SIKHISM IN ASSAM

— Its Historical Background
— Resemblances and differences between Original Sikhism and Sikhism in Assam.
CHAPTER II

SIKHISM IN ASSAM - ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND - RESEMBLANCES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ORIGINAL SIKHISM AND SIKHISM IN ASSAM

(i) Visit of Guru Nanak.

Guru Nanak was one of the most widely travelled man in India. Referring to the visit of Guru Nanak Harbans Singh remarks that "Guru Nanak roamed extensively in Assam preaching love and prayer to a people attached to tantric ritual and theurgic practices." Although it is very difficult to locate the exact year of Nanak's visit to Assam yet it may be inferred from different accounts that Guru Nanak visited Assam in the first decade of the 16th century A.D. Encyclopedia of Religion stated about the visit of Guru Nanak as "Abandoning worldly pursuits, Nanak undertook four long voyages. On the first, he went eastward as far as Assam, visiting Hindu places of pilgrimage and meeting, and discussing spiritual problems with ascetics and holy men."2

In ancient time Kamrupa was famous for magic. Legend says that Guru Nanak and his companion Mardana also became a victim of magical incantation of Nur Shaha. Nur Shah with her companions tried to apply her magical power over Guru Nanak. But according to Macauliffe, their "spells were of no avail, however much they tried."4 But according to some authors Nurshah by her spell made Mardana, a lamb. As Trilochan Singh stated, "perhaps it is the symbolic way of saying that Mardana came completely under her spell, and was a virtual prisoner like a lamb in the sheep-fold of a shepherd."5

Dr. B.K. Kakoti is of the opinion that Guru Nanak visited Assam after 1517 A.D.6

Gopal Singh claims that "Nanak turned towards the east, and went to well-known centres of Hindu Pilgrimage Kurukshetra, Hardwar, Benaras, Gaya and Patna
going as far as Dhacca and Assam."7

During his visit to Assam, Guru Nanak met Sankardeva8 (a Vaishnavite Saint of Assam). Both Nanak and Sankardeva preached a religion of Supreme surrender to One God. In this context Gopal Singh Stated, "That Guru Nanak visited Assam and met Shankar Deva, the renowned Hindu Vedantist of this period, is corroborated by contemporary evidence."9 About the influence of Guru Nanak upon Sankardeva Trilochan Singh stated "Two factors strongly indicate the personal influence of the founder of Sikhism on Sankardeva. This is the only vaishnava sect in India the mode of worship of which strongly resembles the one preached by the Sikh Gurus."10

Guru Nanak met a prince and princess during his visit to Assam. Rani Gaurjan11 was the name of the princess. Trilochan Singh observes about the princess as "The grandson of this princess, Raja Ram Rai was a devoted disciple of Guru Tegh Bahadur."12

Almost all the Janam-Sakhis gave an account of Guru Nanak's visit to Kamrup.

**Puratan Janam Sakhi**

Puratan Janam-Sakhi13 mentioned that Nanak's first journey was to the eastern part of India.14 The name of the female magician, Nur Shah also mentioned in Puratan Janam-Sakhi. And the land ruled by Nur Shah was mentioned as 'kāru, or Kāvāru'.15 Mardana also accompanied Guru Nanak during his visit to Kāvāru, or Kamrupa. According to Puratan Janam-Sakhi, Mardana was turned into a lamb by female magicians. But all their efforts failed in case of Guru Nanak and the female magicians ultimately submitted themselves to Guru Nanak.

**Miharban Janam - Sakhi**

Miharban Janam-Sakhis16 also described Nanak's journey to eastern part of India, with the exception of the name Kamrup. According to Miharban Janam-Sakhi Guru
Nanak travelled in the eastern countries from 1507-10. From the visit of Sultanpur, he went to the eastern countries.

**Bala Janam-Sakhi**

According to Cole and Sambhi, "The Bala Janam-Sakhi on the other hand has often been very popular because of the legend that it was dictated by Bhai Bala, a close companion of the first Guru, in the presence of Guru Angad." In the Bala Janam-Sakhi there is no reference to a queen called Nur Shah. Like the Puratan Janam-Sakhi, Bala Janam-Sakhi also mentioned the name of the country of eastern India as Kāru.

But as the version of different Janam-Sakhis differ regarding Guru Nanak's visit to Kamrup so Meleod stated that "It is not possible to state categorically that Guru Nanak never visited Assam, but we must acknowledge that there is no acceptable evidence to support such a visit."19

**Guru Tegh Bahadurs' visit to Assam.**

Dr. S. K. Bhuyan is of the opinion that "Ram Singha brought with him the ninth Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur and five Muhammadan Pirs, Shah Akbar, Shah Bagmar, Shah Saran, Shah Sufi and Shah Kamal to undo the effects of Kamrupi black arts."20

Encyclopedia of Sikh Religion and Culture also recorded that Guru Tegh Bahadur visited eastern India in 1669 and stayed at Dhubri (the Capital of Kamrup) and visited the sacred places where Guru Nanak had first preached to the local people.21

In the words of Faruki, "Tegh Bahadur, for some reason, left the Panjab and accompanied Raja Ram Singh, the son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh, to Assam and joined the Mughal army."22

With his wife and mother, Guru Tegh Bahadur left Anandpur and moved towards eastern countries. By travelling Agra, Allahabad, Benaras and Gaya he arrived at Patna. Then the Guru visited Sylhet, Chittagong and Sondip and Dacca. From Dacca Guru Tegh Bahadur moved towards Assam. But when the Guru moved towards Ben-
gal, he left his family at Patna under the care of his brother-in-law, Kirpal. Tegh Bahadur was in Dacca when he had the news of the birth of his son (on December 26, 1666) in Patna. Even today, Takht Patna Sahib (birth place of Guru Gobind Singh) is considered by the Sikhs as a place of pilgrimage.

There is a controversy among historians regarding the real purpose of Guru Tegh Bahadur's visit to Assam. One group of historians believes that Guru Tegh Bahadur accompanied Raja Ram Singh of Amber to Assam. But Assam was then known for destructive diseases and witchcraft. So, Ram Singh's mother and wives were as stated by S.K. Bhuyan "Seized with fear having heard of Raja's deputation to Assam." Ram Singh entreated Guru Tegh Bahadur to accompany him to Kamrup. Guru Tegh Bahadur accepted the proposal of Ram Singh.

In December, 1668 A.D., Guru Tegh Bahadur and Raja Ram Singh left Dacca and preaching the gospel of Guru Nanak at different places and in the words of S.S. Johar "reached Assam in 1669." At that time Raja Chakradhaj Simha was the ruling Ahom king. Both Raja Ram Singh and Guru Tegh Bahadur were camping at separate places and a distance of about 30 miles from each other. Guru Tegh Bahadur camped at Dhubri and Raja Ram Singh at Rangamati.

In the words of S.S. Johar, Tegh Bahadur "halted at the Shrine of Guru Nanak at Dhubri whereas Raja Ram Singh camped at Rangamati about 24 Km away."

Raja Ram Singh's mother had warned him not to attack Assam as quoted by S.K. Bhuyan, "there is universal nam - Kirtana (religious music and recital) in that country."

Raja Ram Singh camped at Rangamati with 60,000 troops; on the other side of the river Brahmaputra was the huge army of Ahom Raja Chakradhawaj Simha. Guru Tegh Bahadur realised the evil-effects of the war on both sides. He therefore in the words of Macauliffe "sat down placing the royal disputants on either hand, and effected a reconciliation and an interchange of friendly offices between them."
I have mentioned earlier that in memory of Guru Nanak's visit to Dhubri Guru Tegh Bahadur advised all the soldiers of Ram Singh as stated by Macauliffe to "bring five shieldfuls of earth to raise, in memory of the founder of the Sikh Religion, a mound which could be seen at a great distance." This mound is the 'Gurdwara Tegh Bahadur Sahibji' of Dhubri.

As recorded in some historical accounts, a group of magic women, expert in sorcery or black art, under the guidance of a washerwoman known as Netai, were sent to do their best to frighten away both Guru Tegh Bahadur and Raja Ram Singh. And on the other side of River Brahmaputra, opposite Dhubri, where Guru Tegh Bahadur had already camped, these magic women, began their magical skill of destruction. These magic women violently threw a 26 feet long stone which came across the sky like an object thrown at a target. The stone hit the ground adjacent to the camp of Guru Tegh Bahadur. The stone hit the ground so forcefully that almost half of the stone went into the ground and the remaining part lying out of the ground. Even today the remaining half of the stone lying in the same position, which is known as the Netai Dhubuni Ghat.

Then the magic women thrown a tree which dropped down near the camp of Guru Tegh Bahadur. But the magical skill of women magicians failed to do any harm to either Guru Tegh Bahadur or his companions. At last the women magicians admitted the truth of Guru Tegh Bahadur's superior powers.

Some of the followers of Guru Tegh Bahadur according to Macauliffe, "remained in Kamrup, and their descendants are now found both in Dhubri and Chaotala."

Guru Tegh Bahadur's visit to Assam is important for some reasons: Firstly, Guru Tegh Bahadur's main purpose was to spread the voice of God among the people of Assam. Secondly, the Guru tried to stop unnecessary blood-shed between the invading Moghul Army and Ahom soldiers.

Another notable incident during Guru Tegh Bahadur's visit to Assam was that one of the local chieftain Raja Ram, as stated by S.K. Bhuyan "obtained a son through the blessings of the Guru." The name of Ram Rai's son was Rattan Rai.
After the death of his father Rattan Rai became the Raja and he visited Anandpur with some valuable gifts to Guru Gobind Singh and stayed at Anandpur for about 5 months. In the words of Mann, "it was the result of all these assurances given by the Raja at the time of leaving Anandpur that Sikhs in large numbers considering this province as their homeland, started settling as agriculturists, and in other businesses and identified themselves completely with Assamese, through their matrimonial relations, manners and outlook."39

Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb forced Guru Tegh Bahadur to accept Islam, but Guru boldly refused the order. After Gurus' refusal to accept Islam he was taken to Chandni Chowk40 and executed on 11 Nov, A.D. 1675.

Sikh Soldiers Visit to Assam:

After Guru Tegh Bahadur's visit to Assam a batch of Sikh soldiers came to Assam. During the reign of Ahom King Kamaleswar Simha, two brothers of North Kamrup, Hardatta and Birdatta, enlisted some Sikh soldiers, along with some other soldiers in connection with a secret manoeuvre to expel the Ahoms from Gauhati. In the words of S.L. Barua, Hardatta and Birdatta "arrayed a large force of Barkandazes, mainly of Hindustanis and Sikhs, against the Ahom government."41 This rebellion was known as the 'Dandua' or 'Dumdumiya'. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan remarked that "these mercenaries were called Dumaumiyas or Dundias, probably because the Sikhs had their headquarters at the Gurdwar Dumdume at Dhubri, which had been founded by the ninth Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1669 during his visit to Assam, with his patron Raja Ram Singha, son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber."42 Macauliffe also accepted the view that Sikh soldiers who fought against Ahom government were called Dumdumiyas or Dundias, because the Sikhs had their main centre at the Gurdwara Damdama Sahib at Dhubri, which was founded by Guru Tegh Bahadur.43

Another batch of Sikh soldiers came to Assam during the reign of Chandrakanta Simha to fight against the Burmese Army.
Hadira Choky opposite to Goalpara, was attacked by the Burmese army. At that time Duaria Barua (resident agent of the Ahom king at the outpost) was in charge of Hadira Choky.\textsuperscript{44} It was the last attempt of the Ahom King Chandrakanta Simha to restore Assam's sovereignty. Chandrakanta Simha organised a large force, as stated by Gait "of about two thousand men, chiefly Sikhs and Hindustanis."\textsuperscript{45} Chaitanya Singh was the commander of the Sikh army. The Sikh army along with the Assamese army fought bravely for a long time at the battle of Hadirachaki.\textsuperscript{46}

They tried to resist the attack, but they were defeated and Chaitanya Singh with many other soldiers fell fighting in the battlefield.

Sailadhar Rajkhowa, a great poet of Assam (1972 : pp. 293-296) in his poem "Pasan pratima\textsuperscript{47}" (image of stone) narrated Chaitanya Singh's heroism and valour in the battlefield.

R. K. Bordoloi (1965) a well known novelist of Assam, in his historical novel 'Monumati\textsuperscript{48}" describes the battle of Hadirachoky. The novel itself is a historical record of the Burmese invasion of Assam. This novel describes in detail that Ahom King Chandrakanta Simha built up defences at Hadira Choky with armies under the command of Sikh general Chaitanya Singh, Ahom general Charu, the Muslim general Mirdaulla and another Assamese general Krishnaram.

In the battlefield of Hadirachaki, the Sikh commander Chaitanya Singh and his soldiers were killed in the encounter. The remaining Sikh soldiers along with the wife of Chaitanya Singh\textsuperscript{49} commonly called 'Mataji' or 'Maiji', moved upstream of the river Brahmaputra in boats.\textsuperscript{50} At a place named Kajalimukh,\textsuperscript{51} this Jatha\textsuperscript{52} of survived Sikh soldiers with wife of Chaitanya Singh entered into the river Kapili.\textsuperscript{53} And from this place they proceeded further upstream and came to the mouth of the rivulet Titaimara Suti.\textsuperscript{54} They encamped at the present site of 'Gurdwara Mataji', Chaparmukh, in the district of Nowgong, Assam. Sikh Soldiers carried with them some rare articles and all these materials are still preserved there in the 'Mataji Gurdwara' of Chaparmukh.

It should be mentioned here that even in the political field of Assam Sikh
people have taken active part like their Assamese counterparts.

'Assam Sikh Association' played an active role in political events of Assam. 'Assam All parties Conference' was held at Sibsagar on 22nd and 23rd Oct. 1928. Representatives of all communities including 'Assam Sikh Association' sent their names to the reception Committee.

Another role of Sikh people was that when Mr. V.D. Savarkar, President All India Hindu Mahasabha arrived at Jorhat in 1941, local Sikhs with all other people joined the procession with their Kirpans.

In the year of 1980 'Assamese Sikh Association' was established in Gauhati under the leadership of Late Kripal Singh, Sardar Dhyan Singh, Sardar Manjit Singh and Sardar LP Singh.

Assimilation of Sikhs with Assamese Community:

S.L. Barua observes that the "settlement of the Sikh population in Assam dates back to the middle of the 17th century. It is said that the early Assamese Sikhs are descendants of the disciples of Guru Tegh Bahadur who came to Assam in 1669 A.D." I have mentioned this point earlier that some of the disciples of Guru Tegh Bahadur stayed back in Assam and their descendants are now found in Dhubri and other parts of Assam. According to S.L. Barua, these Sikhs assimilated themselves with the Assamese people through inter-marriage and they adopted Assamese language and Culture. B.M. Das also endorsed the same view while he commented that "After the war many soldiers preferred to settle in Assam permanently. They married local girls, and in due course one religious community came into being." But according to Mann, it is the result of assurance given by Rattan Rai (son of Raja Ram of Assam) during his visit to Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur that the Sikhs in Assam inter-mingle themselves with Assamese people.

The majority of the Assamese Sikhs are rural inhabitants and agriculturists by occupation. They participate in all Assamese festivals and institutions like Bihu, the birth
and death anniversaries of saint Sankardeva and Madhavadeva etc. Assamese Sikhs are associated with Assamese socio-cultural life from a very long time and they adopted the same language as their own. They had inter marriages with Assamese people and thus strengthened the bond of unity with the people of the state.

Though the Assamese Sikhs have their own Gurdwaras, yet they have been maintaining brotherly relation and friendship with people of Assam. Assamese Sikhs also played very significant roles in the diverse movements of Assam and did not hesitate to sacrifice their lives for the greater cause of Assam. In this context, we should mention the name of two martyrs late Karam Singh and Chandan Singh. In the words of Mann "Even in the recent political struggle for independence, the Sikhs stood shoulder to shoulder with the Assamese for the freedom of our motherland, and no one can deny that they were in the foremost rank in doing this." Most of the Assamese Sikhs are expert in Bihu songs and dances of Assam. They play dhol, pepa, gagana i.e. the instrument inseparable from the Bihu festival. They also participate in Husari (a kind of Carol - singing) in the Rangali Bihu of Assam. All the taboos related to the Bihu festivals of Assam are observed by the Assamese Sikhs like native inhabitants. Assamese Sikh women wear Mekhela-Chaddar and are expert in weaving like their Assamese counterparts. Most of the Assamese Sikh women have their own looms, where they weave Mekhela, Chaddar and gamocha. Assamese Sikh women also prepare different types of rice cakes and other indigenous delicacies during the Bihu festivals of Assam. They are equally expert in Biyanam (marriage songs) and other folk songs of the state. Assamese Sikhs are assimilated themselves with Assamese people to such an extent that they call their 'Gurdwaras' as 'Nāṁghars' (prayer-hall of Assamese people) and 'Granth Sahib' as 'Bhāgavata'.

Resemblances and Differences between Sikhism in Punjab and Sikhism in Assam.

The fundamental values of the Assamese Sikhs are derived from Sikhism. But there are significant regional variations. The religious life of the Assamese Sikhs is inclined to be guided by the doctrine of Sikhism. Assamese Sikhs have their own
Gurdwaras and they adhere to all other features of Sikh life. Though Assamese Sikhs are Assamese at heart and soul, yet from the religious point of view they are true Sikh. They follow the path laid down by the Gurus. They strictly adhere to Gurus' tenets and recite Guru Vanis. As true Sikhs, they earn their livelihood by honest means and share food with others. But in spite of all these religious similarities with general Sikhs, Assamese Sikhs have followed socio-culturally the Assamese way of life.

**Gurdwara and Sikh Worship**

Gurdwara as stated by Cole and Sambhi "is any place where a copy of the Guru Granth Sahib is installed."^68

Besides the two historically important Gurdwaras of Assam, i.e. 'Gurdwara Tegh Bahadur Sahibji' of Dhubri and 'Gurdwara Mataji' of Chaparmukh, there are several Gurdwaras in different districts of Assam. There are three Gurdwaras at Borkola Singh Gaon of Nowgong District, Assam. The name of these Gurdwaras are Purana (old) Gurdwara, Central Gurdwara and Nanaksar Gurdwara. Nanaksar Gurdwara is the latest one established in 27th Nov'1994.

Generally Gurdwaras are of two types. Of these two, one is for religious and social needs of people, which may be termed as the Community Gurdwara. The other type is historic Gurdwara, which according to Cole and Sambhi "erected on sites which are important in the history of Sikhism."^69

The Gurdwaras can be recognised from a distance, because each of them has its yellow coloured triangular flag called the Nishan Sahib^70 with the emblem consisting of quoit (Chakra) with double-edged dagger (Khanda) in the centre and two swords (Kirpan) crossing beneath.

Gurdwaras are the religious, political, cultural and social centres of Sikh community. In this context, Sethi and Pummer comment that "Gurdwaras are open to one and all where a pilgrim or a weary wayfarer gets food and shelter round the clock and enjoys equality and fraternity."^71
In each of the Gurdwaras of Assam the Guru Granth Sahib is placed on a wooden pedestal (asana), covered by silken clothes. It is also covered by a canopy. Articles like quoit (chakra) with double-edged dagger (Khanda) in the centre and Kripans (Sword) are kept in front of the Granth Sahib. For singing the Kirtana (singing of songs in praise of God) in each of the Gurdwaras has a harmonium and Dholok (Drum).

Like the followers of Sikhism in Punjab, Assamese Sikhs also put off their shoes, wash hands and feet, covered their heads before entering into the Gurdwaras. Before entering into the Gurdwara, the devotee may touch the flagstaff and bow before it. The first thing a devotee does on entering the Gurdwara is to prostrate fully before the Granth Sahib and make an offering of money or food. And then the worshipper should be careful for not to turn the back on the Granth Sahib and joins the congregation (sangat). Worship begins with the opening of the Granth Sahib by any man or woman able to read it. The singing of Kirtana consists of musical arrangement of the hymns of the Gurus, with musical instruments. S. S. Johar says that "Kirtan is divine music, Kirtan music is like a precious diamond; it is full of bliss and has many qualities."

It should be mentioned here that in Assam Vaishnavism of Sankardeva also Sravana-Kirtana are considered to be the best of all kinds of Bhakti. As a matter of fact there is nothing more worthy than the hearing of the tales of God and singing His praise. Like Sikhism, in Assam Vaishnavism also singing of Kirtana is accompanied by musical instruments. Inside the Gurdwara there is no distinction in the sitting arrangements.

In a Gurdwara of Assamese Sikh highest reverence is given to the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs. Worship of idol is rejected by Sikhs in Assam. This practice of adoration of a holy book against idols is also practised by the Vaishnavas (the follower of vaishnavism founded by Sankardeva) of Assam. As the Sikhs equating the Granth Sahib with the Guru, likewise Vaishnavas of Assam also made the chief works of Sankardeva and Madhavadeva the object of worship.

As Sikhism is against priesthood, so no one may take the place of the Gurus. But in some Gurdwaras, a man is appointed for reading the scriptures, who is called a
In a Gurdwara, towards the end of Kirtana, Anand Shab (hymns of Guru Amar Das) is read out. As a part of the prayer, the concluding speech to the Japji Sahib of Guru Nanak also read. Then the Sangat (congregation) stands to hear one of the verses of Guru Arjun. After which a male or female member of the congregation, who is a Khalsa Sikh, offers Ardas (Sikh Prayer). Everybody of the congregation should sing the final part of Ardas offered to Waheguru (God). Then the Guru Granth Sahib is opened haphazardly and Vak (a brief verse of guidance) is read out. At the end of worship, karah parshad is distributed among the Sangat. It may be mentioned here that the distribution of Parshad (the gift of God to His devotees) after the prayer is also a religious rite of Assam Vaishnavism.

A free Kitchen which is called langar is also attached with a Gurdwara of Sikhs in Assam. Here food is served to all people regardless of caste and creed. In the Langar all people sit together and eat the same kind of food.

In the Gurdwaras of Assamese Sikhs earthen lamps are lighted in front of the Guru Granth Sahib and Joss Sticks are also used by the Assamese Sikhs.

In the Gurdwaras, everyday prayers are held in the morning and in the evening. A large number of Assamese Sikhs remain present in the Gurdwaras during the birth and death anniversaries of Guru Nanak, Guru Arjun, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. During the festivals like Baisakhi, Holi and Diwali a large number of Sikhs gathered in the Gurdwaras. On the day of samkranti also majority of the Sikh people assembled in the Gurdwara. Baisakhi is celebrated on 13th April in Punjab. It is the New Years Day in Punjab. Parallel to the Sikhs in Punjab in Assam also Baisakhi is celebrated as the starting of Assamese New Year.

Each of the Gurdwaras of Assamese Sikh has a committee called 'Gurdwara Committee' for taking care of the matters of Gurdwara. It is the meeting centre of Assamese Sikh people.
Prayer:

The Sikh prayer is termed as 'Ardas'. Prayer may be offered at home or in the Gurdwaras. Assamese Sikhs consider prayer to be essential for success in life. Sikh prayer according to P.S. Gill, "is a communal composition." It is not the composition of a single person. Among the Assamese Sikhs prayer should be offered to God and not to Gods and idols. Prayer is an absolutely necessary part of Sikh religion. It is both individual and collective. Like the followers of Sikhism in Punjab, in Assam also, Sikh people recite Japji (morning prayer) of Guru Nanak, Jap Sahib of Guru Gobind Singh and his ten Swayyas (religious hymns) in the morning. And Rahiras (religious hymn) should be recited in the evening and Sohilla (group of hymns) at night before going to bed. An Assamese Sikh is required to attend Gurdwara as a part of his daily routine. Prayer is offered by the Assamese Sikhs in completion of every ceremony like birth, death, initiation etc. For offering prayer no hereditary priest is required. Anyone able to read Gurumukhi can lead a prayer.

Besides the daily prayers, the Assamese Sikhs offer other types of prayers as Akhand Path (unbroken recitation), Khola Path (free recitation) and Saptahik Path (weekly recitation) Akhand Path is the complete reading of the Adi Granth on special occasions like marriage, birth of a child, starting new business and so on. It should be completed within forty-eight hours. On the occasion of birth and death anniversaries of Guru Nanak, Guru Arjun, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh, Akhand Path is organised by the Sikhs in Assam. Khola Path is not continuous reading like Akhand Path. Khola Path consists of the complete recitation of the Guru Granth Sahib by a single person. Khola Path is organised by the Assamese Sikhs on the occasions like marriage, death and on the special occasions of joy, sorrow etc.

Among the Assamese Sikhs Saptahik (weekly) Path (recitation) of Guru Granth Sahib also arranged on the occasions like marriage, birth and so on.

Besides these paths, there is a place in some private houses where the scripture is kept. It is customary for every Sikh to recite the hymns of Guru Granth Sahib.
early in the morning (Amrit Bela). It is also well enough for the Sikhs to arrange the general recitation (Sadharan Path) of Guru Granth Sahib which should be completed two or three months as and when possible. But before starting Sadharan Path the first five and the last stanzas of Anand Sahib should be recited. Then Ardas should be offered. And the Path should be concluded by the distribution of Karah Prashad to the congregation.

Hindu prayer is mostly individual rather than collective. Though on certain special occasions congregational prayers also allowed in Hinduism. Sikhism rejected the Hindu worship of an idol or images of God. Like Sikhism Judaic prayer is also individual and collective in nature. Jewish prayer is supplicatory and devotional in nature. Christian Prayer is for redemption of mankind from the life of suffering. It is also individual and congregational in nature.

Birth Ceremony:

The birth of a child in a Sikh family is an occasion for great expression of joy. Like the sikh settlers of Punjab, among the Sikhs in Assam, the birth of a child is attended by some social functions. On the eve of the 13th day of birth, when the mother of the baby is well enough after confinement, she takes the baby to the village Gurdwara with her relatives, neighbours and friends. Then the Granthi of the Gurdwara recites Japp Sahib from the Granth Sahib and placed amrit on the lip of the child. This amrit is a liquid substance prepared by adding sugar-candy or a kind of sugar-cake with water kept in an iron bowl.

After that the naming ceremony takes place in the Gurdwara. For the naming of the child, the Guru Granth Sahib is opened at random. And the boy or the girl is given a name beginning with the first letter of the first word on the top of the left-hand page of the Guru Granth Sahib. Then all the members present in the naming ceremony of the child recommend the name by expressing joy. The ceremony ended by reciting six stanzas from Anand Sahib and the prayer is offered to God. Then Karah Prashad is sanctified
with a Kirpan and distributed among the members present in the Gurdwara.

Like the Sikhs in Punjab, Sikhs in Assam also added suffix 'singh' to boys' name and 'Kaur' to girls' name. These are the points of resemblances between both the Sikhs in Punjab and Assam.

However, the indirect impact of the ethnic culture on the collective life of the Assamese Sikhs cannot be ignored. The customary ethics and other social customs of the indigenous people of the state are spontaneously absorbed in the collective life of the Assamese Sikhs. One of these customs is that following five days of birth the baby is taken out of the house and grasp for a while facing the sun. This custom is called by the Assamese Hindus 'bajoloi Olowa' (coming out of the house) Assamese Hindus observe this ceremony as the first stage of birth ceremony of a child. In this context of religious customs C.H. Toy observes, "The taboos imposed on the mother during pregnancy and after the birth of the child, often numerous and oppressive, are derived from local conditions and are generally regulated by religion."92

**Death Ceremony**

One common custom between the followers of Sikhism in Punjab and Assam is that prior to the cremation of the deceased, the dead body is bathed and dressed with new clothes. The family members of the deceased need to be careful to make sure that "the five symbols of Khalsa" (panca-kākār) are present in the dead body. Four close relatives carry the dead body to the cremation ground on a bier. During the journey to the cremation ground, the friends and relatives of the deceased recite hymns from Guru Granth Sahib. At the cremation ground, the funeral pyre is lit by the eldest son or the nearest relative of the deceased. At that time, Japji, the morning prayer is read by the people attending the cremation ceremony. At the end of the ceremony, Ardas are offered. After the cremation is over, the people return to the home of the deceased. For the Sikh people, Granth Sahib should be kept in a deceased's home from the first day of death till the tenth day. Within this period the reading of the whole of the Granth Sahib is to be
completed. However, according to the custom of the Assamese Sikhs, Granth Sahib reading should be completed within thirteen days. After the reading of Granth Sahib, Karah Prasad is distributed among the mourners. These customs of Sikhs in Punjab are similar to that of Sikhs in Assam.

On the fourth day, the ceremony of chautha is observed by the Assamese Sikhs. As a part of this ceremony, the relatives of the deceased collected charred bones of the dead from the cremation ground. Curd is supplied to the mourners attending cremation ceremony for washing their heads. And the ashes of the dead are immersed in a river. A mound is built on the place of cremation and it is covered with a canopy. 'Mulmantra' i.e., 'Ek Omkār Śādi namu Kartā purukhu nirabhau niravairu akāl murati ajuni saibhan gur prasadi,' are written by milk on the top of the mound.

On the tenth day, another ceremony is observed known as 'Dashma'. On this day, the cremators are invited to the deceased’s home and in the evening Kirtana is chanted.

On the thirteenth day of demise, another ceremony is observed, known as 'Karam'. On this day, 'dewan' is observed in the morning hours. Then the Granth Sahib is returned to the Gurdwara. After that langar is arranged in the deceased’s home. In the evening 'Asa di Var' Kirtan is sung by people.

Assamese Sikhs observe one ceremony at the night of the thirteenth day, which is known as 'mashchuwoni' (touching of fish). This ceremony is observed by the Assamese Sikhs under the influence of indigenous folk cultural beliefs. From this day, the family members of the dead may opt for non-vegetarian food.

Sikhism in general is against any kind of ritual. But as Gurmit Singh observes, "It however, must be admitted with regret that with the passage of time Hindu influence is penetrating into the Sikh ranks and the practice of most of the Sikhs in respect of above matters is quite distinct from the precept of their religion."94

However, observances of such external rites are quite contrary to the fundamental principles of Sikhism, which protests any kind of external observances.
Marriage Ceremony:

C.H. Toy narrates the importance of marriage by saying that "Marriage is so important a fact for the communal life that it has always been regulated to a greater or less extent by the community, which defines its methods, rights and obligations."\textsuperscript{95} Hindu ritual is discarded by the Sikhs at the marriage ceremony. Sikh marriage ceremony is performed according to \textit{Anand Rites}\textsuperscript{96} Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics stated about this rite as "In this rite the Adi Granth is circumbulated in lieu of fire, and texts from it are recited to sanctify the union as emblematical of that between the soul and the supreme."\textsuperscript{97}

The marriage for Sikhs is the spiritual bond between two persons. It aims at the fusion of the two souls into one. Child marriage has never been encouraged by Assamese Sikhs. Sikhs in Assam accept the age-limit prescribed by the Indian constitution in case of marriage. Among Assamese Sikhs, before marriage, initiation into Sikhism is compulsory for both boys and girls. If an Assamese Sikh boy wanted to marry an Assamese Hindu girl, then before marriage the girl should be initiated into Sikhism.

Like the Sikhs in Punjab, in Assam also wedding is celebrated in the early morning (amrit bela). The bride groom of Assamese Sikhs, like Sikhs in general, visit the place of the bride, accompanied by his relatives and friends on the previous evening of marriage day. Then takes place the formal meeting of the two parties, which is called 'Milani'. In a Sikh marriage, no priest is required for conducting the marriage ceremony. Sikh marriage is performed in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. Marriage ceremony of the Sikhs in Assam also performed in presence of Guru Granth Sahib. In an Assamese Sikh marriage nuptials start like common Assamese marriage, one or two days before marriage. The first day of the marriage is called 'Joran diya' when a party of women from the bride-grooms house visits the bride and offers her the good-will gifts in the mode of dresses and ornaments according to one's capacity. Such customs are directly absorbed from the local Assamese culture. The bride groom is given a warm welcome in the bride's residence in a traditional Assamese way by offering him curd, betel-leaf etc. and doing 'Arati' with earthen lamps. These customs are also prevalent among the Assamese
Hindu villagers known as 'Dara Adora' (welcome to bride-groom). For the marriage ceremony, both the parties meet together in front of Guru Granth Sahib. After singing the 'Asa-di-var' (morning hymn), both the bride and bridegroom are seated in front of the Guru Granth Sahib. The bride sits on the left side of the bridegroom. After that, the Granthi or any individual person requests the parents and the couple to stand up and call upon God's blessing. Then the Granthi or the person explained the meaning and importance of the marriage ceremony to the couple and cautioned them about their new duties and responsibilities. The bride and the groom openly concur with the marriage by bowing towards Guru Granth Sahib. Then the father of the bride binds the end of bride's dupatta (muslin scarf) with the scarf of the bridegroom. This system of tying a knot is very common among the marriage customs of Assamese Sikh. This knot is called lagun gathi by Assamese Hindus. Then the Granthi recites the four lavans (marriage hymn) and the couple move round the Guru Granth Sahib four times with each lavan. Of these four lavans, the first verse stresses on discipline. When the first verse of the lavan is read by the ragis. The married couple walk round the Guru Granth Sahib in a clockwise direction. The second lavan lays stress on gradual deepening of love between the couple. The third and the fourth lavan emphasise restraint and the promotion of perfect love and devotion respectively.

The married couple bow down and take their seats at the end of each lavan. Thereafter the first five and the last stanzas of the Anand Sahib are read and the Ardas (Prayer) are offered. The ceremony concludes with the distribution of Karah Prasad.

Marriage customs of Assamese Sikh people have similarities with Sikhs of Punjab. In this context it should be mentioned here that due to constant interactions, common Assamese Hindu customs are prevalent among the Sikhs living in the rural areas of Assam. However, the Sikhs living in the urban areas of Assam are not accustomed with these Assamese Hindu customs.

Assamese Sikh women are very expert in marriage songs prevalent in the Assamese Hindu Societies. From the beginning of the marriage ceremony till the cer-
emony is over, all the stages are beautifully narrated by Assamese women through their marriage songs.

Assamese Sikh boys are not very rigid in selecting a girl for marriage. The first Sikh, settled at Borkola Singh Gaon Subedar Ram Singh married two Assamese Hindu women. Likewise time to time, Sikh boys selected Assamese Hindu girls for marriage. It is through inter-marriages of Assamese Sikh boys with Assamese Hindu girls that the Sikhs mingled with Assamese people and assimilated the Assamese culture.

Initiation Ceremony:

Oxford History of India states that the ceremony of Pahul\textsuperscript{101} or Initiation "or baptism consists essentially of drinking consecrated water stirred by a sword or dagger."\textsuperscript{102}

Since the time of Guru Nanak, until the birth of Khalsa, i.e in 1699, the Sikhs were initiated by 'Charan Amrit' or 'Charan Pahul' which was, in the words of Cole and Sambhi, "prepared by pouring water over the Guru's feet and catching it in a bowl."\textsuperscript{103}

When the child is of a mature age he is brought to the Gurdwara for the Initiation into Sikhism. The initiated person should possess the Five K's and the five beloved Sikhs, performed the initiated ceremony also must keep the Five K's. The person conducting the Initiation ceremony, should be a devout member of Khalsa Community. The ceremony begins with the opening of Guru Granth Sahib. At the beginning of the ceremony, prayer is offered and a granthi recites a passage from the Guru Granth Sahib. Then the Five beloved Sikhs' (Panj Pyaras) chosen for conducting the ceremony prepared Amrit (nectre) in an iron bowl and stirred with Khanda (double edged Sword) by reciting Japji of Guru Nanak, Jap Sahib and ten Swayyas of Guru Gobind Singh, the Chaupai (part of the evening hymn) and the first five and the last stanzas of the Anand Sahib.

Thereafter the initiate person is asked to recite "Waheguru ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji Ki Fateh." (The Khalsa is of God, the victory is to God). After reciting this, the solution which is called amrit, scattered five times on the eyes and hair of the initiated person by reciting 'Waheguru ji Ka Khalsa, 'Waheguru ji Ki Fateh.' The remaining
portion of amrit is drunk by the initiates. Then the Panj Pyares, repeat the Mool Mantra\textsuperscript{104} five times. Thereafter the new members of the Khalsa are advised to follow the essential beliefs and practices.

The ceremony ends by offering the Ardas (Prayer) and distribution of karah Prasad.

Assamese Sikhs like Sikhs in general perform Initiation Ceremony in the village gurdwaras. Generally Assamese Sikhs initiate a boy or a girl before marriage. To make a lapsed one holy or sacred, Assamese Sikhs observe the Initiation Ceremony. Another occasion for Initiation Ceremony among Assamese Sikhs is when an Assamese Sikh boy married to a non-Sikh girl. Like Sikhs in Punjab, Assamese Sikhs also select 'Five beloved Sikhs' or 'Panj Pyares' for conducting the ceremony. The system of preparing 'Amrit' is the same between Sikhs of Punjab and Assam. In the Initiation ceremony of Assamese Sikhs the Granthi recites the passage from the Guru Granth Sahib. Thereafter one of the Panj Pyare, takes out Amrit and sprinkled five times over the eyes and hair of the initiated person. Then the Initiated person is asked to follow certain prohibitions. Of these prohibitions the first four are major prohibitions, i.e. cutting of hair, eating meat killed in the Muhammadan fashion, adultery and the indulgence to intoxication. There are also some lesser prohibitions. Similar to the Sikhs in Punjab Assamese Sikh also conclude the ceremony with the offering of Ardas and distribution of Karah Prasad among the members present in the Gurdwara. But it is customary for all the Sikhs to eat Karah Prasad from the same dish.

**Festivals and Gurparb :**

Encyclopedia of Sikh Religion and culture stated about the Sikh festivals as "The Sikh festivals are generally called Gurparbs connected with the birth and death anniversaries of the Gurus or special historical events like Baisakhi, Holla Mohalla etc."\textsuperscript{105} There are three important festivals of Sikhism i.e, 'Baisakhi', 'Diwali' and 'Holi'.

The day of Baisakhi, i.e. 13th April is the beginning of the New Year of both Punjab and Assam and also it is the beginning of Hindu New Year. Corresponding to Assamese colourful festival Rongali Bihu, Assamese Sikhs also observe Baisakhi festival in Assam. They also celebrate the Bihu festival with great enthusiasm.

On the day of Baisakhi, the Granth Sahib is taken out in the procession, through the streets. Five male Sikhs, represent the 'Panj Piyare' walk before the holy book to lead the procession. Gurdwaras are decorated and prayers also held there.

Assamese Sikhs, being an important constituents of greater Assamese society, participate with full vigour in all the prominent socio-cultural festivities of Assam. During the Bihu festival of Assam, like their Assamese Hindu neighbours, Sikh women also prepare different types of 'Pitha' (cake), Chira or parched rice to entertain guests.

There are three 'Bihus' in Assam. The first one is known as the 'Bohag' Bihu or 'Rongali Bihu', which starts on the middle of April, i.e. last day of Chaitra of the Assamese Calendar month. The first day of the 'Bohag Bihu' is for cattle, the second for men and the third one is for God. All people wear new clothes in the 'Bohag Bihu' and it is customary for women to offer gamocha (hand-made towel) to members of the family and close relatives. Assamese Sikh women also present 'gamocha' to their family members and nearest relatives.

Besides 'Bohag Bihu' Assamese Sikhs celebrate 'Magh Bihu' with their Hindu counterparts. 'Magh Bihu' is called the 'Bhogali Bihu' because of availability of the harvest. As a part of 'Bhogali Bihu' Sikhs in Assam observe fire ceremony on the previous night of Magh Bihu and join the community feast.

Another Bihu festival in Assam is the 'Kati Bihu' or 'Kangali Bihu'. On the day of 'Kati Bihu', Assamese Sikhs plant tulsi and light earthen lamp at the altar of the tulsi plant. They also put earthen lamps in the paddy field and at the granary praying for a better harvest.

'Diwali' is another important festival for the Sikhs. It is celebrated with great enthusiasm. It has also historical significance, because on this day Guru Hargobind
reached Amritsar after release from Gwalior prison. It is celebrated in the month of October / November corresponding to the Assamese Calendar month Kati (Kartik). During Diwali, Gurdwaras are decorated with clay lamps. On this day, Assamese Sikhs assemble together in the village Gurdwara and the Granthi recite the Guru Granth Sahib. Earthen lamps with oil are lighted in every home of both Assamese Sikhs and Hindus. Assamese Hindus also celebrate this festival with great enthusiasm.

'Holi' is another colourful festival celebrated by the Sikhs in Assam. It is also the festival of Hindus. Holi is celebrated in the month of February/March. On the occasion of Holi, Assamese Sikhs assemble in the Gurdwaras. Guru Gobind Singh started a new festival known as 'Holla Mohalla'. But this festival is not very familiar with Sikhs in Assam.

**Gurparb:**

In the Gurdwaras of Assamese Sikhs, all the Gurparbs are celebrated by the villagers. On the occasion of Gurparbs, akhand Path of the Guru Granth Sahib is organised by the villagers in the village Gurdwaras. Birthdays of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh and the day of martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev are celebrated all over the world. Birthday of Guru Nanak is celebrated in the month of November at the village Borkola Singh Gaon, Nowgong Assam. And on 1st April, birthday of Guru Tegh Bahadur is celebrated in 'Gurdwara Mataji' of Chaparmukh. Death anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur is celebrated in 'Gurdwara Tegh Bahadur Sahibji', Dhubri with great enthusiasm. A large number of Sikhs, even from outside Assam also assemble in the 'Gurdwara Tegh Bahadur Sahibji' of Dhubri on the occasion of Death anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur. On the occasion of Gurparb, all the Sikh people visit the gurdwara and join the prayer at different times of the day. Then processions are taken out from the Gurdwara by carrying the Guru Granth Sahib, through the village or city. The procession is either on a van bedecked with flowers or on a pedestal. The processions utter the slogans like 'Waheguru ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji Ki fateh,'; 'Bole so nihal, Sat Sri akal'. 
(whosoever speaks "God is true' will ever be happy) etc. At the end of the processions, the devotees return to their particular Gurdwaras and take their meal. In the evening, the gurdwaras and the houses of the Sikh villagers are illuminated with candles and clay lamps.

**Conclusion:**

The evidence of Guru Nanak's visit to Assam as explained in the Janam Sakhis is obscure. There are diverse opinions of Janam-Sakhis, concerning the visit of Guru Nanak to Kāurū or Kāvāru (Kamrup). In this regard the version of Puratan Janam-Sakhi differs from Miharban and Bala Janam-Sakhis. Janam-Sakhis also differ with regard to the magic woman Nur Shah. Only Puratan Janam-Sakhi refers to the name of magic woman Nur Shah. Some Janam-Sakhis omit the name of magic woman. Such controversial comments make the above mentioned views more ambiguous. This does not mean that, Nur Shah, the magic woman never existed, but the fact is that we can no longer accept the version of Janam-Sakhis as beyond doubt.

Regarding the visit of Tegh Bahadur also there are different opinions. According to some historian, Tegh Bahadur was in Assam before, Ram Simha, the Rajput General came to Assam. Others are of the opinion that Tegh Bahadur came with Ram Simha. Therefore historians are not unanimous regarding the date of Tegh Bahadur's visit to Assam.

Sikhism is against any kind of ceremonies, external forms and rituals. However Sikhs in Assam observe some rituals due to the influence of local culture. For example, on the occasion of birth of a child in a family, Assamese Sikhs observe various rituals. Likewise they have to observe some rituals connected with death, initiation, marriage etc. In this regard we have noticed considerable impact of Assamese Hindu folk beliefs and customs upon Sikhs in Assam. Therefore observance of such rites and rituals goes against the fundamental teaching of Sikhism.

Sikhism, as a religion, displays uniformity in the world. Social ethics of
Sikhism in Assam may differ from Sikhism in Punjab due to regional and traditional influences. In this context, we may quote the following remark of Swami Sivananda "Thus in different regions and at different times, many forms of religion sprang up, their fundamental ideals being almost identical and yet their ritualistic practices widely divergent. This diversity in religious practices was mainly due to the cultural background of the races and their historical traditions and customs and manners of life."  

Ceremonies play a significant role in our religious life. Observing the importance of religious ceremonies C.H. Toy mentions that "They have been the most popularly effective presentation of religious ideas, and they have preserved for us religious conceptions that without them would have remained unknown."  

The underlying motive of the various ceremonies is the same throughout the world. These ceremonies reflect the various cultural significances of people. "We are what we are not because of our individuality but rather as members of the great Indian society." Yinger mentions about the importance of ceremonies as "Ceremonies periodically held, serve to impress on men their social nature and make them aware of something beyond themselves which they feel and believe to be sacred."  

External observances of ceremonial functions do not reflect the essence of true religion. True religion in the words of A.C. Dasgupta "is not so much an affair of external demonstration through worthy expression or through ceremonial functions. It essentialy consists in the inward functions or spiritual efforts of self-regulation."  

References

3. Nur Shah was a female magician of medieval Assam.
5. Trilochan Singh, Guru Nanak Founder of Sikhism, P. 205, 1969
8. Sankardeva preached 'Ekasaraniya Dharma' in Assam.
11. ibid, P.213
12. ibid, PP 213-214
14. ibid, P. 64
15. ibid.
16. ibid, PP 66-67
17. ibid, P.67
18. W.O. Cole and P.S. Sambhi, The Sikhs, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices,
    P. xvi, 1978
21. R.C. Dogra and G.S. Mansukhani, Encyclopedia of Sikh Religion and Culture,
    P.115, 1995
22. Z. Faruki, Aurangzeb and His Times, P.251, 1935
23. Dr. Gopal Singh, A History of the Sikh People, P.248, 1979
24. ibid, PP 248-249
25 S.K.Bhuyan, Atan Buragohain And His Times, P.65, 1957
27. After the death of Jayadhvaj Simha, Supungmung, who assumed The Hindu name
    Chakradhvaj Simha became The Ahom King, Edward Gait, A History of Assam,
    PP 155-60, Reprint 1967
29. The Moghul outpost "was situated at Rangamati lying on the road between Dhubri and Bilasipara," S.K. Bhuyan, Atan Buragohain and His Times, P. 9, 1957
30. S.S. Johar, op cit, P.31, 1977
33. ibid, P. 356
34. This stone of Netai Dhubuni Ghat of Dhubri is lying even today in the same position. It is said by people that a British officer tried to ruin the stone, but he failed in his attempt, because blood exuded out of it.
36. S.K. Bhuyan, Lachit Borphukan and His Times, P.115, 1947
37. A.S. Mann, SAT SRI AKAL TRACT.... No.30 Relation of the Sikh Community with Assam, P7
38. D.S. Dhillon, Sikhism origin and Development, P.145, 1988
39. A.S. Mann, op cit, P.8
40. D.S. Dhillon, op cit, P.143, 1988
41. S.L. Barua, A Comprehensive History of Assam, P.350, 1985
42. S.K. Bhuyan, Anglo Assamese Relations, P.431, 1947
44. Gunabhiram Barua, Assam Buranji (Assamese) P.143, 1972
45. E.Gait, A History of Assam, P.235, Reprint 1967
46. Gunabhiram Barua, op cit, P.143, 1972
47. Maheswar Neog, Sanchayan (Assamese) P.291, 1959
48. "Monumati" is a historical novel written by Rajajikanta Bordoloi. In this novel Bordoloi describes the battle of Hadirachaki.
49. Bordoloi in his novel 'Manumati' mentioned that Chaitanya Singh's wife also with him at the battle of Hadirachaki.

51. Kajalimukh is in the Nowgong district of Assam. It is about twenty four kilometres from Gauhati, Nowgong District Gazetteer, P.11, 1978

52. Jatha is "an organised group of Sikhs for religio-political mission," Encyclopedia of Sikh Religion and Culture, Dogra and Mansukhani, P.235, 1995

53. Kapili river rises in the Jaintia Hill (Meghalaya) flows North and North-east winding through the Jaintia Hills and North Kachar Hills, Nowgong District gazetteer, P.12, 1978


55. Political History of Assam, File No 121, year 1928, Forward 1935, State Archives, Gauhati PP 12-13

56. File No-16, Abstract & Intelligence, Assam Police, P.23, 1941

57. ibid.

58. S.L. Barua, A comprehensive History of Assam, P.18, 1985


60. 'Bihu is a National festival of Assam, P.Chaliha, Aspects of Assamese Culture, P.77, 1994

61. Sankardeva the saint poet of Assam and the preceptor of the Vaishnavite movement in Assam, was a member of the Bara Bhuyan family and was born at Bordowa, Nowgong District in 1449 A.D. (Nowgong District Gazetteer, 1978, P. 58) Madhavadeva was the disciple of Sankardeva. After Sankardeva's demise he took the place of his master.

62. A. Mann, Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur And Assam Pradesh, P(V) preface, 1959,

63. The 'Dhol' is the common drum used in Bihu festival of Assam. 'Pepa is also an instrument. It is usually a "reedpipe connected to a buffalo-horn." 'Gagana' is a
"small, split Bamboo instrument" J.Das, Folklore of Assam, P.137, 1972,

64. ibid, P.81

65. Mekhela-Chaddar is the national dress of Assamese woman.

66. Gamocha or Bihuwan is originally a bath towel; but it is used as a token of love and respect.

67. 'Bhagavat' is the holy book of the Vaishnava people of Assam.


69. ibid,

70. ibid, P.171

71. A.S. Sethi and R. Pummer (Ed) Comparative Religion, P.124, 1979 (copyright)

72. 'Wooden Pedestal' refers to a 'seat' where a holy book is placed on.

73. Kirtan is "the singing of songs in praise of God, generally by a group and generally to the accompaniment of music," W.H. Mcleod, Guru Nanak and The Sikh Religion, P. 243, 1968,

74. S.S. Johar, Handbook on Sikhism, P.131, 1977,

75. R. Malakar (Ed), Teachings of Sri Sankardeva, PP 118-119, 1977

76. "Sravana-Kirtana was considered to be the best of all kinds of Bhakti," H.V. Sreenivasa Murthy, "Vaishnavism of Sankardeva and Ramanuja, A Comparative Study', Ph.D. thesis, Gauhati University, P. 199, 1960

77. Leaving aside their extensive contributions, chief works of Sankardeva are 'Kirtana', 'Dasam' or 'Bhagavata' and Madhavadeva's Chief works are 'Namghosa' and 'Bhakti Ratnavli'

78. A Granthi "may be paid a salary (sewa) to read the scriptures, conduct services and perform such ceremonies as marriages, but his role is purely functional," W.O. Cole and P.S. Sambhi, The Sikhs, PP.64-65, 1978

79. 'Anand Sahib' is the blissful hymn written by third Guru Amar Das.


81. Vak "is the opening of Guru Granth Sahib at random and read the first hymn
which meets the eye to obtain what is called Vak, or the day's lesson or order hukm," in The Sikh Review, Vol XXXIII, No 382, P.7, Oct' 1995

82. Karah Parshad is a kind of Pudding prepared with flour, sugar, ghee and water in the appointed manner.

83. 'Langar' is a free community Kitchen, D.S. Dhillon, Sikhism Origin And Development, PP 203-206, 1988

84. "Holy for Hindus is a Krishna festival marking the beginning of Spring. It falls in the bright-half of Phalguna (February-March)", W.O. Cole and P.S. Sambhi, The Sikhs, P.131, 1978

85. Diwali is celebrated by both Hindus and Sikhs as a festival of light and deliverance.

86. 'Samkranti' is the middle day of two months.

87. P.S. Gill, Heritage of Sikh Culture, P.118, 1975

88. 'Jap Sahib' is the composition of Guru Gobind Singh, which is the morning prayer of the Sikhs.

89. Ten Swayyas are also composed by Guru Gobind Singh and recited by Sikhs as the morning prayer.

90. Akhand Paths are undertaken by adult male Sikhs one after another.

91. This 'amrit' is called 'Kaccha amrit'

92. C.H. Toy, Introduction to History of Religions' P.82, 1924

93. Asa-di-Var, is the morning hymn of The Sikhs, composed by first Sikh Guru Nanak.


95. C.H. Toy, Introduction to History of Religions, P.76, 1924

96. 'Anand Rites' mean according to 'Anand Marriage Act, 1909', S.S. Johar, The Sikh Gurus and Their Shrines, P.19, 1976


98. Among the Assamese Hindus the knot which binds together bridegroom and bride is called 'Lagun Gathi'

99. 'Lavan' is a marriage hymn composed by Guru Ram Das for his daughter's
marriage. It describes the marital love between bride and the bridegroom,


100. Ragi is the musician.

101. 'Pahul' means baptism or initiation. It is "a rite of admittance into a militant order,"
Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol 20, P. 647. copyright 1962

102. The Oxford History of India, Vincent. A. Smith, P.454, 1923


104. 'Mool Mantra' or the Sacred formula of the Sikhs, S.S. Kohli, Philosophy of
Guru Nanak, P.27, 1969

105. Encyclopedia of Sikh Religion and Culture, R.C. Dogra & Dr-G.S, Mansukhani,
P.142, 1995

106. "The Spring time Bihu is the Rangali Bihu or the Bihu that Cheers,"
P.D. Goswami, Bohag Bihu of Assam and Bihu Songs, P.4, 1988

107. 'Magh Bihu' or Bhogali Bihu' is the harvest festival of Assam. Bhogali Bihu is
celebrated in the middle of January.

108. 'Kati Bihu' or Kongali Bihu is "observed on the last day of Ahin; it is the Kangali
or beggar's Bihu, for there is nothing much to eat at this time," P.D. Goswami,
Bohag Bihu of Assam and Bihu Songs, P.5, 1988

109. Festival of 'Holla Moholla' was celebrated on the day after Holi. Mock-battle is
organised on the occasion of Holla Moholla'.


111. World Parliament of Religions, Commemoration Volume, The Yoga Vedanta Forest
University, P. 527, 1956,

112. C.H. Toy, Introduction to History of Religions, P.97, 1924

113. The Indian Culture, Mahendra Jayanti Volume, P.56, 1951

114. J.M. Yinger, Religion, Society and The Individual, P. 376, 1957

115. A.C. Dasgupta, A Dose of Gandhism in Indian Culture, Mahendra Jayanti Volume,
P.339