assam in ancient and medieval times. Mahāpuruṣa Harideva (1426-1566 A.D.) composed the *Bhaktirasataraṅgini* with thirteen *Stavakas*, the verses of which are gleaned from the BP and other *Purāṇas*. It glorifies the Lord Kṛṣṇa and mentions the seven kinds of Bhakti merit of worshipping Viṣṇu. The *Bhaktirasākara* by Saṅkaradeva is a compilation divided into thirty-eight chapters for guiding the devotees in their search for Hari.

---

84. *ratnapīthādhipa – śrīmājjalpīśesvarasannidhou.*

*māghe māsi sitepakse granthah sampūṅmatāṁ gataḥ* - *Bhāskara of Sambhunātha Misra* as quoted in SATA, p. 153.
The composer of this work has quoted the BP, VP, Kūrmapurāṇa and the Maitreya purāṇa. Bhaṭṭadeva’s Srīmadbhaktiviveka (1621 A.D.) with fifteen Purūchekadas deals with some important aspects of Bhakti like the Bhaktisthūnamānaṇya, ākṣara, śīyamīrṇaṇya etc. Besides this, the Saranāsamgraha and Bhāgavatādhikaraṇam in Sanskrit are from the pen of Bhaṭṭadeva. Viṣṇupurī, an ideal of Vaiṣṇavism in Assam, composed the Bhaktiratnāvalī. The Harikīrttanagauravām of Kavicandra deals with the Nāmanāhātmya.

The most notable contribution of Assam to Vākaraṇa in Sanskrit literature is the Prayogaratnamālā of Puruṣottama Bhaṭṭācārya or Puruṣottama Vidyāvāgīśa composed in 1569 A.D. with eight divisions called Vinyāsas. He composed the aphorisms into metrical verses and includes certain illustrations in the aphorisms. Besides, various commentary works bear the testimony of Assam’s contribution to Sanskrit. The following commentaries are noteworthy:

- Commentary on the Sīṣupālavadha (Sīṣu) of Māgha by Rājayadhara Mīśra
- Commentary on the Kāvyādarsa (KD) of Daṇḍin by Kṛṣṇadatta Sarma and also by Saurī Sarma
- Commentary on the Kirātārjunīyam (Ki) of Bhāravi by Gadā Simha and also by Ratnagarbhācārya
- Commentary on the Gītvagovinda of Jayadeva by Sukładhvaja, the younger brother of the King Naranārāyaṇa.
PART – III

SANSKRIT STUDIES IN THE MODERN PERIOD

The present system of Sanskrit learning has double aspects, namely, traditional and modern. The traditional pattern is prevalent in Catuspathis and Sanskrit colleges. Formerly these institutions were established and patronized by kings, Zaminders, temple authorities and other endowments. This system of education is also called the Pāñhatā system. These types of institutions were established in Assam also.

Sanskrit had to face a decaying condition with Assam coming under British rule as per the treaty signed at Yandabu in Myanmar (Burma) on 24th February, 1826. The usual royal patronage ceased to exist as had been there earlier and the British Government did not provide sufficient financial assistance for the study of Sanskrit. That is why, the traditional Sanskrit Tols which were the only institutions for Sanskrit learning at that time had to resist the threat of getting closed. In the year 1923 the then Government of Assam established a Sanskrit college in Sylhet (Srīhāṭṭa) town of undivided Assam (now in Bangladesh) for monitoring higher studies in Sanskrit. An association for this purpose was formed under the name and style of Assam Sanskrit Board to frame syllabi and to conduct examination. The Board conferred the title of Sāstri on the successful candidates in the Upādhi examination.

The academic control of the Tol education was rested with the Assam Sanskrit Board. The examination pattern had and still having four phases, namely, Praveśikā, Madhyamā, Sāstri and Acārya. Of course, the number of students in the Acārya programme is strikingly declining. However, it is being noticed that along with other parts of the country, in Assam also the traditional system of
Sanskrit learning is gradually losing popularity to a certain extent. As stated earlier, in Assam also, the second system of Sanskrit studies is in vogue. While traditional system is confined to the Pathsalas or the Tols, many schools, colleges and universities impart Sanskrit learning in a modern pattern of education. In addition to these institutions, there is a Government-aided Sanskrit college under the academic control of the Assam Sanskrit Board. The Gauhati University and the Assam University have full-fledged Sanskrit department. Established in 1970, the Government Sanskrit College, now called K.K. Handique Government Sanskrit College, Guwahati is affiliated to the Gauhati University. Besides these, the Vaišnava Satra institutions in Assam are found to have maintained a tradition of Sanskrit learning. The Satrādhikāras (the head of the Satras) usually acquire indepth knowledge especially in the Bhāgavata and allied scriptures. Regular recitation and explanation of the Bhāgavata are regarded as a must in the Satras. Later on, one person having command over Sanskrit used to perform this job, who comes to be known as Vāgīśa and Bhāgavatī. During the tenure of Śrī Dattadeva Gosvāmī (1843-1904), the Satrādhikāra of Anunāśisatras of Majuli, Sanskrit study received notable intensity. He revived the Sanskrit Tōl in the Satra. Mahāmohopādhyāya Dhīresvarācārī Kaviratna composed his Vṛttamāṅjari, a work on Sanskrit metres, during his stay there as a teacher. In composing this work, he had to consult many other works on the subject, such as the Srutabodha, Vṛttaratnakara, Pingalachandā, Vāṇībhūṣāṇa, Chandomāṅjari (CM) including other works of Chandah, Kāvyā and Nāṭakā. The author opines that the metres which are not taken for discussion in the works like the Śīśū, KD and Bhāṭṭikāvyā (BK) can be found in his work, Śrīhastamuktāvalī of
Subhankara Kavi, a work on the various movement of the hands in dancing, was translated in Aumatāśatra by one Sucandarāi Ojha for the benefit of the aspirants of Satrīyā dance. Even the Satrādhikāra Śrī Dattadeva Gosvāmi himself composed a number of devotional songs in Sanskrit namely, Śrīkrṣṇalīlāmṛtam in affinity with the Gītāgovinda by Jayadeva. Here, there is the nice description of cowherd Gopāla in a poetic manner. The tradition of composing songs has been continued in the Āuniāṭīśatra till the recent years. The Satrādhikāras learn Sanskrit in the traditional method with the help of an Adhyāpaka of the Satra. The Nītilāṅkura, a work on polity by Vāgīśa Sarma of Āuniāṭīśatra deals with the construction of rampart, war policy, creating division among the enemies etc. It may be said that the name of the author Vāgīśa shows that he was appointed for the daily discourse on the Bhāgavata in the Satra, because as hinted earlier, the person engaged in the discourse is called Vāgīśa. Śrīdhara Candra Baruā Ojha of this Satra is credited to the composition of songs in Sanskrit.

Besides these, Nalbari Sanskrit College (established in 1938) and 106 affiliated Sanskrit Tols are engaged in teaching Sanskrit. The Assam Branch of the Lokabhasa Pracara Samiti, the Pancakanya Sanskrit Pracara Kendra, the Bajali Sanskrit Parisad

85. dharanī śyāmalīñyuktva dhenuñjuhuvurmuhuḥ
tacchutvā pucchamuttulya gāvo’dhāvan savatsakāḥ
praviśya vipināṁ sarve mahākautuhlāṅvitaḥ
svāṁ svāṁ gāścārayantaste vicaranti samantataḥ.

- Śrīkrṣṇalīlāmṛtam as quoted in the SATA, p. 238.
etc. have been organizing periodical Sanskrit camps to popularize spoken Sanskrit. The Government of Assam established ABILAC (Anundoram Barooah Institute of Language, Art and Culture) in 1989 with the objective of publishing and editing Sanskrit books. Since the late nineteenth century many distinguished Sanskrit Pundits, by virtue of their scholarship and contribution, have earned a niche for them in the Sanskrit literature.

Anundoram Barooah (1850-1889) is the renowned scholar who took up intensive studies of Sanskrit, besides possessing at the same time, vast knowledge of western language and literature. Anundoram, a contemporary of "scholar extraordinary Max Muller", had his grounding in Sanskrit in traditional method and he memorised the Amarakośa. His preparation of a scheme for bringing out the entire Sanskrit literature in 12 volumes and his hard work to find out original meanings of Sanskrit words and compilation of English-Sanskrit Dictionary stand as testimony of his scholarship. He had left a scholarly commentary named the Jñānakīrātābhāṣya on the Mahāvītracarita (MVC) of Bhavabhūti. This Sanskrit commentary though written in traditional style, exhibits certain feature which are very uncommon to the ancient commentaries written on Sanskrit works. Besides giving the word by word exposition of the text of MVC; he has pointed out the flaws of Bhavabhūti and has criticised the rhetoricians like Visvanātha and Mammaṭa. The most noteworthy innovation made in the Jñānakīrātābhāṣya is the comparative criticism of the MVC and other Sanskrit works written with the story of the Rāma. It has, however, been observed that the Jñānakīrātābhāṣya is much closer to the Sāñjīvanī of Mallīnātha.

Next to Anundoram Barooah, we can mention the name of several other scholars like Dhīresvaracārya, Radhanath Phukan, Candrakanta Vidyalankara, Sivanath
Bujarbaruah, Pandit Rupnath Bujarbaruah, Pandit Jivesvar Goswami, Chakresvar Bhattacarya, Bhagavan Chandra Goswami, Bhavadeva Bhagavati, Rajesvar Bhattacarya, Bipin Chandra Goswami, Baikunthanath Tarkatirtha and others.