The term tense is a grammatical concept. It expresses ‘the time of action’. According to J. Lyons’ *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*, “the essential characteristic of the category of tense is that it relates the time of action, event or state of affair referred to in the sentence to the time of utterance”. It is indicated in languages by the morphological inflection of the word class verb and therefore is correlatable to verb only as its important grammatical category.

It is essential here to distinguish between time and tense. While the former is a semantic concept, the latter is a grammatical one. The semantic concept of time is universal. It is always in a state of motion resulting in time divisions like year, month, day or night, hour, minute, second etc. Every linguistic community has unique ways of time indication. Time can be broadly categorized as public and private time. While the former refers to the socio historical events like the birth of Christ, rule of a dynasty, the
latter refers to the actual time of conversion between the speaker and hearer. This can be explained through the following diagram.

[Diagram]

The line represents the flow of time from left to right and the point 'o' represents a deictic point - the actual present in which the conversation takes place. Events prior to it belong to past and those after it is future.

The important feature of the category of tense in both Asamiya and Bangla is that, it is fused with the category of person, which indicate person contrast corresponding to the five-term personal pronoun system in the language. The various verb form may serve as the markers of the participant roles besides signaling various time connotations. The participant roles are - first person, second person with a three term sociative distinctions viz. status 1, status 2, status 3, and third person. The first person identifies the speaker himself or herself, the second person identifies the hearer and the third person identifies other than the speaker and the hearer as the doer (s) of an action. Within the second person itself, status 1 refers to one who is inferior or junior in relation to the speaker. Status 2 refers to one, who is equal in relation to the speaker and status 3
refers to one who is senior and respectable in relation to the speaker. Thus each tense is fused with a set of five term person morphemes, viz person 1 (p1), person 2 status 1 (p2s1), Person 2 status 2 (p2s2), Person 3 status 3 (p2s3) and person 3 (p3). Each of the fused tense person morphemes has one or more than one allomorph which may be suffixed to the verbal roots.

Tense system in Asamiya and Bangla can be categorized into present, past and future. According to Lyons "Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics" present tense refers to "located temporally as simultaneous with the moment of speaking (eg. John is singing). The past tense as located prior to the moment of speaking (eg. John sang, John was singing) the future "as located subsequent to the moment of speaking (eg. John will sing, John will be singing). COMRIE provides the following definitions for the three tenses in English: "Present tense means coincidence of the time of the situation and present moment; past tense means location of the situation prior to the present moment; future tense means location of the situation after the present moment".

Traditional grammarians S.K. Chatterjee offer the following definition for the three tense in Bangla. If the action of the verb usually takes place or is taking place at present, then the tense of the
verb is present; if the action has been completed the tense is past and if the action is yet to take place at a latter period the tense is future.

**Aspect in Asamiya and Bangla**

Aspect expresses the manner of an action or state, which is indicated or experienced by the speaker. It is a universal feature common to almost all the languages of the world. Aspect is the semantic category of the verb. It is correlatable to the context of speaker hearer’s verbal behaviour. It denotes kind of action such as complete or incomplete, habitual or non-habitual etc and is expressed by the formation of the verb stem. In English three aspectual meaning viz perfective (completed action), progressive (incomplete action) and habitual are expressed in periphrastic, which is combined with the auxiliaries to the root. For instances (i) “I have/ had read the book”- is perfective where the action referred to is completed (ii) “I am / was reading the book”- is imperfective where the action is incomplete, in other words the action is in progress (iii) “I used to read book”- which refers to the habitual action.

The category of tense in Asamiya exhibits five-term morphological contrast. It is to be noted here that in Asamiya, none of these tense forms has one to one correspondence with a particular time connotation. Hence they cannot be called as present tense, past tense and future tense.
For the purpose of convenience I have subcategorized the tenses as $T_1, T_2, T_3, T_4, T_5$. Likewise in Bangla I have posited the tense-aspect in the following ways: simple present or present habitual, present progressive, present perfect. The past has four forms—simple past, past progressive, past perfect, past habitual. The future tense has three forms—simple future, future progressive, future perfect.

A complete tense-aspect paradigm in all the three persons of both Asamiya and Bangla can be shown in the following tabular form as below.

**Asamiya:-**

*(Chart 1)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenses</th>
<th>FP</th>
<th>SP (1)</th>
<th>SP (2)</th>
<th>SP (3)</th>
<th>TP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$T_1$ (simple/Habitual Pr)</td>
<td>$\omega$</td>
<td>$\circ$</td>
<td>$a$</td>
<td>$e$</td>
<td>$e$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$T_2$ (pr. Prog)</td>
<td>$sw$-$isw$</td>
<td>$so$-$is$</td>
<td>$sa$-$isa$</td>
<td>$se$-$ise$</td>
<td>$se$-$ise$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$T_3$ (past. Perfect)</td>
<td>$lw$-$ilw$</td>
<td>$li$-$ili$</td>
<td>$la$-$ila$</td>
<td>$le$-$ile$</td>
<td>$le$-$ile$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$T_4$ (past Imp)</td>
<td>$silw$-$isilw$</td>
<td>$sili$-$isili$</td>
<td>$sila$-$isila$</td>
<td>$sil$-$isil$</td>
<td>$sil$-$isil$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$T_5$ (Future)</td>
<td>$m$-$im$</td>
<td>$bi$-$ibi$</td>
<td>$ba$-$iba$</td>
<td>$bo$-$iboc$</td>
<td>$bo$-$iboc$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All the vowel ending verbs take the former affix and consonant ending takes the later as in following eg.

ni-sw- /nisw/ "taken"

kor-isw - /korisw/ "done"

kʰa-isw - /kʰaisw/ "eaten"

T₁ is referred in the traditional Asamiya grammar as simple present. It is also present habitual tense, which is used to express the action that takes place regularly. It can also be used to indicate future course of action. This will be clear from the following eg.

/moi porhɔ/ "I study"

The sentence above means “I study regularly” but it can also be used in the sense of future as in the eg / moi kailɔi guwahatiloizaw neki/ “tomorrow I may go to Guwahati”.

T₂ – in traditional Asamiya grammar is referred to as present progressive which indicates an action that is still going on and has not come to an end, like, / he kʰelisɛ / means “he is playing”. The same sentence can also be used to indicate past action as / he kʰelisɛ / “He
played.” If the answer of the question like / hi ki korise? / “What he is doing” the answer will be / he kʰelise / “he is playing”, otherwise it is past.

Again the verb form / goisw / “going” in two different situation may signal present or future time as “I am going” and “I will go”.

**T₃** – in traditional Asamiya grammar is referred to as past perfect which is used to refer to an action which is completed in the past as /mɔi kʰalɔ/ “I ate”, /mɔi porhilɔ/ “I read”.

The action of the verb is completed in the past and whose result do not exist in the present.

**T₄** – is referred to as past progressive or past imperfect tense which indicates an action which is not completed in the past and was in progress as in the following egs /mɔe bʰat kʰaisilɔ/ “I was eating”; /mɔe porhisilɔ/ “I was reading.” This tense form is also used to indicate the future course of action as /mək ɔlɔp poisa lagisil/ “I needed some money”.

**T₅** – in traditional Asamiya grammar is referred to as future tense which refer to an action that will take place in future- as / hi zabo/ “he will go”, /mɔe korim/ “I will do.”
The following is tense-aspect paradigm in all the three persons in Bangla:

(Chart-2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FP</th>
<th>SP (1)</th>
<th>SP (2)</th>
<th>SP (3)</th>
<th>TP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present Ind./Habitual</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>en</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pr. Progressive</td>
<td>cʰi</td>
<td>cʰís</td>
<td>cʰó</td>
<td>cʰen</td>
<td>cʰe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pr. Perfect</td>
<td>ecʰi</td>
<td>ecʰís</td>
<td>ecʰó</td>
<td>ecʰen</td>
<td>ecʰe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Ind.</td>
<td>lam</td>
<td>li</td>
<td>le</td>
<td>len</td>
<td>lo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past prog</td>
<td>cʰilam</td>
<td>cʰilish</td>
<td>cʰile</td>
<td>cʰilen</td>
<td>cʰilo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past perfect</td>
<td>ecʰilam</td>
<td>ecʰilis</td>
<td>ecʰile</td>
<td>ecʰilen</td>
<td>ecʰilo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past. Habitual</td>
<td>tam</td>
<td>tis</td>
<td>te</td>
<td>ten</td>
<td>to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Ind.</td>
<td>bo</td>
<td>bi</td>
<td>be</td>
<td>ben</td>
<td>be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future. Prog</td>
<td>te tʰaklo</td>
<td>te tʰakbi</td>
<td>te tʰakbe</td>
<td>te tʰakben</td>
<td>te tʰakbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future perfect</td>
<td>e-tʰaklo</td>
<td>-e tʰakbi</td>
<td>-e tʰakbe</td>
<td>e tʰakbe</td>
<td>e tʰakbe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All verbal root either vowel ending or consonant ending usually takes the above marker.

According to S.K. Chatterjee, verb in Bangla has four tenses- present, simple past, conditional or habitual past and simple future and eight compound tenses- present progressive, past progressive habitual or conditional progressive, future progressive, the present perfect, past perfect habitual or conditional perfect and Future perfect. The compound tenses are made up with the help of the forms or the substantive verb like /ach/ “remain” and /thak/ “stay” conjugated and employed as an auxiliary 

So for as the aspect is concerned we can subcategorize it into three both in Asamiya and Bangla- Perfective, Imperfective and Habitual. They are expressed either by adding and affix to the root or by using auxiliary to the verb and sometimes by adverbials.

(I) **Perfective aspect in Asamiya & Bangla**:

It indicated an action performed in the past. In other words the aspectual meaning of the ‘completed’ action is perfective.

In Asamiya the perfective aspect is expressed by past, as we find in the following egs.
The aspectual meaning of the above verb forms is in perfective sense in Asamiya.

In Bangla perfective aspect can be used in present, past, future perfect as in the following eggs like.

2. a) /fe fɔkale fɔkule gecⁿe/ (za- e- cⁿ-e 'go'-perf.asp, prest. TP)

“He went to the school in the morning”

b) /ami kal oke dekⁿecⁿi/ (dekⁿ- e- cⁿi 'see'- perf. asp. pres. FP)

“I saw him yesterday”

c) / tumi biota porecnⁿo/ (por-e-cⁿ-o 'read'- perf asp. pres. SP)

“Have you read the book?”

We find that the action has already started in the past but its effect is existent in the present moment. Hence it is perfective as it refers to a completed action that has a present relevance.
Again in the following egs,

3. a) /ami cʰotobelae bʰita poɾe cʰilam / (pʰ-e-cʰ-il-am read- perf asp-past. FP) “I read this book in my childhood”

b) /e gʰotokal beɾite eʃe cʰilo/ (aʃ-e- cʰ- il-o come- perf. asp. past-3TP) “He came home yesterday”

We find the action already completed in the past and its result does not exist in the present. In other words the action completed in the remote past but relevant only to the point of time in the past.

Likewise in the following egs.

4. a) /ami gɔlpota poɾʰ-e tʰakbo/ (pʰ-e tʰak-bo ‘read’-stay’ fut FP) “I will read the story”

b) /e amar jonne opekʰa kore boʃe tʰakbe/( bo-e tʰak- ‘be sit stay- fut. 3P) “He will wait for me”

Here we find, the future perfect is marked by the occurrences of auxiliary or helping verb /tʰak/ in the formation of future associated with the preceding perfect verb stem. Thus the verb form /poɾʰ-e tʰakbo/, /boʃe tʰakbo/ in eg 4 (a) and (b) respectively describe the aspe ctual interpretation of possibilities of past action which will be performed in the future.
(II) Imperfective :-

Imperfective aspect contrary to the perfective denotes the incomplete action. In English grammar, it is referred to as progressive. Here also it is used in the sense of progressiveness. In Asamiya the aspectual meaning of the action in the process of continuing is expressed by the affix- /ise/ and auxiliary /ach/. This may be supported by the following eg.s from Asamiya.

5. a) / $e bh at k h ai as e/ (as-e eat be- prog.as. pres. TP) “He is eating rice”

b) / rame sit h ikon lik h ise/ (letter- det lik- is-e write- prog. Asp. pres. TP) “Ram is writing the letter”

In both the eg.s we find that the action referred to is continuing in the present and is expressed by the auxiliary /as/ and affix- /ise/

Again,

6. a) /rame kitap h on porhiasil/ (porh-i-as-il be- prog.asp. past. TP.) “Ram was reading the book”

b) / Xi kam kori as il/ (kori as-il do be. Prog.asp. past. TP) “He was working”
c) /rame kali pās bozat kitapkhon porhisil/ (porh- isil read- prog. asp. past. TP) “yesterday at 5 o’clock Ram was reading book”

Here in the above examples we find that the action referred to, was not completed in the past and was in progress. The progressive aspect in (a) and (b) is realized periphrastically by the auxiliary /as/ be

Again

7. a) /moi gwtei din porhi thakim/ (thak -i-m read- prog- stay- fut- FP) “I will keep reading the whole day”

b) /xi gwtei rati aki t'hakibo/ (ak-i, t'hak- ib- draw pro- stay- fut- TP.) “I will keep drawing the whole night”

We find the auxiliary /t'hak/ “stay or remain” is used to indicate future activity that is likely to be continued over a period of time.

The imperfective aspect in Bangla which contain the action performed continuously can be explained in the following egs.

8. a) /ami boi porc'h/ (pro- c'h-I read- asp. prog- pres. FP)

“I am reading book”
b) /fe kʰela korchʰe/ (kor- cʰ-e read- asp. prog- pres )

"He is playing"

Thus/ poɾcʰe/ and/ korcʰe/ have the semantic interpretation of progressive aspect as it refers to an action that is in progress and has not come to an end.

Again in the following egs.

9. a) /fe bʰat kʰacchʰilo/ (kʰ-a- ccʰ- il-o eat asp. prog. past. TP.) “He was eating rice.”

b) /ami boi poɾcʰilam/ (poɾ-cʰ-il-am read – asp. prog. past. FP) “I was reading book”

Here the verb /kʰacchʰilo/ and /poɾcʰilam/ refers to the action which was not completed in the past and was in progress. It has to be in the context of specific time and event in the past.

Again,

10. a) /ami agamikal emon somoe jete tʰakbo/ (ja- prog- stay fut. FP) “Tomorrow at this period of time I will be going”
b) /ʃe kʰete tʰakbeʃ/ (eat. prog tʰak- be stay – fut. TP) “He will be eating”

Here the verb form /jete/ and /kʰete/ along with the auxiliary /tʰak/ refers to the action that will be going on in the future.

(III) Habitual aspect in Asamiya & Bangla:

Almost all the languages of the world have the means of indicating the state of affairs that occur habitually or regularly. The habitual meaning which in English is expressed by the adverb “usually”. In Asamiya it is expressed by such adverb as /praye/, /hɔdae/ “everyday”, whereas in Bangla it is expressed by such adverbs like /protidin/, /roj/ “everyday” and /ʃɔb ʃomoy/ “always” both with the present and past habitual aspect. The habitual aspect is also expressed by using only affix to the verb root. This may supported by the following egds from both the languages.

11. a) /moe bʰat kʰaw/ (kʰa- w eat- pres. hab. asp. FP). ‘I eat rice”

b) /xi amar gʰorɔt praye ahe/ (everyday- hab- come-pres. TP.)

“He usually comes to our house”
c) /ɔde dae ratipua ɔwɔnkale u tʰ e/ (hɔwɔnkale- u tʰ e early-habi-get-up-pres.TP) “Everyday he get up early in the morning”

The verb forms above covertly express an action that take place naturally, regularly and habitually.

Again,

12. a) /xorute xi əmar gʰ rɔt ahisil/ (ah- isil come- past. TP) “when he was at tender age he used to come to our house”

b) / tetʃa tumi ratipuwa skulɔt goisila/ (za-isila go-past-SP) “Then you used to go to school in the morning”

The verb form in the above egs refer to an action that always took place in the past.

In Bangla, as in the following egs.

13. a) /amra roj dupure bʰ at kʰ ai/ (kʰ a-I eat- p. hab. Fp) “ we take rice every moon”

c) / ami jôb jomoe oder bați jai / (ja-e pres hab. FP) “every time I go to their house”.

The verb forms in the above sentences exist regular pattern of activities in daily life. They are treated as habitual aspect as they refer to a pattern of events that takes place regularly, habitually, naturally etc.

Again,

14. a) /ße tokɔn cakri korto/ (kor-to do-pst. hab. TP.) “He used to do job then”

b) / ami age onek ratri pojonto portam/ (por-t-am read-pst-hab-Fp) “Before I used to read late in the night”

c) /ße roj jskule jeto/ (ja- to go past-hab-Tp) “He went to school everyday”

The verb form in the above examples refers to the action that always or regularly took place in the past.
(IV) Aorist Aspect in Asamiya & Bangla:

Apart from the above three, another aspect can be pointed out in both the languages is the aoristic aspect which is non-committal with respect to the completion or non-completion, beginning or end. It refers to the indefinite meaning and thus do not say whether an action is completed or is in progress. Thus the aoristic aspect may be treated as indefinite action that is total performance of an action from the beginning to an end. This may be supported from the following discussion of both the languages. Let us now consider some few eg's from Asamiya.

15. a) / xi porhakuna kore/ (kor-e do-asp.indef. pres. TP).
   "He studies"

b) /moe tak zanu/ (zan-u know-end. pre. FP) "I know him"

c) / okolwe tar kotha b'abe/ (b'ab-c t'ink- ind asp. pres FP.)
   "everybody thinks of him"

The verbs in the above eg's are considered to be timeless indefinite present. They have the semantic interpretation of aoristic aspect.
Again


b) / ramôr bohut kôta xî zânîsil/ (zan-is-il know-asp-ind.past TP). “He knows many thinks about Ram”

The verbs in the above egs are used to refer to the past action without any reference to the completion.

Again

17. a) / xî akou kolikotaloi zabô/ (za-bo go-asp ind. Fut TP)

“He again may go to Kolkata”

b) /moe kali gôrot zam/ (za- m go-asp.ind. fut FP.)

“I will go home tomorrow”

The verb form in the above egs signals the possibility and willingness of the speaker. They refer to the indefinite action which is about to take place.

In Bangla the indefinites in present, past and future is unmarked and the tense and person marker are added directly to the root.
18. a) /fe olpo lekʰapɔta jane/ (ja- ne know- ind. pres TP).

"He know little to read and write"

b) / rita amake golpo bolbe/ (bol- be tell- indef. asp. pres. TP)

"Rita will tells me story"

The verbs in the above examples are used in the indefinite sense. They refer to the timeless indefinite present tense. They have the semantic interpretation of aoristic aspect.

Again in the following examples,

19. a) / ami kicʰu din kolkatai thaklam/ (thak-1- am be indef past. FP) “I was there in Kolkata for sometime.”

b) / tini amake boi ta dilen/ (di-l-en give- as ind. past TP) “He gave me the book”.

The verbs in the above refer to an action completed at an indefinite and uncertain time in the past.

Again,

20. a) /ami hoito kolkatae jabo/ (ja-b-o go- past- asp- FP) “I may go to Kolkata”
b) /fe kal afbe/ (as-past. asp. TP) “Tomorrow he will come”

Thus the verb forms in the above exams refer to the indefinite action, which is about to take place.


7. Hem Barua : Asamiya Vyakaran