CHAPTER-IV

INFLUENCE OF SUFISM ON ASSAMESE CULTURE AND SOCIETY.
INFLUENCE OF SUFISM

The Original source of Sufism is believed to have been the ilm -i- Sina ' or one of the two - fold revelation received by Hazarat Muhammad ; and it gathered volume ' by the Joining of the tributaries of different ideas and thoughts from neo- Platonism, Christianity, and Buddhism and the religions of ancient Persia -About its growth and development . Evelyn Underhill observes :" Sufi or Muhammadan mysticism , appearing in the eighth century in the beautiful figure of Rabi'a the Muslem St. Teresa ( 717-801 ) and continued by the martyr Al Hallaj ( ob , 922), attained literary expression in the eleventh in the ; Confessions ' of Al Ghazzali ( 1058-IllI ) and has its classic period in the thirteenth in th works of te mystic poets Attar ( c. 11 40 -1234) Sadi ( 1184-1263) and the saintly . Jalalu'd Din ( 12o7-1273) . Mansur al Hallaj has been regarded as the greatest of the early Muslim pantheists. From the theories preached by him, different leaders like Ibn al- Arabi, Abdul Karim Jili, later worked up different systems and their influence reached India , Mansur -al- Hallaj's conception of the relation of God with man has an analogy with Hindu idea of illumination of buddhi by purusa Ibn-al Arabi preached that Good manifests Himself in every atom of creation Abdul Karim Jili ( d. 1406-17) who flourished about a century and a half after Arabi , appears to have developed this pantheism further . He preached that all beliefs were thoughts about one reality, the differences are due to the variety of names and attributes and all together contribute to the perfection of the whole , To him therefore , the monistic philosophy of Vedanta became indistinguishable from Islam .

It appears that he was acquainted with Hinduism to such an extent that he included Brahmana (Brahima) as one of the ten principal sects of his order. It is said that the Muslims adopted the fourfold vows of cleanliness, purity, truth and poverty—and the use of the rosary—from Indian ascetics. Similarly, the Sufi idea of Fana or the total annihilation of the soul is believed to have been derived from the Buddhist conception of Nirvana. To attain his goal a sufi is required to surrender himself to a teacher or Murrshid, commonly known as Pir or Saikh whom he should regard as the representative of God. This faith in the leader is carried to such a degree that the sufi sees the master in all men and in all things and believes that he never dies but departs from one habitation to another. The pilgrimage to the shrines and tombs of their saints is therefore, held by the Sufis in high esteem. Percival Spear observes that this habit of reverencing saints and worshiping them in the tombs or shrines by the Sufis has been developed under Indian influence in Assam.

The terms Sufi, Wali, Darvesh and Faqir are used for Muslim saints who attempted to achieve development of their intuitive faculties through ascetic exercises, contemplation, renunciation and self-denial. By the 12th century A.D., Sufism had become a universal aspect of Islamic social life as its influence extended over almost the entire Muslim community. 2

Sufism represents the inward or esoteric side of Islam or the mystical dimension of Muslim religion. However, the Sufi saints transcending all religious and communal distinctions, worked for promoting the interest of humanity at large. The Sufis were a class of philosophers remarkable for their religious catholicity. Sufis regarded God as the supreme beauty and believed that one must admire it, take delight in His thought and concentrate his attention on Him only. They believed that God is 'Mashuq' and Sufis are the 'Ashiqs'. Sufism crystallized itself into various 'Silsilahs' or orders. The 4 most popular among these were Chistis, Suhrawardis, Qadiriyahs and Naqshbandis.

2. Ibid, P-12.
Sufism took roots in both rural and urban areas and exercised a deep social, political and cultural influence on the masses. It rebelled against all forms of religious formalism, orthodoxy, falsehood and hypocrisy and endeavoured to create a new world order in which spiritual bliss was the only and the ultimate goal. At a time when struggle for political power was the prevailing madness, the Sufi saints reminded men of their moral obligations. To a world torn by strife and conflict they tried to bring peace and harmony. The most important contribution of Sufism is that it helped to blunt the edge of Hindu-Muslim prejudices by forging the feelings of solidarity and brotherhood between these two religious communities.

A. The movement for propagation and its Result

Islam as preached by Prophet Muhammad was a simple religion in philosophy he is unsurpassed for the penetrating keenness of his mind and the subtlety of his thought. The philosophers introduced neo-Platonic ideas of emanation into Muslim thought and sowed the seeds whose intellectual harvest was gathered by the Sufis. If Ghazali starting from dogma landed into mysticism, Ibn Sina whose point of departure was Greek philosophy reached the same destination. He held that reason was of value in science only, but beyond reason was intuition which gave a simpler, more direct, and more adequate knowledge of the absolute truth. 3

His metaphysics served as grist to the Sufistic mill, for he conceived of the ultimate reality as eternal beauty, whose nature being self-expression, it saw itself reflected in the universe-mirror. This self-expression is love, for love is appreciation of the beauty which is perfection. Love is thus the moving energy of the world, it makes beings strive after their original perfection from which in creation they have travelled away, and it is by love that the human soul realises its unity with the ultimate reality. Every avenue of thought thus led to Sufism, whether it was Mutazalah dialectics, orthodox scholasticism or pure philosophy. Apparently the causes

of such a convergence were not merely logical necessity, there were deeper social causes among others the exhaustion of the energy which had led to the establishment of a world-wide empire, and the rise of the nationalistic spirit which brought about the downfall of the Abbaside Caliphate. Their result in the domain of thought is clear: from the twelfth century onwards the sway of Sufism becomes increasingly dominant over the Muslim mind; literature, philosophy and religion become all subject to its sovereign power. It is time then to turn back and trace the beginning and gradual development of Sufi tendencies in Islam. Sufism is a complex phenomenon; it is like a stream which gathers volume by the joining of tributaries from many lands. Its original source is the Qoran and the life of Muhammad. Christocentrism and neo-Platonism swelled it by a large contribution. Hinduism and Buddhism supplied a number of ideas, and the religions of ancient Persia Zoroastrianism, Monism, etc., brought to it their share. Muhammad was a mystic, and the mystical note sounds clearly in the utterances of the Qoran. The Mecca Suras mainly and the Medina Suras occasionally are charged with deep religious devotion and ascetic feeling. They teach absolute dependence and renunciation. God is spoken of as the light of the heavens and earth. God says concerning the believers, He loves them and they love Him and therefore He bears the beautiful name of lover (wudud). Again, the Qoran says, Those who walk meekly on the earth, and when the ignorant speak to them answer Peace shall be rewarded with the highest place in Paradise." Then from the earliest times there were among Muslims the devotees who were continually engaged in reading the Qoran, and the penitents (BalfVaan) who kept fasts and made orisons. In spite of Muhammad's insistence upon moderation, asceticism and abstinence were regarded as specially commendable by those called ZahiJ (abstainers) and 'Ubbad (servants), whose motto was flee from the world (al-firar min al-duniya).4 These ascetics developed the ordinary rites by works of supererogation, their dialectics,
prayers were more numerous and more highly spiritualised, their fasts more continuous and severer. Naturally their ethics and mode of living were held up as an example of saintly life, and their services utilised in roles of preachers, arbiters, ambassadors and leaders. When the Muslims came into contact with the Christians these tendencies were accentuated in liturgical matters, meditation and repetition of God's name and prayer (dhikr) and in ethical, complete detachment from affairs of personal interest, utter dependence upon God (ta'aghül), rejection of material goods (fuqr), indifference towards suffering or sickness, praise or blame. Abu 'Abdullah al Harith al-Muhasibi (d. 857-58), who is the earliest Sufi author whose work is preserved, shows evident traces of the use of the Christian Gospels, one of his works beginning with the Parable of the Sower and another being an expansion of the Sermon on the Mount. The neo-Platonists strengthened the feeling of contempt for the world and supported the leanings towards divine life by their doctrines of emanation and of dynamic pantheism. The neo-Platonic ideas passed into Islam when, in the beginning of the ninth century, Greek works were translated into Arabic. The third foreign source of Muslim mysticism was Indian. It has been pointed out in an earlier chapter that India and the Persian Gulf had a close commercial intercourse; with trade, undoubtedly, ideas were exchanged. It stands to reason that if things of material use like Indian steel and sword and Indian gold and precious stones, and if things of artistic value like the pointed arch and the bulbous dome, reached Persia and Iraq, Indian philosophical ideas should have travelled there too. Many Indians held posts in the financial department at Basra under the early Umayyada the Caliph Muawiya is reported to have planted a colony of them in Syria specially Antioch, and Hajjaj to have established them in Kashgar. The black-eyed and olive-complexioned Hindus were brushing their shoulders against those of the Muslims in the cities of the Caliphate.

The eastern dominions of the empire, that is, Khorasan, Afghanistan, Sistan and Baluchistan were Buddhist or Hindu before they were converted.

5. http://www.india.govt.in
Balkh had a large monastery (Vihara) whose superintendent was known as the Baramak. His descendants became the famous Barmakide Vizirs of the Abbaside Caliphs. Then the Arabs familiarised themselves from early times with Indian literature and sciences. They translated Buddhist works in the second century of the Hijra, for instance, Kitabcd- Bud, and ' Bildwhar wa Budasif Mr; treatises on astronomy and medicine called ' Sindhind ' (Siddhdnta) and ' Shushrud (Susruta) and Sirak (Ch/iara^a) ; story books like Kalilah Damnah (Panchatantra) and Kitab SiWbtd; ethical books of Shanaq (Chdriakya) and Btdpa (Hitopadesa) ; and treatises on logic and military science. They were exceedingly keen on informing themselves of the customs, manners, sciences and religions of the people with whom they came into contact. Al-Kindt wrote a book on Indian religions, Sulaiman and Mas'udi collected information in their travels which they used in their writings. Al-Nadim, Al-Ash'ari, Al-Biruni, Shahrestan! and many others devoted chapters in their books to describe and discuss Indian religious and philosophic systems.

The legend of Buddha entered into Muslim literature as the type of the saintly man, and Muslim hagiologists assimilated the stories of Ibn Ad ham to the Buddhist legend. Indian ascetics travelling in pairs and staying not more than two nights at one place were directly known to the Muslim adepts, who took from them their fourfold vows of cleanliness, purity, truth and poverty and the use of the rosary. What wonder then that the conception of Nirvntya, the discipline of the eightfold path, the practice of Yoga and the acquaintance of miraculous powers were appropriated in Islam under the names of Fana, Tariqa or Saluk* Maraqabah and Karamat or Af'u;*ird. 6

Two periods may be distinguished in the history of Sufism. The first from the earliest times to the beginning of the ninth century, and the second from the ninth century onwards; during the first period, Sufism was merely tendencious and possessed no system; during the second, it developed metaphysical systems and the organization of monastic orders.

6. Ibid.
The leaders of saintly life in the first period were ascetics, quietists and recluses, Kufa and Basra were their two main centres. The name Sufi was first applied to Abu Hashint of Kufa who died in 778 A.D. But the Sufi writers include among the early mystics 50 Imam Ja'far Sadiq (d. 765 A.D.), Hasan al Basri (d. 728 A.D.), Uwais al Qarani (fl. 1st cent. A.D.), Daud al-Tal (d. 781 A.D.); Shaqiq Balkhi (d. 810 A.D.), Ibrahim ibn Adham (d. 777 A.D.); Rabi'a al Adawiya (d. 753 A.D.), HabTb 'Ajmi (d. 899 A.D.), Abu Hanifa N'uman (d. 768 A.D.), al-Kharraz (pupil of Hasan), Futfayl ibn 'Ayaz (d. 803 A.D.). The chief characteristic of their belief was the submission of human will to God. They were seekers more of piety and other-worldliness than of divine knowledge, they had an exaggerated consciousness of sin and an overwhelming dread of divine retribution, yet they had early developed emotional and ecstatic features and they negated the externalia of religion. 7

Among Rabi'a al 'Adawiya's sayings there are many which show emotional tendencies. For instance, Consume with fare, O God, a (presumptuous) heart which loveth Thee. I reserve my heart for Thy converse, (O Lord!) and leave my body to keep company with those who desire my society. My body is thus the companion of the visitor, but my dearly beloved is the companion of my heart. She is reported to have said that the love of God had so taken possession of her soul that there was no room left even for the love of the Prophet, much less of hatred for the devil. The fear of death and of the day of judgement was expressed in many ways. Rabi'a says, O my soul I how long wilt thou sleep to rise no more, till the call shall summon thee on the day of resurrection." Uwais Qarani speaking to Harun ibn Hayyan said, my father died, Adam and Eve died, Noah and Abraham died, Moses, son of Amran died, David, Caliph of God, died, Muham-mad, the prophet of God, died, Abu Baler, his Caliph, died, my brother 'Urmar died, and my friend died... and this is my last advice to thee, keep always before thee the Book of God and the path of the righteous, and do not for a moment allow thyself to become heedless of death. The second period of Sufism began in the

ninth century; the calm monotheistic quietism of the first, having absorbed
Sht' ah theories and foreign notions, blossomed out in surprisingly short time
into full-fledged pantheistic mysticism. The Sufis of the period fall into several
groups, men of similar temperaments clustering together round some pious
leader. These groups eventually evolved several orders and different
systems, according to the differences of emphasis on particular doctrines,
details of organization, and philosophical schemes. In this manner arose the
early schools 09 which Hujwiri has described fully. Among them were the
followers of Muhasibf who has been mentioned above as a writer of Christian
tendencies; opposed to them were the Qassdri* or Malamatia who pushed
detachment from the world to extremes and voluntarily sought the contempt of
men. The followers of Junaid of Baghdad were prudent and sober; they
condemned formalism and preached a religion of sincerity. The Sahtis laid
emphasis on self-mortification. Abu Sa'id Kharraz was the first to explain the
states of annihilation (/ana) and subsistence (baqa). Lastly, there were the
extreme Sufis who held the doctrines of incarnation (hulul), commixture
(imftza;); and transmigration of spirits. 8

But the man who produced the greatest stir in the Islamic world by the
boldness of his doctrines was Husain bin Mantui al-Hallaj. 60 His theories
were later worked up in the systems of Ibn al Arabi and 'Abdul Karim Jili and
in the poetry of Ibn al Faridh and 'Abu Sa'id Ibn Abul Khair and their influence
spread to far off countries including India. Ghazali, Hujwiri and 'Attar
attempted to reconcile him to orthodoxy. The story of Mansur's life is well
known. He started his career as an ordinary Sufi under the guidance of such
well-known Shaikhs pre the Sufi garments and put on worldly clothes. He
began to preach as an apostle of God and offended the Jurists for apostleship
was a breach of traditions and the government, because it savoured of Shi* ah legitimism. He travelled about in many lands, among them India, and
thrice visited Mecca. At last his activities became so obnoxious that he was

arrested. He was kept in prison for a long time, was tortured and at last executed in 922 A.D. As Kabir, Dadu, Nanak and other Indian saints used the language of Muslim Sufism, it is necessary to briefly explain Mansur’s mystical system, for his terms became the current coinage of Sufism. 9

Before creation, God was in. His unity, holding ineffable discourse with Himself and contemplating the splendour of His own essence, and this radical simplicity of His admiration is Love, “which in His essence is the essence of essence,” beyond all modelisations in attributes. In His perfect isolation (infirad) God was illuminated by Love, and from this illumination came themultiplicity of His attributes and names. Then in order to see His supreme joy He projected out of the pre-eternal (ozo/) an image of Himself, that is, of His attributes and names. This was Adam. Thus the absolute God in His divinity (Idhat) became in Adam God in Humanity (ndsui). Mansur conceived of the relation of God with man as the infusion of the divine into the human soul ; in Hindu terms, the illumination of buddhi by Puruwa. The divine spirit produces the illumination where become that which I love, and that which I love becomes mine. We are two spirits, infused in one body, to see me is to see Him, to see Him is to see us.” U7 Apparently Mansur was not a thorough-going monist in spite of his declaration “I am God (anal Hag), for according to him there was still some difference of level or potential between the Absolute and His image. Qushair! (d. 1072) introduced into Sufi thought the neo-Platonic idea of creation by intermediary agencies, and Ibn Sina the conception of ultimate reality as eternal beauty, seeing its reflection in the universe-mirror. Thus the idea that God was both transcendent and immanent grew, and from the pantheistic view it followed that all * otherness * was mere illusion, and the feeling of separateness was due to ignorance, which could only be dissipated by knowledge. This school 08 had three basic ideas in the first place, the ultimate reality was knowledge through a supersensual state of consciousness ; secondly, the ultimate reality was impersonal ; and thirdly, the ultimate reality was one. There were many other schools of mystic

speculation, but two are of special importance: those who regarded the ultimate reality as light (nur) and those who regarded it as thought. The chief exponent of the first was Shaikh Shahab uddin Suhrawardi (d. 1209), and of the second Ibn al 'Arabi (d. 1241) and his commentator 'Abdul Karim Jill (d. 1406). Shahab Uddin began his studies at Maragha and then migrated to Aleppo. The independence of his thought made him suspect in the eyes of the authorities. He was denounced by the QOZJ and executed by the order of Saladin. He wrote a number of works on what is called Hikmat al hhraq (illuminative philosophy). The chain of ideas links him with Plotinus, M'anf, and Zoroaster. In his philosophy the ultimate principle of all existence is Light (Nur-f- Qdhir), whose essential nature consists in perpetual illumination. This light is self -existent, self -manifesting, indefinable. Not- light is its negation and is necessary for its manifestation. Not- light like the Indian Maya is non-existent. Light is the source of existence. It has two kinds of illuminations. First, the abstract, which is without form or limitation and is not an attribute of any other substance. Its essence is consciousness or knowledge.

It is the principle of universal intellect and of its distant reflection, the individual intellect. Secondly, the accidental, which has form and which is capable of becoming an attribute. It is a reflection of the abstract light and is contingent upon it. To light, which is the principle of absolute matter, two kinds of material beings belong (1) the obscure substance or atom which is beyond space, and (2) the forms which are necessarily in space. These two give rise to all material bodies. 10

From the abstract Light to material bodies the whole universe is a continuous series of circles of substance all depending on the Original Light. Those near the source receive more light than those that are distant, and all strive to move towards the original fountain of Light with the intense passion and eternal attraction of Love. Thus the universe lives in and moves by Love.

The human soul is the highest dwelling place of the abstract illumination,

10. http://www.india.gov.in
which enters the body of man which is composed of not-light, through the medium of the animal soul which is midway between not-light and light. The human soul longs for greater and greater illumination in order to gain complete freedom from the world of form or not-light; this is realised through knowledge and action. The human soul has five external and five internal senses which belong to the power of light; and it has faculties or functions like growth, assimilation, digestion, which belong to the power of not-light. They together form the unity of the organism, they are associated with abstract illumination as the enlightened but passive Puruuaa is associated with the blind but active manas. There are three constituents of the human soul (manaa=aq’) (1) reason or intelligence (sattoa), (2) courage and ambition (rajas), and (3) lust, hunger and passion (famos). The harmonisation of the three results in justice which is the highest virtue. The individual soul is ever progressive. It strives unceasingly for total illumination and final absorption. Death does not end its strivings. When the material machinery which it adopts in one life is exhausted it takes up another body and rises higher and higher in different spheres of Being until it reaches its destination, which is the state of absolute annihilation (land). When all the souls which are journeying towards their common source have reached their goal the universe is dissolved and then another cycle of creation follows, similar to the first one; and so cycles of absorption and evolution continue. The spiritual goal of man is enlightenment. He has to tread the path of saintship in order to attain it. On the path are stations, five of which may be distinguished. First is the stage of ’/’, feeling of personality and selfishness; second of ’Thou art nor/ complete absorption in self; third of am not, 9 a reaction of the second; fourth of ’Thou art/ complete resignation to God; and the fifth of ’/ am nor, and thou art not/ cosmic consciousness, annihilation of distinctions of subject and object. Ibn al ’Arab? (d. 1 24 1) 70 is one of the greatest authorities on Sufi philosophy. He regarded both nature and man as the mirrors which displayed Cod Himself.

11.Ibid.
God manifests Himself in every atom of creation; He is revealed in every intelligible object and concealed from every intelligence except the intelligence of those who say that the universe is His form and first self (sura/i wa huwayah), inasmuch as He stands in the same relation to phenomenal objects as the spirit to the body. 71 Regarding the relation of God and man he says, *' man is the form of God, and God is the spirit of man" 72 By means of man God beholds the objects which He has created. Man is the substance of every attribute wherewith he endows God; when he contemplates God he contemplates himself, and God contemplates Himself when He contemplates man. Attainment of the knowledge of God was the only end of man, for complete union with Him was not possible as long as the body lasted. The knowledge is gained by faith and contemplation, in which human reason divests itself of its discursive or reflective faculty. The end of knowledge is transcendental unconsciousness, where the phenomenal vanishes in the presence of the eternal. 12

The practical inference from this pantheism was that God could be worshipped in innumerable ways, and that all religions contained truth. For if all things are a manifestation of the Divine substance God may be worshipped in a star or a calf or any other object, and consequently there should be complete tolerance towards all creeds. He says, "every one praises what he believes, his God is His own creature, and in praising it he praises himself. Consequently he blames the beliefs of others, which he would not do if he were just, but his dislike is based on ignorance. If he knew Junaid's saying, the water takes its colour from the vessel containing it he would not interfere with the beliefs of others, but would perceive God in every form and every belief. About a century and a half later than Ibn al Arabi ived Abdul Karim Al Jifi 75 (d. 1406/17), who wrote a commentary on his predecessor's work, Futuhdt al-M<zfefe:ya/i and an inde-pendent treatise on Su/fam called the Perfect Man ' (Insan al KdmiT). Jili does not rank in intellectual power or philosophical insight as an equal of Arabi. His treatise is full of digressions.

on all kinds of occult subjects and his philosophy can only be pieced together with such patient labour as has been bestowed upon it by Nicholson and iqbal. From their accounts the following abstract of his system is drawn.

There is one Being which exists in two modes, the absolute or unmanifest and the qualified or manifest. The absolute is unknowable per se, for it is beyond all relation, beyond being and not-being, a sum of contradictions. This absolute (wujud mutlaq) which is devoid of all qualities and relations exists enveloped in cecity ('ama). The first step in its manifestation is when it emerges from the darkness without becoming externally manifest; it is still free from name and attributes and is a unity comprehending diversity. The external aspect of this bare potentiality is abstract oneness (ahadiya), when Being is conscious of itself as a unity. The second step is taken when the abstract unity (ahadiya) manifests itself in two aspects of he-ness (huu); ya) and I -ness ('anniya). In the first or inward state the Being is conscious of itself as negating the many (attributes), in the second or outward state as the truth of the many. The third step is that of Unity in Plurality (wahidiya), when Being identifies itself as one with Itself as many. The last step brings the absolute out of darkness into light, out of the unconscious into the conscious, out of nirguna into saguna, into the sphere of Divinity with distinctive attributes embracing the whole series of existence. At last the absolute has become the subject and object of all thought, the noumenal has become the phenomenal. 13

The Divinity ( : Idhiya) is the highest manifestation of the absolute. It is a name for the sum of the individualitations of Being, for the sum of all the attributes, it is revealed in two aspects of mercy and lordship; in the first it is in the relation of creator (al-hoqq) to the created things (al-kAalq)-, and in the second it is as the preserver and roaintainer in their respective order of the created things, The Divinity is known through its names and attributes. The names appertain to its essence (dhat). beauty Gamoft arande Hir (jalal) and perfection (kamal). The principal attributes are life, knowledge,

13.Ibid.
will, power, speech, hearing and sight. The universe is the embodiment of the Divine idea, the objectification of the absolute. The universe is ice, God, water. God is the substance (hayula) of the cosmos. The sensible world is idea, thought or dream, but not unreal, it is reality as presented to itself through and in the cosmic consciousness of the perfect man which holds all the attributes of reality together. The thing-in-itself is the collection of attributes, it is built of idea and has no other existence. In Jill’s cosmological myth, the idea of ideas (haq'tqat al haqa'iq) existed as a white chrysolite (ydqut-al-baidha) in which dwelt God before He created the creatures. He looked at it with the eye of perfection and it became water, and then with the eye of grandeur (jalal) and it surged into waves, and from its grosser elements seven earths were created and from its subtle elements seven heavens and from the water seven seas with their presiding angels and inhabitants. Man in perfection is the image (nus'ha) of God. He is a mirror to God reflecting His names and attributes. He is the archetype of nature, the link between God and the universe.

He is the microcosm in which the absolute becomes conscious of itself in all its diverse parts. He is the unifying principle between reality and appearance, the axis (qutb) round which the spheres of existence revolve. He is the first created spirit (rufi) in which God first manifests Himself in His essence. He is the archetypal spirit of Muhammad (Haqlqat al-Muhammadiyah) and one of his names is the Word of God (canri-Allah). Regarding this spirit (rufi), Jill says, I (i.e., spirit) am the child whose father is his son and the wine whose vine is its jar .... I met the mothers who bore me, and I asked them in marriage, and they let me marry them. These phrases bear curious resemblance to the Vedic cosmologies where the Aditis are spoken of as mothers as well as wives of their sons. The first theatre of the manifestation of the spirit was Adam, then there were angels of light and darkness, and then five kinds of souls, animal, passionate, active or good, penitent and tranquil. All souls are potentially perfect, some are actually so. Among the latter, one stands above all, namely, Muhammad. In every age there are perfect men who are an outward manifestation of the essence of Muhammad, the Logos of God. The absolute descends by many stages into
man; in man the mystical ascent takes place by which man returns to the Divine. The process of ascent or spiritual perfection has four stages. In the first stage man completely surrenders himself to the will of Cod. In the second, he meditates on the names of Cod and is illuminated by the splendour of the name, the individual will is destroyed. In the third stage takes place the illumination of the attributes; man participates in the divine attributes and acquires miraculous powers. 14

He hears the ringing of bells (ailsilat-al jar as), experiences the dissolution of the bodily frame, and beholds "lightning and thunder and clouds raining lights and seas surging with fire." In the fourth stage he crosses the domain of name and attribute and enters into that of Essence and becomes perfect (insan-i'-/Camii), Cod-man. Jill was an idealistic mon.'st. For him all beliefs were thoughts about one reality, and all modes of worship expressive of some aspect of that reality. The differences were due to the variety of names and attributes and all together contributed to the perfection of the whole. Jill was acquainted with Hindu religion, for among the ten principal sects he noted the Brahmo (Brahman). About them he says that they worship Cod in His absolute aspect, without reference to prophet or scriptures of the Brahman, according to him, them not by God but by Abraham (Brahr five books, the fifth on account of its to most of the Brahman, but those became Moslems. Apparently Jill's fifth life &BF Jill whose monistic philosophy in the eyes of Jill made it indistinguishable from Islam. Theoretical Sufism had reached the highest point of its growth; the writers of subsequent times wrote text-books for students and popular treatises without adding much of original value. Of these Jamil's Lawaih in Persian is the best summary of Sufi philosophy and deservedly attained the widest repute. Arabic and Persian poets who became increasingly imbued with Sufism made it more than the philosophers the religion of the high and the low. Among the former Abu Sa'id ibn Abul Khair (d. 1048) and 'Umar ibn al Faridh, and among the latter Hakim San! (d. 1150

A.D.), Farid-ud-Dm 'Attar (d. 1229-30), Jalal- ud-Dln Ruml (d. 1273). Shabistari (d. 1317 or 1320) give the best exposition of Sufi doctrines. Besides the philosophical and the poetical, and of equal importance with them, is the practical aspect of Sufism. The practical aim of the Sufi is absorption in Cod. According to the orthodox (ba Shara) school there are three stages in the attainment of this goal. The first is the stage of good actions, the surrender of will to the commands of Cod, the obedience of law (shari'at). As a preliminary step to the first stage the seeker (talib or salik) has to repent of his sins (taubah) and to acquire faith (rrnon). Then he has to carry out scrupulously all the injunctions regarding cleanliness (taharat), prayer (saldt), fasting (saum), almsgiving or charity (zafeat), and pilgrimage (Haj). By ascetic practices, fasting, silence and solitude the evil propensities of the self (na/a), that is, ignorance, pride, envy, uncharitableness, anger and others are mortified, for it is absolutely essential that the lower self should die, in order that the higher should in Gad.; The inward or spiritual aspect of obedience to law designated the path (tariqat). The second stage is that of gnosis (m'ari/ku attainment of spiritual knowledge. In third stage logical reasoning is discarded because its inadequacy to gain the knowledge of God is realised. Intellect ('stidla) are abandoned, and the restless soul seeks relief only in the mercy of God, for it is only by His grace (faidh) and favour ('inayat) that gnosis takes place. 15

Then the Sufi finds out that otherness is an illusion and therefore attachment to created things and fruits of good actions utterly vain. With Abul Hasan Khirqani he holds. I do not say that paradise and hell are non-existent, but I say that they are nothing to me, because God created them both, and there is no room for any created object in the place where I am. Hi To the gnostic the following of law is relatively insignificant. Inward light transforms his intellect and will, and he no longer stands in need of outward action; for instance, the object of mysticism, 'n traversing wilderness and deserts is not heaven (hc'aoa) itself, for to a lover of God it is unlawful to look upon His

sanctuary. No; their object is mortification in a longing that leaves them no rest, and eager dissolution in a love that has no end. Junaid pointed out how outward pilgrimage without spiritual progress was futile. KH But gnosis is not enough. It must lead to the next and the highest stage: complete union with the Divinity (haqiqat), the transformation of the whole of man, will, intellect and emotions, and the attainment of the unitive state. In this state the mystic passes away from the self (/ana) and lives in essential unity with God (baqa). The illusion of subject and object vanishes, the sense of individuality dies and law and religion lose their meaning; but this is only the negative aspect of the cosmic consciousness which has a rich, positive content. The sanctified mystic comprehends both the inward and the outward aspects of Reality, the one and the many, the truth and law, in the unitive state he becomes one with God, he exclaims with Mansur: 'I am God' (ana Haq). 'I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I. The stages by which a novice rises to union with God have many stations (maqdmdt) and their corresponding states (haft).

The seven stations usually recognised are (1) repentance (taubah), (2) abstinence (war a), (3) renunciation (zuhJ), (4) poverty (/uqr), (5) patience (safer), (6) trust (tawakkd) (7) satisfaction (radha). The states 80 are meditation (muraqaba), nearness to God (qurfe), love (muhabbat), fear (fehau), hope (rija), longing (shauq), intimacy (uns) f tranquillity (itmindn), contemplation (musha'hadata), certainty (yq'in). The stations are self-acquired, but the states are given by God. 16

In the copious literature of Sufism all the stages, stations and states have been described with superabundant zest and consummate resourcefulness. The legends of saints overflow with stories illustrating ascetic, contemplative and unitive states, and the language of poetry and symbolism has been exhausted in giving expression to all the emotions of fear, hope, longing and love which the mystic experiences. For a student of mysticism and of varieties of religious experiences no richer mine of information exists than the

lives of Muslim saints and the poetry of Muslim mysticism. Sobriety and
toxication, quiet piety and frenzied love bordering on insanity, profound
thinking and fantastic occultism, writhing anguish, abject humility, joyous
elation and exuberant hope; there is not a note in the whole gamut of human
feeling and thought which has not been touched and made to yield its rich and
hidden music. All kinds of physico-psychical phenomena, the hearing of
sounds and voices and the seeing of visions and colours, the melting of sound
into sight and of colours into music, the ravishing scents of flower and musk
and the soft touch of morning zephyrs, the trance produced by song and
dance and death caused by the reciting of a line of poetry all of them are
there, offering an endless feast to the psychological gourmand hungry for
esoteric facts. The Muslim mystic who sets out upon the path of union
of absorption (Ana) always needs a spiritual guide, for "if a man has no
teacher, his imam is Satan. The guide or the preceptor (pir or Shaikh) is the
pivot round which the whole machinery of Sufi monachism moves. His
authority is divine, for the Sufi preceptor has inherited the whole significance
of Shla'h Imam. In the order to which the Sufi belongs he is sovereign. The
order provides the companionship of saints which is necessary for spiritual
welfare, the Shaikh regulates the conduct of the companions and watches
over their spiritual progress. He is a saint who has completed the journey and
reached the goal. He has become one with God and therefore his position
and status are divine. Ma'ruf Karkhi* Basked his disciples to swear to God
by him, and Dhul Nun 00 asserted that a true disciple should be more
obedient to his master than to God Himself. Jalal-ud-Dln Rum? spoke of his
master Shams- i-Tabriz f as that monarch supreme who had come out from
behind the door clothed in the garment of mortality. 17

In this way the Sufi professing to adore a universal abstraction makes
individual men the object of his real worship. The disciple is advised
to keep his Murshid constantly in mind, to become mentally absorbed in him
through constant meditation and contemplation of him. to see him in all men

and in all things, and to annihilate his self in the Murshid. From this state of self-absorption in the Murshid, the master leads him on through several stages at last to absorption in the Deity/* 3 Muhammad taught surrender to God (is/am), Sufism surrender to the teacher who is the representative of God upon earth. The discipline of the seeker is dhikr, which ordinarily means remembering God and repeating His name, but which includes all the devotional practices which induce ecstasy and trance. There are two kinds of it, jāfīr i jatl or reciting aloud and dhikr i khafi or reciting mentally. Malcolm 94 and Brown 95 have described the processes. They are very similar to the meditation and the breathing exercises (prānāyāma) of the Indian Yoga. Shibl pointedly brings out this feature of Sufism in his definition. Tasau/u>)" (Sufism) is control of the faculties and observance of the breaths. 90 In the Naqshbandi order, the Murid (disciple) closes his eyes, shuts his mouth, presses his tongue against the roof of his mouth, holds his breath and recites in his heart. The "Ilāh" goes upward, the 'illaḥa " to the right, the whole phrase "Ilāh illāha " is formed upon the cone of the heart and through it passed to all the members of the whole frame. The breath is drawn from the navel to the breast, from the breast to the brain, from the brain up to the heavens and then again repeated stage by stage backwards and forwards. 18

Another method of bringing about trance is by song and dance (sama'). There has been much dispute among theologians as to the lawfulness of music and dancing regarded as religious exercises. Ghazali speaks of them as novelties which had not been received in Islam from the first followers of the Prophet, but which were therefore not forbidden. He himself approves of them for by their means the Sufis "stir up in themselves greater love towards God, and by means of music, often obtain spiritual visions and ecstasies, their heart becoming in this condition as clean as silver in the flame of a furnace, and attaining a degree of purity which could never be attained by any amount of mere outward austerities. The Sufi then becomes so keenly aware of his and often fails down senseless Hujwīrī quotes traditions and the opinion

of early Sufis to show that audition is lawful, and fulfills a necessary function relationship to the spiritual world that he loses all consciousness of this world, and although footplay (pay b&i) was bad in law and reason, the ecstatic condition " when the heart throbs with exhilaration and rapture becomes intense and the agitation of ecstasy is manifested and conventional forms are gone, that agitation is neither dancing nor footplay nor bodily indulgence but a dissolution of the soul Jalal-ud-Din Rumi laid great emphasis upon music and dance, so much so that his order, the MaulaVis, has become known as the 'dancing Derwishes.' Both the Chishti and SuhrawardT orders included them as essential features of their dhikr. Of Shaikh Badr-ud-Din (a saint settled in India in the thirteenth century) it is related that " in his old age when he was unable to move, the sound of a hymn would excite him to ecstasy and he would dance like a youth. When asked how it was that the Shaikh could dance notwithstanding his decrepitude, he replied, 'where is the Shaikh? It is Love that dances.' Sufism indeed was a religion of intense devotion, love was its passion; poetry, song and dance its worship; and passing away in God its ideal. It found in Manikka Vasahar's compositions. Here are a few specimens of his songs: Indra or Visnu or Brahm, Their divine bliss crave not I; I seek the love of Thy saints, Though my house perish thereby. To the worst hell will I go, So but Thy grace be with me. Best of all, how could my heart Think of a God beside Thee? I have no fear of births, but quake at thought that I must die E'en heav'n to me were naught; for earth's whole empire what care I? O, i va wreathed with honeyed blossoms, when shall come the mom When Thou wilt grant Thy grace to me? I cry with anguish torn. Myself I cannot understand, nor what is day or night; He who both word and thought transcends has reft my senses quite, He who for bull has Visnu, and in Perundurai dwells, O light supreme, in Brahman guise has cast on me strange spell I had no virtue, penance, knowledge, self-control A doll to turn At others' will I danced, whistled, fell. But me He filled in every limb, With love's mad longing, and that I might climb

there whence is no return. He shewed His beauty, made me His. Ah me, when shall I go to Him, is individuality is Maya, his reality is Brahman. It is due to ignorance that he does not perceive the identity, and so lives a miserable existence in the phenomenal world which is only a creation of illusion. As long as this ignorance lasts the weight of the phenomenal presses upon man. The phenomenal appears real and during the period of ignorance has to be taken into account. This phenomenal world has a god, Isvara, who is endowed with good attributes. He is the creator who evolves and dissolves the world in cycles. 20

The human soul looks up to Him for reward and punishment, for grace and forgiveness. It realises its good through knowledge of Isvara. Thus there are two worlds, one real, the other unreal; and there are two kinds of knowledge, one, the higher, for the removal of ignorance and the realisation of the absolute Brahman, the other, the lower, to win Isvara’s favour. But the lower knowledge and its end Isvara are both phenomenal and true freedom is only attained by rising above it to the real. As, besides the soul, the mind and intellect, the ordinary instruments of cognition are the products of Maya, the higher knowledge cannot be gained as long as the activities of the mind are not completely controlled and stopped. In the moment when the mind is still and the path of impression is cut off and the state of deep trance (Sāmādhi) is induced, the soul realises its unity with the absolute and rids itself of the illusion of the phenomenal. Sankara established a logical monistic system, but the cost at which it was done was great. On the one hand, God’s unity was raised to such a giddy height of abstractness as to daze the ordinary mortal. On the other, by compromising this idealism by the acceptance of a world of lower good and lower truth, he almost handed over this poor mortal bound hand and foot to the mercies of the pr’lest and his elaborate ceremonial. What he tried to drive out of the front door thus re-entered through the back door, and while he started to condemn, he remained to bless those very practices and doctrines which were fit only for the feeble and the ignorant.

who was a follower of Sankara at Conjeeveram, but he disagreed from his teacher on the interpretation of sacred passages and was dismissed from the class. He was then invited by Yamunamuni, who taught at Srirangam, to become his disciple. Soon after, the teacher died, and Ramanuja was appointed his successor. He continued to study and teach, till at length he considered himself fit to carry out the directions of his Guru to write the promised commentaries, and then he composed his Vedanta Sangraha, the Bhdsyas of Bādrayana's Vedanta Sūtras and the Bhāgavatītīkā. He had before becoming an author taken to Sanyāsa, and now he started on his travels accompanied by his disciples. He visited many northern countries as far as Kashmir and then returned to Srirangam. Here he was threatened with persecution by the Chola King Kulottunga I (1095) who wanted him to renounce Vaisnavism for Saivism. Ramanuja took refuge in the dominions of the Hoysala Yadava princes, and converted Vīthaldeva, brother of Ballaladeva. After the death of Kulottunga I in 1118, Ramanuja returned to Srirangam where he died in 1137. The aim of Ramanuja's teaching was the refutation of Sankara's absolute monism and Madhyamaka, and the establishment of Bhakti: within the philosophy of Vedanta, and, incidentally, also to obtain recognition for the non-Vedic Panchādṛtra in the Vedic literature.

According to him, Brahman is the one supreme reality possessed of unsurpassable greatness both in his nature and in his qualities. He is the Lord of all (Īśvara), and, as the universal soul, the Highest Person (Purusottama). He is devoid of imperfections and endowed with numberless auspicious qualities of unequalled excellence. He has unconditional and unlimited power to realise His wishes and purposes. He creates, destroys and preserves. He does not create out of nothing, for creation out of absolute non-existence is inconceivable. His creation means change from one state to another, from existence in the casual condition (kādrana) to existence in the effect condition. 21 The soul attains God by Bhakti. It first purifies itself by sacrifice and the performance of duties (karma), and acquires concentration

and meditation (Jñāna) which lead to actual visualisation (Bhakti). The three upper classes alone could practise Bhakti, for others there was the path of self-surrender or avoidance of opposition and resolution to yield (Prapatti) and complete trust in the preceptor (Acharyā abfcmana). The end of the path was release, a glorious freedom in which the soul enjoys eternal blessedness in the presence of God, it partakes of His joys and excepting creation shares (in his powers, transcending all prohibitions and commands and ranging freely through the universe. Ramanuja, although he still maintained the ancient privileges of the higher castes, opened a way for the Sudras and the outcastes. He arranged that the outcastes should be able to attend certain temples on a fixed day in the year and he gave instruction to the Satanis who were a group of Sudras whom he attached to his Sampradaya. 22 His teaching with regard to Prapatti led to the formation of two schools. The northern branch (Vadagalai) holds that God's grace is cooperative, that is, the process of deliverence must begin with an act of a person seeking it. The southern branch (Tengalai), on the other hand, considers God's grace obligatory, for God must take entire possession of the soul of the devotee and lead him to Himself, his function being to surrender himself completely. The Northerners describe Prapatti as one of the ways of liberation, the Southerners as the only way. They also differ regarding their treatment of persons belonging to inferior castes, and in other details. Nimbarka, 35 a younger contemporary of Ramanuja, carried the doctrine of devotion further. Philosophically his system was based on the theory known as bhedabheda (difference without difference), that is, that God the individual soul and the inanimate world are identical yet distinct. In religion he gave 1 35 Bhandarkar: Vaiñavism and Saivism, disciple of Arulnradi was the author of another work on Saiva Siddhānta, and the Sudras disciple was Brahmana Umapati (1313) who was the greatest theologian of the sect. The Tamil Saiva Siddhāntas were affiliated to Kashmir Saiva Schools which had arisen in the ninth and subsequent centuries. The

central doctrine of both was the trinity of Pati (lord), Pdsu (individual soul), and Pasa (bond). The systems into which this doctrine was expounded bear analogies with Vaisnava Panchorana systems. But, whatever the metaphysics of Saiva Siddhanta, the practical religion was that of love and devotion. Its chief elements were: (1) faith in Siva and his grace; (2) unquestioned belief in the teacher; (3) loving devotion and worship; (4) discipline of Yoga demanding concentration and accompanied with song, dance and ecstatic rapture; (5) toleration of all creeds; (6) protest against the externalia of religion, ritual and idol worship; and (7) religious equality of all irrespective of caste or sect or worldly position. The distance which the Indian mind has travelled from the sober, moderate, contemplative devotionalism of the north and the fervent ardour and explosive passion of the religion of Bhakti, of the south is great. The mystic note is struck clearly in both. But mysticism is universal and eternal. It appears in all cultures and in all periods of man's history. It is an activity of the human mind obscure and ill-understood, arising out of dark regions carefully protected from the intrusion of intellect, a phenomenon of the subconscious self, a function of the subliminal consciousness. It dwells where abide libido, and impulses of sex and fear and desire. 23

It has thus a world-wide significance and a history coeval with that of man. Evelyn Underhill: The Essentials of Mysticism. Bertrand Russel: Mysticism and Logic. Pratt: Psychology of Religious Life. Starbuck Psychology of Religion. Cohen: Religion and Sex. William James: Varieties of Religious Experiences. movement of Hindu thought pressed onwards, and whose influence, which began to operate early, continued to grow with time. The need for such a cause has been felt for a long time and most writers on the history of Hindu religion have sought to discover it. Grierson felt it strongly, as appears from his remarks in reply to Keith and Kennedy's criticism of his paper Modern Hinduism and its Debt to the Nestorians. Pope, in the

introduction to the translation of Manila Vdsahar, notes two features of this Bhatyi which appear to him new. He says, "here can be no doubt but that the idea of special devotion is expressly taught in the Gita, but the devotion of the sive to the Guru who is a man, a holy, human, divine-ly-endowed teacher differs very widely from this, or any previous Hindu conception of loving service." Again, "Bhakfi, or loving piety, is the main idea of the Saiva system, and the fervent self-negative love and worship of Sivan is represented as including all religion, and transcending every kind of religious observance, and since all are capable of this, men of all castes can be received as devotees and saints in the Saiva system .... In fact, it (love) seems to be something pertaining to the Semitic religions especially. Cults of various tribes are merged into Bhagwata and Panchatantra worship and their speculation in the Bhagavad Gita and Va\$nava Samhitas. Sakta philosophy, worship and cult of Fow exactly the model of the Siva sect. In Buddhism and Jainism the influence of neighbouring sects and the assimilation of alien elements produce complexities which have been described elsewhere. All these processes which go on throughout the ancient period leave on the mind an impression of great complexity and bewilderment, although as time passes the confusion begins to simplify. 24

According to some sociologists, all religions in their begin- ning must have been monotheistical; each tribe had one god whom it worshiped. As tribes joined together, either because of war or of struggles for means of living, their gods were brought together and polytheism arose; and as the joint tribes became uniform and gained in solidarity so again the many gods coalesced into one dominant god. If this theory is true, it throws a great deal of light upon the process of the emergence of the three deities Siva, Vinu and Sakjti in India. After the Guptas had vanquished the barbarous Hunas in the fifth century, no large accession of foreign tribes took place in India for the next five or six hundred years. The Muslims, who settled on the western borders or on the coast from eighth century onwards, came in small communities and

did not produce any large disturbance in the settled populations. The fluid mass of thought and religions had therefore time to settle. The peoples of India in the ancient times were divided into numerous tribes politically independent or semi-independent, and culturally diverse as the literature of the Vedic and Buddhist periods clearly attests. The incursion of Scythians, Yueh-Chis, Hunas and others added to the diversity already existing. The assimilation of the tribes and their cultures was the task of the various periods of ancient history. The leader of the bhakti movement focusing on the Lord as Rama was Ramananda. Very little is known about him, but he is believed to have lived in the first half of the 15th century. He taught that Lord Rama is the supreme Lord, and that salvation could be attained only through love for and devotion to him, and through the repetition of his sacred name. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was an ascetic Hindu monk and social reformer in 16th century Bengal. A great proponent of loving devotion for God, bhakti yoga, Chaitanya worshiped the Lord in the form of Krishna. Sri Ramanuja Acharya was an Indian philosopher and is recognized as the most important saint of Sri Vaishnavism. Ramananda brought to North India what Ramanuja did in South India. He raised his voice against the increasing formalism of the orthodox cult and founded a new school of Vaishnavism based on the gospel of love and devotion. His most outstanding contribution is the abolition of distinctions of caste among his followers. Followers of Bhakti movement in 12th and 13th Century included saints such as Bhagat Namdev, and Saint Kabir Das, who insisted on the devotional singing of praises of lord through their own compositions. Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru and founder of the Sikhism, too was a Nirguna Bhakti Saint and social reformer. He was opposed to all distinctions of caste as well as the religious rivalries and rituals. He preached the unity of God and condemned formalism and ritualism of both Islam and Hinduism. Guru Nanak's gospel was for all men. He proclaimed their equality in all respects. 25

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries continued to witness the rise of many religious reformers. The exponent of the Rama cult and the Krishna cult

among the Vaishnavas branched off into a number of sects and creeds. The leading light of the Rama cult was saint-poet Tulsidas. He was a very great scholar and had made a profound study of Indian philosophy and literature. His great poem, 'Ramcharitamanasa', popularly called Tulsi-krita Ramayana is very popular among the Hindu devotees. He set before the people the image of Sri Rama as all virtuous, all powerful, the Lord of the World, and the very embodiment of the Supreme Reality (Parabrahma). The followers of the Krishna cult founded the Radha Ballabhi sect under Hari Vamsa in 1585 A.D. Sur Das wrote 'Sursagar' in Brajbhasha, which is full of verses of the charm of Lord Krishna and his beloved Radha. With the Unity of Good (Tawhid) as the central doctrine and daily prayers as the important ritual, the religion was based on fast, alms giving, pilgrimage to Mecca and belief in Muhammad as the last of the prophets of God. Equality and brotherhood of all Muslims before God and among themselves were the important characteristics of the religion in the social side! In spite of these appealing features, the religion could not attract many followers in Assam, as it could in other parts of India. It was the philosophy of Islam with the sociological features of equality and brotherhood, rather than its religious aspects, that perhaps was responsible for the spread of the Islamic religion in India, as Hindu philosophy which in the medieval period "had been responsible for the social chaos from which Islam showed a way out for the masses of he Indian people. In Assam, the very composition of its society was distinctly different. The absence of the rigid caste system in ancient Assam was its unique character. It could only be divided as Aryan and non-Aryan.

On the non-Aryan side, there were races and tribes and they were morally regarded as inferior to the Aryan. As these races and tribes had to live together for generations, they came in contact with mutual influences and their way of life. None of these tribes and races could oppress or dominate over others as they were more or less equal in numerical strength. The Aryans, however, could not totally get rid of the caste system that was in

26.: http://bangle padica.www.com.in

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existence in other parts of India. A loose form of caste system diving them as Brahmans and Sudras came into prominence in Assam. But this division was not rigid as was apparent from the ancient Assamese chronicle that many Sudras were once raised to the status of the Brahmans by some of the Assamese rulers. Such Brahmans were known as the 'al the 'al – Brahmans. Even the non –Aryans were raised to the status of Arayan Sudras. The Hindu priests were responsible for making them saraniya (i.e., they were accepted as Sudras) according to the Hindu rites, and all of them were included within one class (Sudras). This process continued for a long time, with the result that there had been an increase in their number in the Hindu fold. The Assamese Hindu social divisions were more or less based upon a spirit of liberalism and probably no less based upon a spirit of liberalism and probably no caste or class, including that of the Brahmans followed their caste in strict conformity with the Sastras. The higher classes did not look down upon the lower ones as they did in other parts of India, and were not strict in the observance of their rules relating to food and profession.

Shihabuddin Talish the historian of of Mir Jumla found that all people of this country eat whatever they get from the hand of any man regardless of his caste. They do not abstain from eating food cooked by Muslims.

It therefore appears that under such prevailing condition the sociological tenet of Islam could not render any affective help for the spread of the religion in Assam. With its simple formula of faith, dogmas and rites Islam, however, could have attracted the Assamese people who during the period of their contact with Muslim, suffered from the exploitation of the priestly class. But it did not happen. The reason for this was perhaps that there was no systematic attempt on the part of the Muslims to preach their religion. Secondly, the people might have become apathetic towards Islam from the time of Hussamuddin Iwaz’s invasion in 1225-26 A.D. when they for the first time experienced the fury of Muhammadan iconoclasm and contempt for

27 Tazkirat-ul-Awliya, Faridud-Din-Attar, Delhi, 1317 A.H., P-52
others religion. This certainly resulted in the hardening of the attitude of the Assamese people towards Islam before they could acquire proper knowledge about it. Their dislike for Islam was further strengthened by the invasions and iconoclasm carried on by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Bahadur shah in 1320-21 A.D. and Kalpahar, the general of Sultan Karrani of Gauda in the middle of the sixteen century. The exaggerated stories of Muslim atrocities on the Hindus in other parts of India, as narrated to them by immigrants who entered the country from time to time intensified their bitterness and opposition to Islam in Assam.

Minhajuddin however tells us that the Koch and the Mech tribes of the Territory to the east of Gauda displayed their appreciation of Islam so much that one of their chiefs even adopted the faith from Muhammad – ibn – Bakhtiyar as early as 1205-6 A.D. we have shown earlier that these Koch and Mech people were the inhabitants of the western part of the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa. This shows that with the first political contact of Assam with Muhammadan powers the Islamic faith found its way into this land through this process of conversions. But this did not last long although this first venture appears to have vanished some years after the death of Muhammad –ibn – Bakhtiyar and particularly after the invasions of Hussamuddin Iwaz in 1225 A.D. because. We learn from Minhajuddin that the signs of Islam appeared in the country only after Malik Yuzbak had conquered it and instituted Friday religious services having erected a mosque there. But however faint the impact of this event might have been on the people of Assam it is certain that it had after all compelled them to turn their eyes to Islam. The accounts of the King Ratnadhwajapla of Chutiya Kingdom, Show that about forty years after the advent of Muhammad –ibn – Bakhtiyar on the political and cultural scene of Assam the Islamic faith and culture could claim the appreciation even from the people of the Chutiya kingdom in the far eastern region of Kamarupa. The Deodhai Buranji that this king of the Chutiya Kingdom established friendly relation with the sultan.

28. Seikda Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Relation and its cultural significance, P- 257.
of Gauda. We have already tried to ascertain the historicity of this account and identify the sultan of Gauda as Tughral Tughna Khan (1244 A.D.). This sultan is said to have left one of his sons Ratnadhwajapala and for ward the water the holy Ganges everyday to the Chutiya king who reciprocated by sending him holy water from parasuramkunda in eastern Assam. But the relationship between the two kings was apparently political, and it had nothing much to do with the cultural life of the people of Assam. Similarly, the venture of Malik Yuzbak could not leave any repression in the country because after a few months of this event Dharmapala the king of Kamata recovered his kingdom having defeated and killed Malik Yuzbak. Thus with the victory of the native king this first systematic attempt at the propagation of Islam in the country came to an end. Sultan Mughisuddin Tughral seems to have ruled in some part of Kamarupa after its king Dharmapala abdicated the throne. But considering the political relations of Bengal with Delhi during the period, we are inclined to think that not any effective step for the spread of Islam in Kamarupa. After Mughisuddin Tughral, Prince Durlabhanarayana came to power in the country. This prince was a great exponent of Hinduism and a patron of Assamese literature. The settlement of fourteen families of scholarly people, including that of Chandivara, the great-grandfather of Sankaradeva by this prince of Kamata suggests that this king worked for the case of Hinduism and social and cultural development in the country. It is therefore, certain that during the reign of Durlabhanarayana the possibility of reviving the influence of Islam in the country receded to the background.

After Durlabhanarayana, Kamata passed to the family of Arimatta. During the reign of Sukarangka the successor of Arimatta, Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah conquered the country including the south-western part of the Brahmaputra valley. It seems that long before this time, Hazarat ghiyasuddin that Awlia settled in (1257-58) the country and began to preach Islam and exsansica of the suzerainty of Sultan Ghiyasuddin over thia

part of the country might have supplied fresh incentive to the saint in the task. But after the death of the saint and particularly after the local chief's ruling in the region threw off their allegiance to the successors of Ghiyasuddin Bahadur shah, the endeavouer of the saint was in all probability greatly hampered.

Sultan Sikandar shah must have again extended the suzerainty of Gauda over some of these chieftains at the time of his invasion of Kamata. But he does not seem to have been able to encourage the propagation of Islam in the region because, like Mughisuddin Tughral he was very much engrossed in conflicts with Delhi and also with the affairs of consolidating his authority in Bengal. Again, towards the close of his reign the local chiefs ruling in this region appear to have revolted against him and continued to rule independently, until his successor, Sultan MuZaffar Azam Shah (1389-1410 A.D.) subjugated them sometime around 1389 A.D. Azam Shah's reign in Bengal ended in 1410 A.D. we also learn that about this time the Kamata king Mrigangk wrested back the cis - karatoya region from the possession of Muslims. Consequently, during this period i.e during the regions of these Kamata king any kind of intensive campaign for the propagation of Islam in the country was not possible. 30

After the death of Mrigangka a state of anarchy prevailed in the country till the rise of Prince Niladhwaja of the Khen dynasty, Niladhwaja was followed by Chakradhwaaja. Who was succeeded by Nilambara, From Rasalat-us-shuhada we learn that Chakradhwaia adopted the Islamic faith from the Muslim General Ismail Ghazi with whom he fought a protracted war. But this event also does not seem to have left any influence on the populace or even on the royalty, because we learn from the Buranjis that though Nilambara, the success of the Chakradhwaia, married a Muslim princess from the house of Sultan Hussain shah, he had consecrated her in the Hindu way before she was admitted into the Kamata seraglio. This queen of Kamata came to be known in history as Susudhi Garama Kunwari.

or sus-udhi the princess from Gauda, during the reign of Nitambara, Husain Shah conquered the greater part of Kamata and the present Kamrup and Goalpara region and ruled there more than fifteen years. This sultan is said to have settled a colony of Afghan warriors in Kamrup. Thus it was during the reign of Hussain Shah that the movement for the expansion of Islam in the country received a momentum. But this growth of the movement was a short-lived one because it soon ended with the Ahom conquest of the whole tract of land up to the river Karatoya. This event was again followed by the rise of the Koch kingdom in the region. It was during the reign of the powerful Koch king Nranarayana (1556-1587 A.D.) the Vaishnava movement in the country under the leadership of Sankaradeva reached its climax and, therefore, once again the hope of the expansion of Islam in the country had to recede to the background it was in fact only after the Mughal conquest of the whole region of the western Kamarupa or Koch-Hajo up to the river Barnadi in the east in 1613 A.D that Muslim culture and the faith received some incentive to grow there. But it is doubtful if any large-scale conversion of the native people took place because the influence of neo-Vaisnavism was still running high in the country. Moreover, the Mughal emperors of the time were not religious bigots to enthuse forced conversion in a conquered territory. Apart from this they were completely overwhelmed by the prolonged and different wars with the Ahoms and thus they had little chance of turning their attentions towards the propagation of Islamic faith and culture in a systematic way.

The cardinal tenets of neo-Vishnavism, preached by Sankaradeva under the patronage of the Koch king Naranarayana being as simple, straightforward and practical as those of the Islamic faith, people in the lower strata of Assam's society felt more attracted to it than to the latter. To this again was added the rise of the Vaishnava fraternity which the saint had stirred up by the social reforms through the new institution like Namghars (temples) and Sattras (residential establishments). The

31 Sakti Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Religion and its Cultural Significance, P-258.
hopes and aspirations which Sankaradeva thus gave to the people of Assam, whose social life did not suffer from so much wider horizontal divisions as that in the Hindu society in the rest of India, removed the probability of falling under the spell of Islam.

After a long period of about sixty-five years of hostility between the Mughals and the Ahoms the latter finally annexed to their kingdom the whole tract of territory from the Barmadi to the river Manas. Thus the hope of Muslim rule in Assam disappeared forever in 1682 A. D. 32

Through the Ahom rulers of Assam had fostered a liberal attitude to all religion including Islam and no wide campaign for large scale conversion to the latter faith could take place in the country. Moreover except Siva Singha (1525-1556 A. D.) and his successors all the Ahom kings had followed such a clear-cut policy towards all religions that any kind of forced conversion of the people or alluring them to change their faith or cult or sect was thoroughly censured in the country. It is of course true that though Hinduism predominated in Assam, the Ahom kings ever maintained a liberal outlook to all other religions in the country. But still the policy described above was strictly followed. We learn from the Buranjis that a minister and his sons were put to death by the king Pratap Singha, for the reason that sons of the minister had violated this rule more than once having sullied the caste of the subject of the king. Even Sankaradeva and some of his disciples had earned the displeasure of the contemporary Ahom king, as they had tried to attract votaries from other cults and sects of Hinduism to neo-Vaishnav Vishnu Puria Sannyasi, a religious pontiff from outside Assam, was ruthlessly murdered during 1670-72 A. D. for his endeavour to lure the people and the nobles of the country to be his followers. King Gadaadhar Singha, who ascended the throne in 1681 A. D. had chastised the heads of some of the vaishnate monastries of the country as they had amassed wealth by blackmailing people. Even in much later time when, Bhattacharyya Gosain from Bengal who tried to preach a new cult of Bhatta-

32. Ibid., P-258-259.
charyya Gosain from Bengal who tried to preach a new cult of Hinduism with due approval from some of the highest dignitaries of the state. A great upheaval and discontentment overtook the country. We also learn from other sources that Rupai Gariya, a Musalman official of the Ahom kingdom who also seems to have been appointed caretaker of the Muslim religious institutions in the country, in the middle of the seventeenth century, tried to poison the Ahom monarch against Hazarat Azan Pir who came to Assam during his period. It is said that the king thrice rejected him Rupai, however, at last scored his success. But the king even did not take the responsibility to punish the saint. He tacitly asked Rupai to do whatever he deemed best. The officer then arrested the saint and extracted his eyes. Soon after this, the king became aware of the conspiracy of Rupai and therefore put him to death. When such restrictions were imposed upon any act of alluring the people to change their cult even within Hinduism itself, to which faith the rulers themselves belonged, it was certainly not for Islam to gain maximum freedom for launching a wide campaign to gain a large number of converts for it in the country.

Commenting on the growth of the Muslim population of Assam, E. A. Gait writes, in the Report on Census of Assam 1891 A. D., that the great majority of persons professing the Islam faith in Assam are, as in eastern Bengal, local converts from the lower castes and aboriginal tribes, who on conversion, described themselves as "Saikhs." But he had at the sometime admitted that conversion to the faith, in the country, did not occur until much later dates and its earliest believers of the faith who settled in the eastern districts were the remnants of the army of Turbak who was defeated and killed as we have shown elsewhere by the Ahom in 1522-23 A. D. 11. But the facts which we have discussed above leaves no room for us to accept this contention as correct.

Considering the account given by Minhajuddin about the Mech chieftain who adopted the Islamic faith as early as 1205-6 A. D. as well as

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33 Mohini Kumari Saikia: Assam Muslim Relation and Its Cultural Significance, p. 259.
the time of the advent of Ghiyasuddin Awliya in Assam, as given by traditions which is also confirmed by the evidences of history, we cannot accept that conversion occurred in Assam in much later times, and only the remnants of the army of Turbak were the earliest Musalman souls in the country. They might however, be considered as the earliest settlers in the eastern districts of Assam valley. The other contention of Gait that the converts who were mainly from the lower strata of the Hindu and aboriginal tribes constituted the bulk of the Muslim population is also not wholly correct. Because if the converts actually made up the major bulk of the country's Muslim population then a large scale conversion of the natives to the faith certainly would have occurred in Assam. But the above facts show that no such campaign was possible in the country during the whole period from the rise of Kamata kingdom by 1240-45 A.D. till the close of the Ahom rule in Assam in 1826 A.D. Gait further states that all the local converts of Assam called themselves the Saikhs. Now if converts actually formed the greater part of the Muslim population then most of them would have been classed as the Saikhs. But from the Census Report of 1872 A.D. we learn that only 924 out of 1,78,109 Muslim souls in the country were returned as the sakhs. This alone justifies our contention that there was no large-scale conversion of the native people to Islam in Assam and converts did not form the major bulk of the Muslim population in the country as Gait would have us believe.

B. Muslim Saints of Ancient Assam:

Many Muslim saints entered Assam with the invading Muhammadan army. Some of these saints stayed in the country while others might have returned after a short stay. We shall presently discuss about the saints whose names are associated with some of the Muslim holy places in ancient Assam. The name of Khojaj Pir is held in high esteem in western Assam. 34

34. Ibid., P. 186.
This saint of Qutb and Abdul order is also known as Khwaja Khizr and the term Baliyan is ascribed to him. It is believed that he belonged to the family of Hazarat Nur and was a Jew by race. The city of Siraj in Persia is assumed to be his birthplace. During the early part of his life, he was a merchant and a chemist. But subsequently, he became a mendicant traveler having dedicated himself to the service of God. A stream near Kabul in Afghanistan is said to be associated with his name. Curiously enough, a rock inscription saying:

Abl hayat cashma khizr,

Is also found near a stream on the foot of the eastern slope of the Kamakhya Hills, in the north of the steps leading to the temple.

Some people accept this Pir as the messenger of God. In ancient times, the people of this area were said to have held him in high esteem.

In Koch Behar, the name of Satya Pir still holds its influence. It is believed that he was a Hindu convert from Rajshahi district, and Satyapir was his title only. Many Hindus of north Bengal are said to have adopted Islamic faith in his hand. He is credited for introducing the shirni function without the use of meat. The Satyanarayan is one of the important religious functions of the Hindus in western Assam and Koch Behar. It is interesting to note that in the Pan chhali of Satyanarayana, no distinction is shown between Satyapir and Satyanarayaana.

Jei satyanarayan sei satapir
Dui kule laiche seva kariya jahir
{ Satyapir is the Satyanarayan
He receives devotion from both sides
( Hindus and Muslims ) in his ( two) forms .}

Satyapir name puja karibe yavane erup karibe seva jar jei mane
The Muslims will worship in the name of Satyapir
Thus all will perform the worshiping in their own way
Pir Shah Madar, whose title is said to be Badiuddin, has been believed to be

resident of Madina and a disciple of Muhammad Bustami. It is also said that from shah Madar the community of Madari Fakir developed. He was present in the places of India ravaged by Timur. It was after this event he seems to have come to Kaamarupa. It is said that there are holy places associated with his name in paharpur Raishahi, Begura Sherpur and Basta near Dacca.

The name of pagal pir has still its influence on many people in Koch Behar and western Assam. It is said that rabid dogs or jackals became subdued as soon as they saw the pagal pir. It is for this that the people in later times place a bamboo stick in the name of the pir when they are to subdue such rabid animals. In this performance a person behaves like a Bhauriya (whom the pir has his influence) or madman and makes prophecies.

The two pirs whose tombs are in the enclosures of the Panjatan or Dakaidal dargah and the Degdhoa dargah near the modern Goalpara town were said to the contemporaries of the pagal Pir of Dhupdhara a place situated about fifty miles east of this town. According to a tradition they entered Assam together with an army of Mastim invaders. It may however be noted yere that the reference to Muslim armies invading Assam appears to be a common feature of most of such local traditions concerning the advent of the Musalman saints in the country. It is therefore not un likely that in most cases the stores of invading armies particularly that of Mir Jumla and Hussain shah were introduced by the people of later periods and hence there are no historical values in them. 36

The pagal pir of this account appears to be the same person about whom we have discussed earlier. The names of the pirs of Degdhoa and panjatan dargah are not known. It is however said that they were the founders of the two dargahs and they staid in their respective dargahs till their death and they were entombed there. Many people from different parts of the district, even now, visit the panjatan dargah and make offerings to the pir in the tomb for fulfillment of their prayers.

36. Ibid., p. 188.
Tradition concerning the pir of Degdhoe dargah is that he was stobbed to death by a disciple. It is said that he had a pet bird of extraordinary qualities and a large numbers of pigeons which rosted on a rock near the abode of the pirs on the bank of the Brahmaputra. His pet bird could recognize each of his disciple. with the assassination of the pir the bird is said to have fasted unto death and the pigeons disappeared suddenly. The rock where they roosted is now known as the Kabutarar sil or the rock of pigeons. 

From a chronicle preserved in the Damdama sikh Gurudwar in Goalpara district, it is learnt that Raja Ram singha, the noted Raput general of Emperor Aurangzeb, when he led his punitive expedition against Ahom king Chakradhwaja singha in 1667 A. D. brought with him five renowned pirs, shah akbar, shah Bagmar, shah sufi shan sharan and shah kamal to overccire the Assanes black art and magic. The general concensus of opinion is that these five pirs stayed together till their death in the place where the panch pirar dragah or the dargha of five pirs of Dhubri is now situated. But some section of people believe that shah Akbar, the head of these pirs, alone stayed there till his death and the dargha contains his tomb only. to the south west of Garo hills district of Assam and near the border of Mymansing district in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) a pir popularly known as shah Kamal, is said to have stayed in a khankah. According to a tradition this pir was the same person as shah kamal who was one of those five pirs of Dhubri.

In our discussions about the invasion of sultkan Ghiya -suddin Bahadur shah of Gauda in the early fourteen century Bahadur shah we have referred to a local tradition concerning the advent of saint Ghiyasuddin Awliya to Assam. The tradition has it that the saint entered Assam with the invading army of sultan Ghiyasuddin in A.H. 721. He first stayed in the Garigaoon area to the west of Gauhati but lasted he went to Hajo on the north bank of the Brahmaputra in kamrup district and stayed there on the top of the Garudachal mountain. Another tradition relates that Hazaarat Ghiyasuddin

Awliya came to India from the Arab land sometime around A. H. 642 when a famine ravaged the latter country. Having passed several years in different parts of India he came to the Brahputta valley with three of his comrades Hazarat—Jamal Hazarat shah Gudur and Hazarat. shah Buzrug and passed the rest of his life here on the top 750 feet high mountain of Hajo. In the Assam District Gazetteer (Kamrup) B. C. Allen records two different accounts concerning the Daragha on the top of this mountain in Hajo. One of these accounts relates that a mosque was built on the mountain by one sultan Ghiyasuddin. But he died before it was completed and was buried there within the enclosure of the mosque. According to the other account sultan Ghiyasuddin was killed in a war with the Ahoms near Biswanath and his body was brought to Hajo by his vanquished soldiery. In Kamrupar Buranji it is recorded that one sultan "Balawanta" Ghiya suddin, the son of Gauda sultan Hussain shah ruled over Kamrup region for sometime. The seat of his government was on the top of Kuverachal mountain where he died. In the land grant issued to Hajo dargh by Sultan Shuja son Emperor Sahah Jahan, it is recorded that the mountain of Garudachal contains the tomb of sultan Ghiyasuddin Balwan. 38

From all these accounts it becomes clear that the shrine on the top of Garudachal mountain is associated with the name of Ghiyasuddin who seems to have come of a princely family. The term Balwan which appears in the account of shah shuja was perhaps an incorrect rendering of Assamese word balawanta as found in the Kamruppar Buranjii if this Sultan Ghiyasuddin was killed in an engagement with the Ahoms at Biswanath as the second account of the Gazetteer relates then this event cannot have occurred before the first decade of the sixteenth century had run out because the Ahoms came into direct conflict and clash with Muhammadans only from the second decade of the century. But first account recorded by B. C. Allen shows that Ghiyasuddin's death was not unnatural. This is corroborated by the Kamrupar Buraniji, from the account of

38. Ibid, p. 189-190.
Which it becomes clear that Balawanta Ghiyasuddin flourished long before the rise of Ahom supremacy in the Kamrup region. The first of the two local traditions referred to above identifies Ghiyasuddin Awliya as Hazat Jalaluddin Tabrezi. It states the later came to be known as Ghiyasuddin simply because he entered Assam with sultan Ghiyasuddin Bahadur shah. But this dose not appear to be convincing. In another place it again states that after the investiture of the Gaushiyat of Asia Hazarat Jalauddin Tabrezi came to be popularly known as Ghiyasuddin and he stayed in Hajo till his death. This change of the from Ghaushiyat to Ghiyasuddin appears to be extremely doubtful. The second tradition which is even now believed by the large section of the people to be trustworthy relates that Ghiyasuddin Awliya entered India sometime after A. H. 642 and having stayed in different parts of the country came to stay on the Garudachal mountain in Hajo. If it is so his advent in Assam appears to have occurred by this sand is now in the possession of the Revenue Department Govt of Assam. But the information has been ascertained with the help of present Khadim of Poa Mecca. 1257-58 i.e. during the time of the invasion of "Kamru" by Ikhtyaruddin Malik Yuzbak. This sultan is said to have conquered and ruled Kamarupa for a few months after which he and his whole army was destroyed by the Rae of Kamru. Minaajuddin records that the sign of Islam appeared in the county when Ikhtyaruddin Malik Yuzbak instituted Friday religious services having erected a mosque there. It is therefore not unlikely that Hazarat Ghiyasuddin Awliya entered Kamarupa during that time and being a fakir he was sored by the king of Kamarupa who destroyed the entire forces of Malik Yuzbak. The dargh of Hazarat Ghiya suddin Awliya being on the top of Garudachal in Hajo we may presume that Ikhtyaruddin Malik Yuzbak erected the mosque there in 1256 A.D. 39. There is no reference to Hazart Ghiyasuddin Awliyas stay in Garigaon in any of these accounts save the first tradition recorded above. We are therefore inclined to think that the

saint might have come from Hajo to south bank of the Brahmaputra and stayed for sometime in Garigaon. Curiously enough there is a strong belief among the Muslims of Kamrup that Hazarat Jalaluddin Tabrezi, who is said to have passed away in 1244 A.D. stayed in Garigaon, Hajo and also perhaps on the Ueche parbat in the east of Gauhati. It is also believed that his tomb is in the Garigaon khankah. A few years ago the local Muslims unearthed an ancient tomb within the enclosure of this Khankah. It is not unlikely that Hazarat Jalaluddin Tabrezi visited Assam sometime in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, when the Kamrup region of the Brahmaputra valley was ruled by local tribal chiefs either independently or as vassals of Gauda Sultan Allauddin Mardan Khaiji. It is also probable that he entered the country with invading armies of Husamuddin Iwaz, who after the conquests having returned to Bengal was later killed by Sultan Nasiruddin, son of Ilutmish in 1228 A.D. We learn from Minhajuddin that a tribal chief of this region adopted Islamic faith at the hands of Muhammad ibn Bakhitiyar, and his followers held the latter in high esteem so much that they came for his rescue after his disaster on the bank of Barnadi in 1206 A.D. 40

From the travel accounts of Ibn Batutah we learn that the Moorish traveler visited a renowned saint who stayed in a cavern of a mountain of Kamrupa (Kamru). This mountain was within or near the territory of ‘Habank.’ A large river flowed through this territory and sailing down this river one could reach Lakhanawati or Gauda Bengal. Ibn Batuth steered down this river when he returned from Kamrupa. It is however difficult to ascertain from the travel account whether the name of saint was Jalaluddin Tabrezi or Jalaluddin Shiraji. In this context it seems essential to state that a renowned saint from the city of Shiraz is believed to have stayed in Assam in ancient time. The general consensus of opinion is that Ibn Batutah

actually visited saint shah Jalal of sylhet who is also regarded as the traditional conqueror of the latter territory in A.H. 703.25. This contention seems to have been based on Blochmann's observation that Hazarat Jalaluddin Tabrezi passed away in 1244 A.D. H. Beveridge, however, finds sufficient reason to assert that the year 1244 A.D. cannot be the last year of Hazarat Jalaluddin Tabrezi and that the was not the same person as Fakir Shah Jalal of Sylhet. 41

In the suhail Yaman an abstract of the earlier histories called The Risalah of Muhiuddin Khadim and the Rauzatus salatin refers to Jalal Fakir of sylhet as Yamani and not as Tabrezi. Similarly he has been described in the Sylhet inscription of Sultan Hussain shah, dated 1505 A.D. as the hermit of kanya instead of Tabriz. The suhail - I- Yaman of Nasiruddin late munsif of Sylhet states that Shah Jalal breathed his last (intiqal) on the 20th of Kali Chand. A.H. 591- . According to H. Beveridge, Ibn Batutah arrived at Bengal By A.H. 7741 (1341 A.D.)

It is said that Ibn- Batutah's earlier copy of the travel account being lost in his journey he had to compile the second copy of it in the latter part of his life. But he did not write it himself. He dictated it to an African friend. Consequently the great traveler certainly had recorded this later account entirely from his memory. It appears to be certain from the account that he came to kamarupa the land of magic to visit a renowned saint who lived in a cavern of a mountain. But this saint cannot be Fair shah Jalal of Sylhet because the sylhet shrine of Fakir shah Jalal is situated on mounds in plains and not on hills and the river Nahr- ul- azraov of the account also cannot be identified as the Meghana or Barak in sylhet, because the way from kamru mountain (Kashi) Jayantia or Garu Hills) or Sylhet to lakhanawati lies not through these rivers but through the Brahmaputra. From lakhanawati Muhammad ibn - Bakhtiyar followed the course of the Brahmaputra to enter Kamru mountain in 1205 -6- A.D. Lakhanawati lay far to the north of the Meghana and near the Brahmaputra where the latter river turns to south

having passed through the Assam Vally, we therefore believe that Ibn-Batutah actually came to Hajo which lay on the south bank of the Brahmaputra and facing Kamakhya the place of magic on the south. It is there that he visited Hazarat Ghiyasuddin Awliya who entered the country in 1256-57 A.D. and lived till the time that Ibn-Batutah visited that place. It is not unlikely that Hazarat Jalaluddin Tabrezi who visited Assam probably during the first quarter of the thirteenth century established the Khankah of Hajo where Ikhtiyaruddin Malik Yuzbak later erected a mosque in 1256-57 A.D. when Ghiyasuddin Awliya came to stay there. Thus this place being associated with the name of Jalaluddin Tabrezi it gradually attained widespread celebrity, particularly from the stay of Hazarat Ghiyas Uddin Awliya there. It was perhaps to see the latter as well as to pay homage to the memory of saint Jalaluddin Tabrezi the founder of the khankah that Ibn-Batutah visited Hajo and the latter period of his life when he dictated the account of this travel the aged Moorish traveller might have misplaced the name of the founder of this renowned khankah for the name of the saint who stayed there during his visit. The supposition that Ibn Batuth came to the Garudachal mountain in Hajo situated on the north bank of the Brahmaputra in Kamrup region is further strengthened by the fact that his description of the place of the saint appears to be greatly in agreement with the mountain and the shrine of Hajo. There still exists a cavern at the foot of this mountain facing the Brahmaputra on the south. The natives around the place believe to be a mysterious cave where there are heaps of ancient metal wares and wealth kept by some unseen spirit.

It is also believed that from the southern slope of the hill this cave runs underground right to be base of the place where the shrine is now situated. Apart from this we learn from the account of Ibn-Batutah that when he went back having visited the saint he steered his way through a big river which flowed by a prosperous place called Habank. This Habank was

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42. **Ibid.** p. 136-137.
probably the same place as Hajo which lay on the north bank of the Brahmaputra since the great traveler compiled his account only in the later part of his life he might have failed to remember the exact name of the place and therefore wrongly referred to it as Habank instead of Hajo. In some copies of his accounts the name of the ruler of the place Habank has been mentioned as Zeina. In all probability this appears to be a reference to prince Jongal-balahu of the family of Arimatta who flourished at that time and ruled over the part of the country as a vassal of the Gauda sultan.

To conclude, we hold that the renowned saint Ghiyasuddin Awliya of the Hajo dargah which is now popularly known as 'poa Mecca' entered Assam by the middle of the thirteenth century and he lived there till 1346–47 A.D. and that it was to visit him that Ibn Batutah came to the mountain of Kamarupa. In the Lau mountain which is situated about seventy miles away from Shillong town in the Khasi and Jayantia Hills district of Assam there is a very ancient Khankha. Tradition relates that this Khankah was founded by Hazarat Shah Sharifin. He is behaved still to be living and the strong belief of the inhabitants in the area is that they even now at times hear the saint Azan or call to prayers. They also hold that time the saint secretly traveled to Mecca through a tunnel the remains of which can still be seen in the enclosures of the Khankah. This lead us to think that Hazarat shah sharifin was perhaps a great Sufi saint.

In a copper plate inscription of Ahom king Lakshmi Singha issued in 1780 A.D. we find references to panch pirs of Khetri and Shah Fakir of Barnagar besides Fakir shah Madar of Bausi pargana. All these places are within the Kamrup district. No account of these pirs of Kamrup district is available now. But it appears to be quite certain that they all flourished long before 1780 A.D. and their names exercised considerable influence over the people at least till that time. The copper plate grants reelse that the king placed Anwar Haji Fakir of a family of Persian Readers of Assam in the charge of the Makams of these Fakirs and he was granted revenue free.

43. Saikia Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, P-197-198.
land with a number of servitors. Fakir shah Madar referred to in this inscription, however, does not appear to be the same pir about whom we have discussed earlier in this Chapter.

Apart from these 'Fakirs,' many pirs appear to have stayed in the ancient darghs and Khanks of Kamrup. In these holy places there are several ancient tombs. It is said that about seventy Alims and Awliyas were laid at rest on the Garudachal mountain of poa Mecca in Hajo. Except a few traditions, which are also extremely confusing and incoherent, no reliable account of these pirs of ancient Assam, is available at present. It is however gathered from some of these traditions that many of these pirs came with the Muslim invaders of the country. It seems that the local accounts, if there were any concerning the life of these pirs might have lost during the period of incessant wars between the Muslims and Ahom kings of Assam.44

Chandkhan who is more popularly known as Chandsai among the Assames people was one of the renowned religious men of ancient Assam. He was a tailor by profession and became a disciple of Sankaradeva. It was probably for this that he was also called Kabir by his Assamese brethren. A number of Zikirs and other religious songs of a gnomic type are ascribed to him. Besides these, he is also said to have compiled a biography of Gopaladeva another celebrated Vaisnav pontiff. As Chandsai was a disciple of Sankaradeva who flourished from 1449 A.D. to 1569 A.D., we have perhaps, no difficulty in considering him as one of the sixteenth century Muslim saints of Assam. Many miraculous stories about his divine power have been current among the Assames people. The account recorded by waderelates that 'Kabir' being ordered by his mother to repair the tottering roof of his house, went to gather thatches. But when he saw the thatches waving to and fro in the wind, like Brahmins praying to God he desisted from cutting the reeds and returned home. But at home he found that the house had already been repaired by some miraculous diving.

44. Ibid., p. 198–199.

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It is also said in this account that four Hindu fakirs visited Kabir who stayed at Hajo on their way to the Ganges for pilgrimage. When Kabir was told of their desire for the pilgrimage, he said that the virtue of the Ganges was everywhere with the virtuous. The pilgrims ignored the advice and decided to proceed on their mission. Kabir gave them a part of his food to offer to the Ganges. But at the time of their ablution in the Ganges, they forgot about Kabir's part of the food to offer to the holy Ganges and therefore they all became blind till they realized their mistake and made the offering to the river when they gave the food to the river they were said to have seen the hand of the Ganges to receive the offer. It is also said that a Hindu oilman went out for pilgrimage to Jaganath. On the way he visited Kabir at Hajo. Kabir showed him a bundle of straw and said that Krisna, Balabhagra and Subhadra all were in the bundle and asked the oilman to pour all the oil there, and this was done accordingly. The man then continued his journey to Jaganath. But on the way he once dreamt that the oil had already reached God in Jaganath.

Mr. Wade further records that Kabir Gosain stayed at Hajo and the tradition concerning the temple there was that it was formed by God during his stay in the place. It is also learnt from this source that Kabir afterwards went to west Bengal where he was revered by Hindus more than Musalmans on account of his restriction in diet. His compositions were found also in Bengal. His chief cults were the unity and universality of God and equality of mankind. This equality he seems to have extended to all animated creations. He alone was superior who adored God properly. A pilgrimage he laughed at. Many Hindus of Bengal were said to have accepted him as their apostle, and acknowledged God after him. They abstained from flesh and fish. But in Assam Hindu admirers worshipped

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their usual divinities.

In the middle of the seventeenth century Hazarat shah Miran alias Azan Fakir. The most renowned Muslim saint poet of Assam is said to have entered the Ahom Kingdom with his brother Hazarat Nabi pir from some place in the western country. Azan Pir had composed a number of Zikirs in Assamese and some of these Zikirs were composed during A.H. 1045 to A.H. 1052 (1635 A.D. to 1642 A.D.). The reference of these dates and the uses of literary expressions from Assamese folk-songs and other Vaishnait literary works in some of his Zikirs of high literary merit suggests that he had not only established himself in Assam but also acquired perfect knowledge of Assamese folk-literature and other religious literature besides a perfect command over the language. We have therefore reasons to believe that he had entered Assam with the Mughal.

Force as early as 1612-13 A.D. and stayed with them is Hajo in the Kamrup district, till 1626 A.D. It was not unlikely that he actually acquired true knowledge of the Assamese language and other literary works of Vaishnavite period. His biographers state that he originally hailed from Baghdad and a scion of the family of Hazrat Muhammad. Some of the old Assamese Syed families are the descendants of this as well as his brother and Khandkar Pir. 46

From some Zikirs, we learn that Azan Fakir was a geryhaired main when he entered the Ahom Kingdom. The Zikir which the Pir composed in 1635 A.D. shows that in language and stule it conforms distinctly to the folk-song of eastern Assam valley. Obviously, we have least difficult in asserting that he had settled in the Ahom kingdom some years before th is date (1635 A.D. in 1636 A.D.) the second phase of war between the Ahom king pratap singha with the Mughals broke out and it ended with a peace treaty in 1639 A.D.

By this treaty, the cause way Asur Ali near the city of Gauhati on the south of the Brahmaputra, and its tributary Barnadi on the north had been fixed as the Ahom Mughal boundary. Thus the present city of Gauhati remained

within the Mughal territory of Kamrup. The first phase of this war began in 1616 A.D. and ended in a cease-fire in 1628 A.D. We may therefore presume that Azan pir stayed in Mughal-Kamrup till this date i.e., 1628 A.D. and after this, he came to the Ahom kingdom which he described in his Zikirs as pardesh — or alien country. It is also learnt from some other Zikirs that the Muslim residing near the capital of Ahom kingdom (Sibsagar) became pankicky when hostility between the Ahoms and Musalmans broke out. The saint had therefore come down to Hajo and stayed there. This suggests that he being a new come to the Ahom kingdom, probably deemed it better to be away from the capital for his safety. Moreover, he had by that time probably become the source of displeasure for the Assamese Muslim leader like Rupai Gariya. 47

This reference to hostility between Ahom and Muslims as found in the Zikirs was probably to the second war between Pratap Singha and the Mughal FauJder in Kamrup. When this ended in a peace Treaty in 1639 A.D. the pir might have returned to the Ahom capital. Because we find that he composed Zikirs in the same language and style referred to above in A.H. 1052 (1657 A.D.). This time he appears to have settled in the country and gradually earned popularity amongst his followers in the country. This growing popularity of Azan Fakir had gradually become a cause of concern to the early Muslim settlers of Assam. Because through his writings and preaching the Pir bitterly attacked those native Muslims who delighted themselves in doing such things which were against Islamic Sahriah. Thus in course of time he came into direct clash with the Assamese Muslim official Rupai Gariya the Dadhara or the armour carrier of the Ahom king. In 1685 A.D. i.e., during the reign of Gadadhar singha this Rupai Gariya brought open charges thrice against the pir before the king saying that the pir was a spy of the Mughals and he met Mughal soldiers in Jungles. The king however heeded him not thrice. But at last Rupai succeeded in convincing the king alleging that the pir gave wrong guidance to the Muslim subjects.

in the country and thus polluted the religion. Still the king would not take himself any steps against Azan Fakir. He, therefore, tactly suggested Rupaj to do what the latter deemed best and also cautioned him to act with utmost care and in a rightful way so that neither the king nor the Muslim subject be held responsible for his misjudgment. Rupai Gariya, thus having the king's concurrence, arrested the Pir and extracted his eyes. But subsequently the king learnt all about the intrigue against the Pir and therefore he immediately put Rupai Gariya to death and the Pir was granted a monasatery with free land grant and servitors near the Dikhaw river in Sibsagar.

Azan Pir is said to have married an Assamese lady, by whom he had three sons. Their descendants are still found in Assam and they have been known as Saraguria Dewans, a name which originated from the name of the place where the king settled the Pir after his eyes were extracted by Rupai Gariya. Syed Shamsul Huda M.A., the retired D.D.P.I. and professor of Arabic Gauhati University belongs to this family. Azan Pir probably died sometime around 1690 A.D. Nabi Pir, brother of Azan Pir, stayed near Simaluguri at Sibsagar sub-division. All his descendants are still found there.

Tradition relating to Hazarat Saleh is that he stayed in Tiru Pather near Charaidew hills in Sibsagar district. His descendants are known as the Parbatia Dewan. The Muslim of Nazira in Sibsagar believe that he was entombed at a place in the vicinity of the Ahom royal palace at Gargaon (Nazira). All his descendants are still found in Nazira. Late Shah Syed Muhibul Haque, B.L., a freedom fighter and scholar belongs to this family.

Hazarat Abdul Gani alias Khondkar Pir, who stayed in Assam during the time of Azan Fakir is said to have ended his life himself with the help of a grass blade. No sepulture was raised around his body. The white ants are said to have raised a mound over his body where it laid in rest. Even today an ant hill is seen on his grave. This grave is situated on the bank of the

48. Ibid, P-47.
river Dilih, in Sibsagar. His genealogical table shows that he is also a
scion of the family of prophet Muhammad. His descendants are also
therefore called Sayed and they are known as komaldaiyas sayed Abdul
Malik the renowned literature and scholar of Assam belong to this family. 49

Sawal pir was popularly known as Bandar pir and it is said that he came
to Assam during the time of Azan pir. Tradition relates that this pir had
always roamed in Jungles in order to avoid the madding crowds. It was for
this that he was called Bandar or Monkey pir. He had no permanent
residence. The general consensus of opinion is that he was entombed on
the bank of the river Dichang in Sibsagar.

Apart from these pirs and Awliyas there were some Muslim religious
pontiffs who were accepted as priests by some of the ahom kings. These
holy men stayed in the vicinity of the Ahom palace. They are said to have been granted privileges similar to those granted to the Hindu priests of
the king. J. P. Wade who stayed in Assam from 1792 to 1794 A.D. noticed:
A Musalman of the name of Newas was gooroo - general of his persuasion
in Assam from about the time of Roodur singha. He had numerous
attendants. He dressed in high Musalman fashion. He resided at or near
the capital and frequented the durbar and the Swargdaos (kings) used to
dispatch him to pray at Hadjoo (Hajo) after the Musalman fashion for their
prosperity. He was usually succeeded by his nearest relations. He was
indulged with the privilege of riding on horseback but not in a Palki- dolah.
Three or four priests always remained in attendance at the palace. The
moment the king came forth to take the air they called down the blessing of
God on him with elevated hands. Whenever the surjee (king) sent this man
to perform puja at Makam Hadjoo he always sent considerable presents to
the temple ...

A number of Musalman Gosains were said to have stayed in Jorhat sub-
division in the later part of Ahom rule in the Assam. Their position and

49. Assam Buranji, Ed. S. K. Bhuyan. (A History of Assam from 1228-1826 A.D.) by Harakanta
functions were like those of the heads of the Vaishnava monasteries of ancient Assam; "Occasionally, they bear the title Dewan while their local names are derived from their residence or from the name of the saint of the line whose successors are distinguished from him by the appellation Deka or youth." The names of this Gariya Gosains or Muslim spiritual guides were (1) Akan Deka, son of Karphul Deka of Holonga Pariya line (2) Aol Deka of Bakir-puria Gosain Family (3) Dewan Deka of Sakkhoa Dewan family. They were however not bound to celibacy. It is said that the descendants of one of three sons of the great Azan pir of Assam were known as Holonga – Pariyas. It seems that Akan Deka mentioned above belonged to this family and hence he was known as Holonga – pariya. 50

C. Ancient Dargahs and Khanks of Assam

In the Goalpara district there are a number of Muslim shrines which are acclaimed to be ancient. The Dakaidal or Panjstan dargah is believed to be one of them. It is situated near Shri-surya hills at the tenth mile south west of the present day Goalpara town. The dargah contains the tomb of the pir who established it. Till 1857 A.D. it enjoyed a vast tract of revenue free land. The whole area of the dargah was it is said adorned with an elegant flower garden surrounded by a brick wall. The traces of this wall can still be seen there. But now the greater part of the dargah has been eroded away by the Brahmaputra which flows by it.

They are neither prohibited nor encouraged by the monarch to instruct Youths and exercise their religion. (Kabir Gosain at Haio. Assam Review. May 1929 pp 213-f)

This shows that the condition of the Muslim Madrassa were same as the Sanskrit tols in the country. The number of Muslim in the country being whether smaller it is natural that their such educational institutions will be also less. This therefore disqualify the view that Muslim education in the

country was forbidden and neglected.

The Degdhowa dargha which is situated four miles west of Goalpara town and on the Degdhowa hills near the Brahmaputra is believed to be as old as the Dakaidal dargah. Within its enclosures lay the tomb of the renowned pir who attracted many visitors to the place till he was stabbed to death by one of his disciples. Even to day boatmen of both Hindu and Muslim communities happening to pass by the dargah miss no chance to pay their homage to the pir and to make offerings on the tomb with prayers for a safe journey on the Brahmaputra.

The general belief concerning the name Degdhowa is that the soldiers of the invading army with whom the founder pir of the dargah came, washed their 'degs' or cooking pans at the place. The term dhowa means washing in Assames. This explanation does not appear to be convincing for the reason that the soldiers certainly have washed their cooking pans not only in that place, but many times and in many places along the bank of the Brahmaputra before they reached the vicinity of the dargah and many times after they advanced further east of the place. Moreover Musalman armies entered Assam several times and on different occasions during the whole period of their repeated invasions from 1206 to 1682 A.D. Consequently in different times many Muslim solders were certainly stationed in different place on the bank of the Brahmaputra where they definitely washed their pans during the period of their stay. 51

The term Degdhowa in fact reminds us of the story of Degdhani carried on his head by Haarat Jaluddin Tabrezi in order to serve warm food for his apostle with whom he used to move to from place to place. It may also be noted here that the name of Hazzat Jalauddin Tabrezi is associated with a few ancient deags and mazars in Gauhati.

Pagal pir, who is believed to be the founder of a dargh in Dhuphara lying about fifty miles east of the Goalpara town and on the western border of the

Kamrup district appears to be the same person about whom we have discussed earlier in this chapter. This dargah is said to have been endowed with a vast tract of pirpal land till 1859 A.D. after which this area was included in the Bijni Raj Easted (Zamindary).

The Panch pirar dargah in Dhubri in Goalpara is said to have been situated in the same place where stayed the five pirs brought to Assam by Raja Ram singha, the Rajput general of the Mughal army in 1667 A.D. when he led his punitive expedition to Assam. According to a tradition the Dargha contains the tombs of the five pirs and therefore it came to be known as Panch pirar dargah or draught of the five pirs. But some people hold that the dargah contains only the tomb of shah Akbar the chief of the five pirs. Since it is believed that shah Kamal who was one of these five pirs stayed in a khankah in the south-west of the Garo Hills. We presume that all these five pirs except shah Akbar, might have moved to different parts of the country from Dhubri dargah and established Khankahs in their respective place of stay. But after their death their mortal remains were probably brought and entombed in the Dhubri dargah where their leader shah Akbar was laid at rest. 52(A)

In the Kamrup district there is a number of dargahs and khankahs which are considered to be of much antiquity. Garigaon to be west of Gauhati is associated with the memory of Hazrat Jalaluddin Tabrezi, who is believed to have passed away in the place. The ancient tomb discovered in the place a few years ago strengthens this belief of the people. Scholars differ in their opinion concerning not only the date of demise of Hazrat Jalaluddin Tabrazi but also the place where he passed away. Abul Fazl relates that this great saint breathed his last in Mahal dev. This Mahal – dev has been identified as Maldives. Beveridge finds ample reasons to accept this identification as quite tenable. Some authorities however assert that he passed away in the famous Sylhet dargah which subsequently came to be. 52(A).

Assam that he breathed his last in Garigaon may not be correct but the tradition stating that he was the founder of the dargh does not appear to be altogether baseless. Because it does not appear to be unlikely that Hazrat Jalaluddin Tabrezi would enter Assam in the first quarter of the thirteenth century i.e. during the reign of Allauddin Ali Mardan khaji in Gauda or at the time of Hussamuddin Iwaz's invasion of Kamarupa in 1226-27 A.D. It was during this period that the great saint is said to have sojourned through India. The western part of the Kamrupa kingdom from the river Barnadi in the east of Gauhati and Hajo to the esteran fronter of Gauda to the west was then ruled by the local tribal chiefs who were either allies or feudatories of the sultans of Gauda. Consequently it is not improbable that Hazrat Jalaluddin Tabrezi had visited this part of Assam during that period.52(B)

We find that the tradition concerning the powa Mecca dargha of Hajo also refers to the Ucchu Parbat or high mountain in the east of the modern town of the Gahuati. Curiously enough the Kachari tribals who live in the villages near the foot of the Ucchu parbat have the firm conviction that this mountain is the abode of a Musalman Gosain or Muslim saint and they make offering of milk on a rock in the name of the Gosain. They also believe that the holy spirit of the Musalman Gosain still moves about on the hill and there are people among them who it is said have experienced the vision of this holy spirit on certain occasions. Often they come across as they say some warm and cocked food neatly placed on the rocks although no human being can be found around the place. The hill is covered with a thick forest, and as such it becomes a happy retreat of wild animals. The conviction of the Kacharies about this holy spirit of the Musalman Gosain reminds us of Minhajuddins account that far in 1205 A.D. a chief of the Mech people accepted Islamic faith from Muhammad – ibn – Bakhtiyar and that all the followers of the chief became true admirers of the latter. The Mech people from a branch of the Kadharis of Assam, we may therefore

52(B). Ibid, P-84.
presume that in the first quarter of the thirteenth century Hazrat Jalaluddin Tabrezī visited Assam and established his khānakahs in these which were inhabited chiefly by the followers of the Mech chieftain who demons.

Vide our discussion on the problem of the Raja of Kamarupa of the time of the invasions of Muhammad - ibn Bakhtiyar and Hasmuddin Iwaz treated their fidelity to and admiration of Muhammad - ibn Bakhtiyar and came for his resue after his whole army was destroyed by the Raja of Kamarupa in 1206 A.D on the bank of the Barnadi to the east of Hajo. 53

Among the other ancient dargahs of the Kamrup district the Sijubari dargah is situated in the Beltola mauza in the vicinity of Gauhati and the Barduar dargah of Bholagon at the foot of the Khasi Hills on the south bank of thr Brahmaputra. The rest of them are situated at Kameswar Hajo Rajabazar, kalita-kuchi, Agiathuti Hills sila senduri ghopa Madhapur, Majdia and Barbehealth. It is believed that they were founded by some compeers or disciples of Hazrat Ghiyasuddin Awliya of Hajo powa Mecca Dargah. In our account of Hazrat Ghiyasuddin awliya we have discussed the powa Mecca dargah of Hajo. It is said that Hazrat Ghiyasuddin Awliya having inlaid holy earth from Mecca in this dargah named it as powa Mecca quarter of Mecca some people in Assam however believe that the place was originally the abode of Chandsai the Muslim disciple of Sankaradeva, and that it was during his stay in the place that God himself created a temple there. Apar from these the dargahs of Bhella and Dhamdhama also appear to be very old. The former is known as the dargah of sayed Shahnur Fakir who might have flourished some in the latter period of Ahom rule in Assam. The Dhemdhama dargah is said to have been established when a Mughal army stayed in the place. Since the Mughals entered Assam only from the early parts of the seventeenth century we may perhaps hold that this dargah was built in the seventh century, and possibly before 1682. A.D. when the Ahom king Gadadhar singha finally expelled the

Musalman invaders of Assam beyond the river Manas in the Goalpara district. In the vicinity of the pingalewar Siva temple of Hastasal within the Pati Darrang Mauza in the Kamruo district, there is a 'makam' or holy place. The mosque within the Makam is said to be recent origin. But it possesses a copy of the Quran sharif, which is said to be very old and as the tradition goes, it was discovered in a place near the Pingaleswar Siva temple where it was earlier kept buried in a wooden box and along with the images of certain Hindu deities and a bull hewn from stone. The images and the bull are said to have been preserved in the temple while the Quran is kept in the mosque by the local Muslims. Adjacent to the temple there is a small earthen mound which is believed to have been gardully rising above the ground and has been claimed by some local Muslims as the tomb of certain pir. But there is controversy as regards this assumption of the Muslims. Reference to the Bar Makam of Fakir Shah Fakir of Barnagar, besides the PANCH Pir Dargha of Khetri in the copper plate grant issued by the Ahom king lakshmi Singha in 1790 A. D. in favour of Anwar Haji Fakir of Assam, reveals that there holy places in the Kamrup district attained their celebrity in those days. This presupposes that the two makams and the dargah were established long before that date. From the Baranjis we learn that during the Ahom Mughal war in the early sixteenth century one Madar a Muslim who has been described as Bairagi (Fakir) was captured by the Ahom. This Bairagi Madar was perhaps a follower of Fakir Shah Madar and he was subsequently allowed to stay in Bausi pargana in Kamrup district where he founded this khankah. No trustworthy and detailed accounts of these places however are available to day. The solitary hillock to the north of the Urdnagon which lay to the west of Urdnagana in the Now going district is Known as Graduate parvat or the hillock of cow slaughter. There is no mosque or dargah, but Muslims of the locality regard it as a holy place and they go to say their prayers on the top of the hillock. This might be the same place where Rupai Gariya, the Muslim officer of Ahom king Gadadhar Singha, instituted a shirni function having slaughtered seven cows. As his contemporary pir Azan Fakir refused to attend the function.
Rupai branded the pir as the enemy of Islam and its followers in Assam and having taken orders from the king by blackmail, he punished the Pir by extracting the eyes. 54

The dargah of Hazarat shah Miran alias Azan Fakir of Assam is situated in the heaths of Saraguri on the bank of the river Dikhaw near its confluence with the Barhamputra in the Sibsagar district. The ancient dargah is said to have contained about a hundred bighas of land. The ruins of two ancient earthen ramparts around the dargah can still be seen there. It now stands as one of the important religious places for the Muslims of Assam. On the river Dililih and about five miles away from the Sibsagar town lies the dargah of Hazarat Osman Gani Saheb alias Khondkar Pir. This dargah enjoys about twenty bighas of revenue-free land. It is said that in this place the pir sat alone and put an end to his own life with the help of a grass blade. The white ants built a mound on his remains. It was only sometime posterior to this event that some of his followers found him there and raised a tomb there. There is a pond near this sepulcher. It is reported that some people in recent times went to the dargah to pay their homage to the pir and that when they went down to the pond which was then all dry and cleared the bed of it in search of water they discovered a pair of wooden sandals and some other relics connected with the pir. When the people brought these to their home, some thing evil happened to them. They therefore placed them again in their old place. Hundreds of people even now go there to pay their homage to this great pir in his dargah.

The dargah of Hazrat Nabi Pir, the brother of Assam Fakir, is said to have been situated near the Simaluguri railway station in Sibsagar. This place is in the vicinity of the old Ahom royal palace in Nazira. The Khanhah of this pir as tradition goes was at Timu Pathar near the Ahom necropolis on the Charaideo Hills in Sibsagar.

Sawal Pir is said to be another of the three contemporaries of Azan Fakir. His dargah is believed to have been in the village of Ririya on the

bank of the river Dichang in the Sibsagar sub-division. This dargah was discovered only in recent times. It is said that the pir, who was popularly known as Bandar pir, appeared before a village of Ririya in a dream and he himself gave the information of the dargah in the nearby forest. According to the instructions reportedly received in the dream the villager along with some of his companions went out in search of the dargah into the forest and found a tomb near a tank there. From that time people visit this place and pay their homage to the pir entombed therein. 55

D. Ancient Mosques of Assam

We have already noticed how sultan Ikhtiyaruddin Malik Yuzbak erected a mosque in Kamarupa as early as 1256-57 A.D. As we have so far no information of any other mosque established in the country anterior to this date, we may accept this as the first mosque to have been created in Assam. B. C. Allen's account in the District Gazetteer, Kamrup makes out that there was a very ancient mosque in Powa Mecca dargah of Hajo and that this mosque was rebuilt by Mir Lutfulla Shieazi, the Mughal Faujdar who governed the Kamrup region from 1653 to 1658. This ancient mosque at Hajo may be considered as the second of Assam. Tradition relates that Ghiyasuddin Awliya constructed a mosque in Hajo during his stay there. This was probably the same mosque rebuilt by Mir Lutfulla Shirazi in Raangamati, which lay to the north of Gauripur in the Goalpara district. There is another ancient mosque, which is believed to have been constructed by Sultan Hussain Shah of Gauda who held sway over this part of Assam from 1502 to 1519 A.D. In Manikachar area within this district there is another ancient mosque which is said to have been built by Mir Jumla, the Mughal general who was in Assam during the year 1661 to 1663 A.D. This Mosque can still be seen in Manikachar.

Apart from these there were several ancient mosques to be found in the villages of Dhakpara, Mirtola and Karara within the Kamalpur circle of the

Kamrup district and these mosque enjoyed pirpal land endowed by Ahom kings. These old mosques are however, no more to be seen now. Their place has been occupied by new constructions. But these new mosques have still been enjoying the pripal land grants in the same old order.

E. Other Islamic Institution

There were also a few Muslim religious institutions which were different from dargahs and khankahs. They were known as the sattras which had their prototype in the Hindu Vaishnava sattra, institution of Assam. As it has been in the case of the Hindu temples of the same name, the heads of these Muslim sattras were called Gosains like the spiritual preceptors of the Vaishnavas. The name of these Muslim Gosains have been mentioned earlier in our account of the pirs and Awliyas of Assam in the present chapter.

All these Musalman institutions were situated in Jorhat. Commenting on these institutions E. A. Gait says, The Musalmans have borrowed the ecclesiastical machinery of the Hindus. They have their Gosains or spiritual preceptors, to some one of whom every Musalman is bound to attach himself. Thewse Musalman Gosains have their own sattras or establishments and resident disciples (Bhikits). They collect their tributes from non-resident disciples by means of village officers of their own called Gaon burhas each of whom is assisted by a barik or peon. The Gaonburha is appointed by investiture with a turban at the hands of the Gosains. He receives no direct emoluments but Late Qazi Syed Fazlur Rahman of soraguria Gosain family was a renowned freedom fighter. In 1921 Khilafat Movement, he resigned from his post as Teacher of Mangaldal Govt. H. E. School and joined movement and was imprisoned with ether political fighters like late Gopenath Bordoloi. He was physically strong enough for which he was popularly known as Gadadhar sahib. He visited Naga Hills and some of the Arunachal hills for Islamic Missionary work is entitled to the highest place at village entertainments on the occasion of religious festivals.

festivals, weddings, funerals etc.

The existence of so many ancient Muslim religious institutions in Assam shows definitely that although the Musalmans in ancient Assam were small in number compared to the Hindu population in the country they had ever been considered an important part of the country population and enjoyed privileges not lesser than their Hindu brethren in social or religious matters. This goes to disprove the belief in some quarters that Musalmans in ancient Assam were the most oppressed class of people and were forbidden even to say their prayers. 57

**F. Islam and the Vaishnava Bhakti Movement of Assam.**

Islam does not seem to have provided the expansion of Vaishnava Bhakti movement in Assam with a source or incentive. The speedy expansion of this movement appears to have been an inevitable result of prolonged sufferings the people under the oppression of a professional priestly class and the pressure of ritualism which gained great importance in the country in the period of its unstable political conditions prevailing from the downfall of king Jayapala in the early twelfth century to the ascendancy of Ahom rule in the sixteenth century. During this period the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa broke into a number of small and independent principalities perpetual conflicts, jealousies and infiltrations culminating in wars became the dominant factors to determine the relations among these principalities and the people of the country as a whole became overwhelmed with feelings of uncertainty, terror and despair so much so that they were bound to seek solace in religion. But when the greater part of the people was ignorant they were bound to be attracted towards the ritualistic aspect of religion. This again in its turn helped the growth of a strong priestly class which finally brought about a state of religious anarchy in the country. Thus with the disappearance of a strong central government the people of Kamarupa became the easy prey of all sorts of oppression and exploitation so much so

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57. Tamizi, Mohammed Yahyi: Sufi movements in Eastern India, New Delhi, 1992 A.D., p-49.
that their hope for peace and progress in the political social and spiritual spheres was curbed. To save the people from such a sickening state and to enthuse them with new hopes a great social reformer and saint like Sanaradeva (1449-1568 A.D.) became the crying need of the hour.

In an age when religion formed the basis of all social and cultural life and even of political thought of a people, any reform mooted for them would inevitably require of their reformer to concentrate his endeavours first of all on the recollection of the religious system followed by them. This is what exactly happened to Sanaradeva in Assam. He was a great protagonist of the Vaishnava Bhakti faith. For his countrymen who had so long been stumbling in the darkness of ignorance and under the pressure of extensive ritualism his preachings of monotheistic cult through the direct easy and practical system of Bhakti (consisting of sravana and kirtana) ushered in a new hope for peace, unity and progress in their spiritual life. Sanaradeva does not appear to have been a follower or agent of any of the Vaishnava reformers of other parts of India. With his own interpretations of the text of the sastras, he evolved his own faith of Vishnu-bakti which it appears is distinct from those followed in different parts of India. The cardinal tenets of his preachings are (i) It preaches supreme surrender to one God. Vishnu or Krishna who is the central reality of soul and matter and the first and final cause of creation (2) Lord Krishna is the full incarnation of God on earth. Unlike some of the Vishnu Bhakti schools in other parts of India it banishes the dualistic conception of God as Kaishna and Radha or Krishna and Gopi. It upholds that Madhava is the controller of both Prakriti and purusha. (3) It provides only one mode of worship of God and that is through love and intense devotion. It indicates the idea that Bhakti is superior even to Mukti or final release and strictly prohibits the idolatry of any kind (4) This religion knew no caste and universal spirit is the main principle of this faith (5) It attaches utmost importance to the preching of the Bhagawat Gita.

Another noteworthy feature of this school of Bhakti appears to be that

like Islam, it also urges its adherents to accept this world and life respectively as the best place and time to prepare for the selfless services to God through love and devotion. In some of their Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva sing the glory of life (narajama) human body (naratani) and the world in the shape of Bharatavarsha. With the abrogation of idolatry of any kind and the dualistic conception of God as Radha-Kaishna or Gopi Krishna and also with the glorification of human life and the world the Bhakti cult of Sankaradeva seem to have conformed greatly to Islam. It was probably for such qualities that it could not only attract several Muslims to be its votaries but also arouse the profound feelings of admiration as well as respect among the Hindus and Muslims of Assam for each other's religion and thus succeeded in forging a sustaining fraternity between the communities even during the long period of evergrowing hostilities and wars of Assam with the Muhammadan powers of India. Whether these affinities of the Bhakti preached by Sankaradeva with Islam were mere coincidence or an out come of any direct or indirect influence of the latter, cannot be established with absolute certainty. But the influence of the Vaishnavas on the Assames Muslims can perhaps be inferred from the reverential reference to Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva and the occurrence of the word nama (of nama-dharma, the official name of the faith preached by Sankaradeva) as a substitute for Kalima (qalma) in the Assames Zikirs. 59

In some aspects the Vaishnavism preached by Sankaradeva appears to have a close affinity to Islam. But there is no evidence to show that he ever studied any Islamic work or came into close contact with any Muslim saint before he began to preach his doctrines in Assam. It is of course, found that the name of Kabir has been held in high esteem by the followers of Sankaradeva. In the Katha, Guru Charit it is stated that during his second pilgrimage he visited the place of Kabir but met his Grand-daughter only. According to this biography, this act of Sankaradeva was not liked at first by his followers who held Kabir as a mere Yavana. But Sankaradeva

stated that Kabir was the son of a Brahman and was himself a worshipper of Vishnu. This shows that a hatred for Yavanas was prevalent during the time among the Vaishnavas of Assam. At the same time it also indicates that Sankaradeva acquired some knowledge about Kabir's life and works. Sankaradeva started his second pilgrimage about 1550 A.D. Sankaradeva appears to have been a much contemporary of Kabir and during the Assam saints first pilgrimage the latter was preaching his doctrines. According to Dr. Tarachand, the probable date of Kabir's birth was 1425 A.D. and he might have passed away by 1492 A.D. or 1519 A.D. It is therefore not improbable that during his first pilgrimage Sankaradeva might have visited Kabir or met at least some of his disciples in some of the holy places. We have noticed earlier the influence of Islam and Hinusim on Kabir's preachings. We have also noticed that the language and style of Kabir's preachings were shaped by that of Sufi saints and poets. It is therefore not unlikely that some elements of Islam find place, at all, in the preachings of Sankaradeva through the songs of Kabir and others he heard in different holy places in India. Chand Khan the Muslim disciple of Sankaradeba is sometimes identified with or Known as Kabir. All this shows that Kabir is held in esteem in Sankardeva's school at least from the second pilgrimage of the saint. 60

From the biographical details of Assam's Vaishnava saints and from all the different religious texts it would however be hard to establish any direct influence of Islam on the sect Sankaradeva always insisted that all practical efforts even if it be just a lyric, should have a basis in some authoritative text so far as it is practicable. Particularly in the doctrinal aspect of the faith this sectum was most strictly adhered to. It is true that Vaishnavism as a whole had at least something to do with the Islamic ideal of monotheistic principles etc, but Sankaradeva, Madhavadeva and others in Assam always fell back upon the old sanskrit texts like the Bhagawatapurana and the Bhagawat gita for the enunciation of the doctrines of faith and even for poetic

60..Salim, Gulam Hussai :Riazussalation, P-257.
About the identity of thought and sentiment of the Asam Vaishnavas on the one hand and of Kabir and the Sufis on the other, we have spoken elsewhere but these appear to be more chance coincidences than any deliberate community of philosophy. 61

THE LOCAL INFLUENCES OF THE MUSLIM WAY OF LIVING

A. Religious Beliefs and Establishments

From what has been said about the growth of the Musalman elements in Assam whether through propagation of the faith or by different types of folk movements it becomes clear that they from the beginning formed but a small part of the total population of the country. It is therefore inevitable that they should fall under the influence of the mode of life of the Assamese. It would appear all the more certain when we consider that being under the rule of the non Muslim rulers of Assam for centuries, besides the intermittent wars and conflicts between the two Countries, they were completely cut off from their co-religionists of Northern India. The climate conditions of the country as well as the catholic trend of the ruling class of the Assamese people of the time seem to have greatly helped the Muslim to come closer to the native populace. We learn from Shihabuddin Talish the chronicler of Mir Jumla, that unlike in the rest of India the Assamese ate food cooked by Musalmans, and the Mariyas in the eastern Brahama Putra valley are said to have eaten beef and pork and indifferentive.

The acceptance of Sankaradeva as their apostle by Assamese Muslims like Chandkhan and Jayahari and of Madhavadeva by Yavana Haridas show to what an extent Vaishnavism exerted its influence on the Muslim settlers of Assam. This is further confirmed by the marked influence of Assamese neo-Vaishnava literature on the Zikrs and Zaris or marshiyas composed by several Muslim pirs and Aweiyas in the seventeenth century.

Apart from the impact of Vaishnavism certain other local religious beliefs also seem to have influenced the Assamese Muslims to a certain extent.

61 Saikia Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, p. 218.
Like their Hindu neighbours, the Musalmans in certain parts of Assam believe that the outbreak of smallpox is the doing of a goddess known as Ai (Mother) and that if this goddess is propitiated in a proper manner people might get rid of the menace of the epidemic. They therefore invoke the goddess Ai like the Hindus as soon as an epidemic of smallpox breakout and some of them even go to the length of sacrificing fowls and pigeons. In some of his Zikrs Azan pir regrets that some Musalmans indulge in the worship of trees or deities who are believed to have dwelt to have dwelt in trees sacrificing ducks and pigeons or offering oblations on the upper end of a plantain leaf like the Hindus. Besides these animistic practices in their private life many Musalmans in the Kamrup Mangaldai and Nowgong district have also been taking part with their Hindu friends in worship of Manasa, the goddess of snakes in Kamrup. This section of Musalmans is known as Jahils (fools) while Musalmans is known as Jahiils (fools) whereas in Nowgong they are called Dhekris. On such occasions they generally give performances as Oja - pali or choric singers and dancers who sing narratives on Hindu religious themes.62

In such performance the Ija or the leader of the group expresses through his speeches, body movement and gestures (Mudra) the various sentiments and actions described in the narrative while the palis or his followers sing the refrain set by him with constant rhythmic body movement. This institution of dance and music is claimed to be indigenous to Assam and is popular with the Assamese Muslims to such an extent that many of them earned laurels as Ojas or leader of such singing and dancing groups. Even now a Muslim village in Mangaldai is known as Oja Bara Chuk after the name of one of such Ojas. Similarly the name of Kerkon Gariya a Muslimman is still remembered by some people of Sibsagar, as one of these renowned ancient Muslim drummers of the Sibsagar Siva temple. From ancient times the managements of this Siva Temple has been conducted.

62. Ibid, P-228-229.
through a committee one of the membership of the committee has remained hereditary to the family of late Bakhtdaullah of Daai Ali Sibsagar Town. The term Dauliah however does not have anything to do with the Assamese term Dol which means a temple. Though there are separate Hindu and Muslim villages in Assam the two communities do not always reside separately. There is a large number of villages where the people of both the communities live together having different prayer house Namghars and mosques in different places in the same village but they jointly take part in the welfare of the particular village. Even today in many of the Assamese villages Muslim villagers are often found visiting their Hindu friends in Namghares and delighting them having unhesitatingly accepted "Mah Prasad" that is, part of the offering made during prayer of the latter. Similarly the Hindu villagers are also often seen visiting Majars of Pirs Khankahs and Dargahs, and making offerings as well as hanging threads on trees or posts in such places indicating their to obtain fulfillment of their prayers. The ancient custom which is said to have been followed till to day in the Chamariyasattra, the renowned Hindu Vashnava temple in the Kamrup district is that once in a year the Hindus and Muslim meet together in the Namghar or the prayer house of the sattra and large quantity of Prasad prepared for the occasion of community prayer is served to them all in a large basin from where everyone takes his own share with his own hands and enjoy it sitting all huddled together.

The Vaishnava sattras served as important centres of learning in ancient Assam. They may be likened to some extent, to a residential educational institution of modern times. These sattras were chiefly run under the orders of their pontiffs who were sometimes selected by the Voaries, the Vaishnava monasteries maintained Hatis or barracks of boarding houses for students. As it is practised even now in some of the sattras, so also in ancient times a boy attaining five years of age could be placed there and this boy had to pass some twelve years as a recluse till he completed his studies.

In our notice of the ancient Dargahs and Khankahs of Assam we have seen how the Muslim religious teachers also maintained a number of monasteries which had their prototype in this Hindu ecclesiastical organizations. Like the Assamese Hindus they also recruited their followers from among the general Muslim population and this process has been known as Bhakat kara as in the case of Vaishnava sattra novices. The heads of the monasteries were called Gosains (or Gariya Gosains) The Muslman Gosains quotes E. A. Gait from the Census Report of 1891 have own sattras or establishments and resident disciples (Bhakat) who however are not bound to celibacy. We have already noted in connection with the revenue system of ancient Assam, that a village head man in the Muslim territories was Known as Muqaddam. The use of the term Gaonbura or Gaonburha for such an official is prevalent in Assam, perhaps from very anients times because even now in ival areas of the country, a Gaon burha holds a very high position in social life similiary the term Barik is indigenous to Assam. It is applied to a person who is appointed as a collector as well as caretaker of publice institutions in a village. The process of the recruitment of monks or Bhakats from among the Musalmans by their heads of the sattras and the appointment of a Barik by then of services similar to those by the Hindus appears to be the results of the influence of the latter on the Musalim settlers. The Village officers appointed by Hindu sattras are of Course known as saj-tolas or medhis. The Hindu Gaonburhas perform the functions mainly of a village leader. 64

B. Agricultural Customs.

While discussing the Mariyas or the earliest groups of Muslims to be settled in the eastern part of the Brahmaputra valley towards close of the first quarter of the sixteenth century, we refered to a local tradition which states that these Muslims were absolutely ignorant of the system of agriculture prevalent in Assam. But the remark of Azan pir in one of his Zikrs that the Assames Muslims delighted in agriculture rather than in the

64. Ibid, P 231-232.
C. Food and Diet.

Through India as a whole falls within the monsoon belt, yet Assam may be regarded truly as a land of showers and shallows and as a such its agricultural products greatly differ not only from those of the land of the Saracens, but to a considerable extent from even those of the Indo-Gangetic plains. Consequently the Muslim settlers were not only compelled to be acclimatised here but were also bound to accept Assamese dietaties. As it is today the use of chira or fried and flattened Sandah — a kind of flour from fried rice laru a kind of balled sweetmeat from rice and pitha or cakes made of rice formed the important tiffins and matimah or phaseolus aconitfolius comprised a popular part of the main meals not only for the Hindu families but also for the Muslim in ancient times. It may of course not be unlikely that some of their own items and their own system of preparation the Muslims might have added variety and quality to these indigenous items. About some of the items introduced by the Muslim to the system of Assamese dietery we have discussed in the chapter on the employments of the Musalman in different profession and services in the country. Some of the Muslims in the past are also said to have been addicted to country liquor generally prepared from fermented rice and have invariably been popular amongst some sections of the native people. 66

D. Dress and ornaments.

It was on some economic basis that the Ahom kings had to introduce rules determining the modes of wearing garments and dresses for different classes of people. When due to constant invasions of the Muslim rulers of India, the Ahom kings had to divert all human resources to strengthen the economy of the country to help the increase of its defence potential, they were constrained by circumstances to curtail all sorts of luxuries which might cause laxity or bring about a set back in the economic development of the country according to the needs of the time. In Assam during this period

66. Saikia Mohini Kuma: Assam- Muslim relation and Its Cultural Significance, P-166.
that the popularity of the Muslim types of dresses was confined only to the Ahom court or among the high officials in the country, it reached down to the level of the common people. The constant references in the Buranjis to the Nara Kapor or a wrapper from the Nara country to the south east of Assam a Nara chola or Nara shirts besides Nara Jali chola i.e. a shirt of very thin Nara cloth prove that there were other types of dress and garments which were equally popular among the Assamese people. It can therefore, be safely presumed that the Muslims in the country also became accustomed to the use of the latter types of dresses. 68

It is generally said that the Muslim males in the country were required to shave their heads. Through the portraits of them as depicted in the paintings of Sahapari – Upakhyan confirms it this rule does not seem to have been strictly enforced. In the same paintings we find a Musalman with a coloured Lungi wearing a bunch of long hair on the top of his head. The queer feature that attracts our attention is the grooming of the bunch of hair in the form of a pig tail which is very common among the Hindus. As for the head gears a Muslim commoner in the country probably used caps of his own type besides the Japis or Assamese hats made of indigenous materials. The portrait of a Muslim countier with well-trimmed beard as depicted in a painting in the Hasti – vidyrnava, Shows that he wears a turban like his Hindu or Ahom colleagues. But the fashion of the turbans used by the Muslims was perhaps slightly different from that of others because even to day we notice that groups of Muslims who sing Jikrs and Zaris or Marshiyas in the country wear their turban in a fashion which appears to be akin to the Raiput fashion rather than to that of a Mathura Pag or stra Pag (?) used by the Assamese Hindus.

The ordinary section of the Assamese Muslim women as the paintings in sahapari – Upakhyan show wore a long sleeved Jacket for the upper part of the body and an Assamese Mekhela or long skirt for the lower. But the

68 S.M. Bijli: Early muslim mystics and Philosophers, P-120.
ladies of the higher class were richly clad with well decorated clothes and the mode of its wearing appears to have been more or less a variation of the Burkha with the face left exposed. This might be due to local influences, because we learn from the Fathiyah—ibriyah that the Assamese women in the mid—seventeenth century used to move freely in the streets and market—places with bare heads so much so that it attracted the attention of Shihabuddin Talish. The use of a beautifully embroidered small kerchief called Hachati or wallet for betelnut preparations is still in vogue amongst both the Hindus and Muslims of either sexes in the rural areas of Assam. The male persons of both the communities are also seen even now using a towel with coloured borders in the fashion of a phachau, or Ahom turban as head gear. Apart from the long skirts or Mekhelas and Jackets with sleeves the Muslim women like their Hindu counterparts might have also used Cheleng Khaniya and Riha as their upper garments, because such clothes are still used by them. The indigenous gold ornaments such as Hemhar for neck, Kundal for ears and Nupurs for feet and even the use of Vermillion Marks on forehead were probably not very rare among the Muslim women of Assam. The Assamese Zikrs and Zaris records the intense longing for as well as the use of these. Muslim women is several places it is also learnt from this source that like their Hindu friends they also used Gathiyan a kind of aromatic root for preparation of scented hair oil and Ghila (Entada scandeus) as shampoo besides Kakai, i.e. a comb made of bamboo or horn or ivory for grooming hair. Bahadur gaonburha one of the heroes who led the struggle for the cause of Assam sovereignty in 1857 supplemented his earning by manufacturing ivory combs or Kakals and other similar ivory goods. 69

E. The Use Of Tambula (betel-nut preparation)

Various social uses of betel—nut have been observed amongst the Assamese people from ancient times. In old Assamese literature we have ample references to its use by the Hindus in the country. In the middle of

69.Rashid A: Society and culture in Medieval India, p. 52.
the seventeenth century when shihabuddin Talish visited Assam he noticed
that betel-leaves and areca—nuts were the only commodity sold in an
Assamese market. It seems that the Muslim settlers in the country soon
became accustomed to its use in their private and social life. Even to—day
both the communities offer it as the first article of reception to their guests.
It has also been used by the Muslims in the same manner as the Hindus in a
soliciting's favour or making an appeal as well as in seeking compromise
between. 70

The decendants of Bahadur Gaonburah is still held in high esteem by the
native people.Md. Ab dus satt e one of his decendants is a renownerd
literature of assam disputing perties and also in apologising for one's own
wrong doing. The system of extending invitation to people by offering a
packet of betel-nut to attend important ceremonies in one's family is still
prevalent not only among the Hindus but also among the Muslims in some
parts of the country. Similarly an Assamese Muslim like his Hindu friend
desists from plucking betel leaves or areca nuts himself, for a few days
from if the happens to attend a funeral rite in the burial ground. Thus we
find that being under local influence the Muslim settlers of Assam have been
giving importance to the uses of betel—nut in their social and domestic life.

F. Household Utensils.

Apart from the Bata or Metallic tray to serve betel—nuts the use of Saphura
i.e. high tray with a dome shaped cover and Sarais or such trays without
cover on holy occasions as well as a make of honour to dignitaries has been
prevalent among the two communities from ancient times. Similarly the uses
of Bera Kanhis or metallic (brass) platters with stands for meals were
common among the higher classes of Hindus and Muslims of ancient
Assam. This utensil is considered to be of native origin.

G. The Modes of Housing

The system of constructing houses with reeds, bamboo, cane and
timber is indigenous to Assam. we learn from the accounts of the fathiyah—

70 Saikia Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Relation and its
Cultural Significance, p- 240.
i- Ibriya. how the Muslim invaders of the seventeenth century were struck with awe and admiration when they for the first time saw the Assamese craftsmanship on woodwork in Ahom palaces. the Muslim settlers seem to have become adept in the construction of houses with such materials. They also seem to have been under the influence of some of the local customs and devices concerning such construction. Like the Hindus they are also seen even now in villages to observe the custom of tying a piece of red cloth on the first main post to be erected on the site of construction in order to make a happy and auspicious beginning. On the occasion of the first occupation of new house, the Muslims also arrange parties or congregation of well-wishers as the Hindus do, with a wish to averting any impending evil.

H. Customs relating to Nuptial Ceremonies.

The Custom of playing a village orchestra, particularly with the indigenous drumas (dhol) in a Hindu or tribal ceremony is very ancient in Assam. It is said that till about fifty years ago from now Muslims in the country also followed this native custom. Besides this the custom of constructing bamboo-gates with an arched top which is often decorated with a piece of red cloth and also erecting a dome-shaped structure in the place where a bride or bride-groom is given bath after the customary anointing of their persons with pastes prepared by pounding the rhizomes of turmeric and Gathiyan along with Matiman (Phaseolus aconitifolius) along with Matimah (Phaseolus aconitifolius and mustard oil and the ladies singing wedding songs have been prevalent amongst the Muslims and Hindus alike. To observe the local custom of Hengar dhara or offering impediments or obstruction to the bride-groom and his party on their way to the bride's house is also common. It is often found that the people from both the communities join together in such fun. The custom of demanding bride-prize for their daughters has been prevalent among certain sections of Assamese Hindus. It is said that the Muslim settlers in some parts of the

71. Ibid., p. 241.
country also follow this custom. Similarly like their Hindu neighbours many of the native Muslims also are said to observe the Nowal Tolani ceremony when a girl attains her puberty.  

I. Common Belief and Customs.

Many of customs observed by the Hindus in their everyday life seem to have become popular among the Muslim settlers in the country. On Thursdays and Saturdays, members of both communities refrain from cutting a cane from a cane-brake or a bamboo from the clump, and desist from carrying inside a house earth from outside for using it in any kind of household work. It seems that an Assamese Muslim, like his Hindu friend also believes that a happy and successful journey should be started on a good day and at an auspicious moment and generally avoids the latter part of Thursday besides the Friday the day of his religious services. It is also seen that very often Muslims go to consult a Hindu pandit in order to ascertain an auspicious day for commencement of any undertaking. The members of both the communities believe that crows possess the occult power of foretelling an impending event. They also do not differ in holding as evil omens such incidents as the falling or breaking of a pot while using water for some purpose and the displacement or falling away of the platter while taking meal. Though cock fight which has been prevalent among the Hindus are strictly forbidden by Islam, it is observed that some of the Muslim settlers in the country unhesitatingly indulge in these acts. Similarly, the un-Islamic process of killing animals or birds for meat by strangulation was as it is said in vogue among the Mariyas who are considered as the earliest group of Muslims to have settled in the eastern part of the Brahmaputra valley. We have noted earlier that the Khulafas or the Muslim religious teachers in Assam think it beneath their dignity to touch the plough or to carry a bhar or load affixed to two ends of a bamboo and supported on the shoulder though they are willing to use the hoe or carrying things in bundles. Such customs appear to be the result of influence of similar customs followed in the

country by the Brahmans and Gosains (Assamese Hindu priests and the religious preceptors).

**J. Names of persons.**

Apart from these, the personal names of Assamese Muslims furnish clear evidences of local influence on the latter. It is often found that the Muslim villagers of Assam like their Hindu counterparts take names like Hira Mukuta Powal son or Sona Rup or Rupai which are derived from the local terms denoting precious jewels and metals like diamond pearl, coral gold and silver. It is also commonly found that men are named after their physical features, for example, Katiya (or short) Dighala (a Longman) Bhaluka (hefty) Kaliya (dark) Complexioned) Bagai (a fair complexioned). The names of favourite flowers and natural objects besides the local terms denoting personal qualities and complexions are often used in naming women folk of both communities. Thus such names as Tagar (a species of flower) or Tagari Bakul (Mimus opseluegi) Malati (jasmine) Golap (rose) or Golapi. Jonaki (a glowworm) Tara (star) Batahi (windlike) Lahari (lovely) sadari (affectionate) Rupahi (beautiful) Kali (dark-complexioned) Bagi (fair-complexioned) etc are very common among both Hindu and Muslim women of Assam. To address their relatives and kins the Muslim settlers of Assam have using the same terms (kakaiti, baiti, dadaiti etc) and modes of their Hindu friends, instead of using Persian or Arabic terms of address except in case of addressing one’s father for which they often use the terms Baba or Abba or Abbajan as against Deuta or petai. 73

**K. Occult Practices**

In ancient times Assam was known to the people of India as a land of black art and witchcraft. Even the chronicles like Riyaz-us-Salatin and the Fathiyah-i-Ibriya ascribed the cause of death of Aurangzeb’s great general Mir Jumla, to sickness caused by witchcraft and sorcery practised by the Assamese. It is therefore not unlikely that those Muslims who had to settle in Assam being forewarned before hand with such an idea about the

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73. Ibid., pp. 243—245.
country would soon be influenced by local belief about the powers of Mantras or charms to subdue invisible spirits of men and women as well as to control disease and would try to learn and practice the art themselves. As a result of this, many of them in course of time became acquainted with various magic charms and modes of their practices. The existence of Arabic and Persian words (like bismillah) besides reference to Muhammad, Allah and Rasul along with the names of Siva and Barahma, Tara and Gauri in some of the esoteric Mantras leads us to believe that many Musalmans became well-versed in the subject and such charms were composed by them too. For example, one of the charms used for detecting thieves and burglars opens with:

Bismillah i Allah u Tara, Gauri
Haji Bakun, Haji Bakun etc.

Here the names of the goddesses, Tara and Gauri, consorts of Siva appear with the words Bismillah and Allah Haji. Haji Bakun was probably a celebrated Muslim charmer who composed the charm. That the Musalmans acquired celebrity in the art, is also confirmed by the fact in some of these indigenous charms we come across references to Mughalar Ban (the Black art of the Mughals) as well as to the Gariyar Bez (Muslim charmers) as experts in the work. The existence of many Muslim Bezés (village medicinemen) even now in the villages of Assam also confirms this. It is interesting to note here that a Mantra containing a story about Lord Siva relates that once Brahma Vishnu and Siva approached Narayana or Iswara to enlighten them about the Quran which became the fifth scripture with the four Vedas. To this Narayana replied that at the time of the creation of the Vedas, four saints came and received from Him the contents of the Quran. Then Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva expressed to Narayana that this fifth scripture embarrassed them all. This reference to the Quran reminds us about Abdul Karim Jili’s reference to the fifth scripture revealed to the Barhmanas by Brahma. According to Dr. Tara Chand, this fifth scripture is

74. Sai K. Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Relation and Its Cultural Significance, p. 245-246.
the Vedanta, but this Mantra describes it as the Quran. This reference to the Quran in the story of Siva reminds us also about S. K. Mitras observation that the name of Mecoa was derived from the worship of Siva as Makkesha. in the place. It is also interesting to note that some of the Mantras show an attempt at establishing harmonious relation between the philosophies of Hindu scriptures and the Quran. Such Mantras being completely devoid of Arabic and Persian vocabulary go to relate Hindu myths in the usual diction of Hindu religious texts leading us to think that these were composed by Hindus who acquired some Knowledge of doctrines laid down in the Quran. Since these Mantras contain references to various Hindu and aboriginal deities and the modes of their practices, prescribe propitiation of such deities these charms have been regarded as the records of different religious beliefs prevalent in the country. The practice of these Mantras by the Muslim settlers in the country, therefore leaves no doubt that the latter have been greatly influenced by such local beliefs.

L: Fasts and Festivals

Bihu, the famous spring festival of dance and music of Assam, has been as popular among the Muslims of Assam as with the Hindus. In the Nowgong district Muslims are said to have joined their Hindu neighbours even in the cattle bathing ceremony which marks the beginning of the festival. Certain Bihu songs which contain hints at some Islamic customs and also refer to their skill in playing some musical instruments show that they also participated in the group dances and music with the people of other communities. In one such song we find reference to the custom of entombing (burying the dead instead of cremating them like the Hindus). The concluding line of this song runs: Only a few sods will follow you into the grave. Similarly another song reminding one about the futility of pride and wealth concludes saying: soon will grasses cover your bones. That the long caps of the Muslims hindered their free movement in the dances is recoveded thus, in one such song:

75. Ibid., p. 247.
What an excuse do you make, Oh Gariya,
That only for the uneven ground you cannot dance!
Put off your tumbler-shaped cap and
Go up there, oh Gariya
and with a leap begin your round.
The skill with which the Muslims played indigenous musical instruments which are used for such dances is described in another song;
When a Gariya plays the Gagana.
Made of a tender bamboo slip.
My desire grows evermore to listen to it
The shrubs of Birina: on the bank of Dichai
Break beneath the dancers; feet
Besides these evidence the repeated use of expressions apparently borrowed from Bihu songs by the composers of the Assamese Zikirs and Zaris also clearly shows to what extent this secular festival of dance and music exerted influence on the life of Assamese Muslims.76

The Bibu festival comprises of two distinct parts called Hussari and Bihu. In Hussari the revelers make a circular movement, singing and dancing around the leader of the group it seems that this part of the performance greatly influenced the Zikir and Zari dance of the Assamese Muslims. It is however to be admitted that the Zikir and Zari dance of Assam was based on the Muslim Darvesh dance. Like the Hussari dancers the Zikir and Zari dancers move around their leader dancing and singing the songs with the rhythmic clapping of their hands. But unlike the Hussari dancers they do not use drums. It is however said that in ancient times the Zikir and Zari dancers used the Tokari a kind of indigenous instrument resembling a vin or vina.

M. Muhammadan Influence on Assamese Customs Manners add Belief.

We have noticed elsewhere how with the employment of Muslims in the government services the material culture of the country

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76. Saikia Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, p. 248.
grew richer than ever having absorbed in it some elements of Islamic culture. It, however seems that Musalmans had very little influence on the social customs, manners and beliefs of the Assamese people. The reason for this is perhaps to be sought in the fact that their number was extremely small and they spread like very thin specks across the vastly numerous Hindu population. Nevertheless we may expect to find out certain features of Assamese social practices which either resemble or point to a probable influence of Muhammadans. 77

Some Hindu display a firm belief that the "pirs" at rest in Dargahs possess divine powers and can ward off misfortune. Some of them light candles in dargahs and use talismans containing a little soil from the tombs of pirs for luck. The deification of the Guru is believed to have gained momentum in India due to the influence of Islam. In Assam sankaradeva has been regarded as an incarnation of god Himself. Chand Khan or Chandsai the Muslim disciple of sankaradeva was a Tailor by profession. It is said that Chand Khan once having sighted sankaradeva in arms, made a shirt for the saint with four sleeve. Chand Khan is venerated by the assamese Hindus and Muslims alike. The main cause of the Mowamariya rebellion which greatly weakened the Ahom power in Assam in the eighteenth century was the humiliation meted out to some of the Gurus of the Mowamariyas by the Ahom queen Phuleswari. Even today the Assamese Vaishnaves place their guru next to God and address him as Gosain Iswara or prabhu Iswara.

The darvesh dance of some Muslim countries in certain aspects has a close resemblance to the Assamese Vaishnava religious recitals in Bar Sabah (mass prayer observed generally in the Namghars). Daveshes congregate in a mosque and standing in rows facing each other sing their prayers with rhythmic movements. This continues for hours or even days. In this way the singers are said to attain high religious ecstasy. In a Bar Sabah of the Assamese Vaishnavas, men sit in two rows and the person to lead the song


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stands behind the two rows. All the men in the congregation sing in chorus with the rhythmic clappings of hands and movements of the body as a whole. This prayer and recital continues for hours, and the votaries seem to become completely lost in intense devotion.

It is recounted in the Katha Guru Charit that the use of straw mats as seats for Vaishnavas in course of religious services was introduced for the first time during the lifetime of Sankaradeva by his disciple, Madhavadeva. This first mat was woven by Madhavadeva with dried stalks of plantain leaves. The use of mats called Musalla or Jainamaj during prayers is regarded as indispensable by the Muslims. But whether this was the result of an influence of Islam cannot be asserted.

Assamese Hindus, like Muslims, believe in Paris and Huris which may be likened to the Apsarases and Zins and in their power of possessing human beings when such possession is suspected a Muslim Mullah or bej (Village medicine—man) is summoned for aid and he applies his occult power of mantras to drive away the spirit residing in the body or the house of the sufferer. 78

N. Folk-Sayings

The contact of the Muslim settlers of Assam with the indigenous people of the country also helped the growth of a number of Assamese folk—saying centering around the customs manners and beliefs of the two communities. A few of these folk sayings may be cited below:

1. tini molona thakil chai
   khodaito olal bhorokai
   (As the three Maulanas were looking on, Khuda appeared all on a sudden)

2. ajan fakireo kay din gatle rati hay
   (Even does azan Fakir (who was blinded) proclaim: when the day ends night begins)

78. Saikia Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, P. 251-252.
3. jayai thakile b hate atiba
   mariie gate atiba
   ( There will be sufficient food for you
   as long as you like and there will be
   sufficient place for you in the grave when you die )

4. taklau muriya silkhota gariya
   ( This seems to be reference to the custom
   of wearing a clean shaven head by the Muslims
   of Assam as mentioned in the Fathiyahi – Ibriya,
   and the profession of stone engraving and masonary work in which they were
   mostly engaged in the country. taklau mur – clean shaven head; sil – khota
   = stone engraver )

5. gosaye nasare yamar dut
   pire nasare gatar much
   ( the Gosain that is, hindu religious teacher does not escape the messenger
   of Death and the Pir, that is the Muslim divine cannot escape the crater of
   the grave )

6. garlyar garu mariyai bay tamo ag – guri kone chay
   ( A mariya tills the field with the bullock of a Gariya and who is there to see
   the nature of his work? )

7. na sa mariyai cha sa dhan palo
   hay swargadeur gun' ha' ba
   na hay swargadeur dharma hen vastu
   ka'lai yaba?
   ( This is possibly a reference to the story which states that the remnant of
   Turbak's army were brought as captives by the Ahom king suhungmung. They were first engaged in agriculture in the government farms. But they were so ignorant of the art that six hundred men from among them could produce only nine hundred bundles of paddy. ) 79

THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAM ON LITERATURE, LANGUAGE, MUSIC AND PAINTING.

A. An Important Aspect of old Assamese Literature

Old Assamese literature, which first gained its importance under the patronage of the Kamata king, Duriabha Narayan (A.D. 1281-1312) entered its golden age in the sixteenth century when Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva enriched it with their new creations of drama prose and lyrics composed on the Vaishnava religious themes. Coupled with the vigorous expansion of the Bhakti movement, launched by Sankaradeva this neo Vaishnava literature of Assam grew in such intensity that within a short time its influence became firm and deeply rooted in every sphere of life of all sections of the Assamese people. The impact of this influence was so great that not only all the literary creations of the subsequent period, but some of the Baranjis and many other books of different science were also composed in the neo Vaishnava literary style. Even the Islamic religious literature of Assam of this period were to be composed in this style. Thus being based on the old Hindu religious themes and also fashioned under the influence of such literary forms and conventions, Assamese literature of the whole period extending from the thirteenth or fourteenth century to the dawn of the British rule in Assam in 1826 A.D. strike, generally speaking a note of monotony. To this some relief was, however, brought in by a few secular romances, which seem to have grown under the influences of certain Persian, Urdu and Hindi works. 80

B. The Growth of Secular Romances, Under the Influences of Hindi, Urdu and Persian Literature

It seems to be doubtful if the early Muslim settlers in Assam could bring a rich treasure of Islamic Literature with them, because most of them were mainly warriors, traders and artisans who were either taken in as prisoners or came to stay in the country in different political circumstances. Obviously, the wide culture of Islamic Literature in Assam by them appears to be

80. Saikia Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, P. 257.
improbable. Even if they made any attempt in this direction it was too weak to gain any ground against the all pervading influences of the neo-Vaishnava literature. Consequently, Islamic literature. If there was any with its distinct and original hue and colour had to recede to the background and finally vanish away. The Zikirs and Zaris of a later period could as it seems retain its position and popularity mainly because they were based on the religious themes which were akin to those of Vaishnava Bhakti. Another reason for the absence of an early Assamese Islamic literature was probably that the early Muslim settlers had taken keen interest in their own vocations rather than in the study or creation of literature. It was actually for their skill in different trades that they could procure their footing or even an importance in the country. Moreover being always associated with war commerce and small industries, they had a love for such professions or work rather than for taking the subtler interest in literature or culture. This supposition will appear all the more probable in the light of a remark on the Assamese Muslims of the time made by Azan pir in some of his zikirs. The pir state that they (Assamese Muslims) took great delight in the work of agriculture and performed the duties of sentries with high skill and enthusiasm, but took no interest in the culture of Knowledge.

The Ahom Mugal war having ended in the middle of the last quarter of the seventeenth century, cultural exchanges between Assam and the rest of India began in a freer and larger scale only from the beginning of the next century. King Rudra singha who flourished from 1696 to 1716 A.D. was the first Ahom monarch to open the flood gate for Muhammadan influences to enter into Assam in a forceful torrent. We have noticed earlier how during his reign the Mughal type of costume was sought to be introduced as Ahom court dress and how be tried to popularise the Muslim types of Garments among his subjects. In the field of literature also he appears to have been taken a bold step to introduce a change in its kind with the admission of the fertilising effect of the Muslim influences. In other parts of India Persian

81. Ibid., P-258-259.
literature had attained by this time a great popularity among different sections of the people. It was probably during or after the reign of this Ahom king that some of those popular literary works, mainly romances of a profane and secular nature found their way into Assam through the Muslims and other settlers. But we have so far no evidence to show that any such book imported to this country and was directly translated to the Assamese language. It appears that only the themes were transported here originally by some Muslim settlers.

The Chandraketu Kamakala, a fine piece of romance in Assamese, appears as part of the Sakuntala kavya of King Rudra Singha’s court-poet, Kaviraja Chakravarti. Rudra Singha, who showed high appreciation for Muslim art and culture, might have also delighted in listening to some of the romantic tales from renowned Persian; Urdu or Hindi works from the Persian scholars of pirs setting in his country. It is therefore not unlikely that his court-poet Kaviraja Chakravarti should find inspiration for describing the episode of Chandraketu and Kamakala in purely romantic veins and for inserting it in his Sakuntala to enhance the romantic spirit of the main trend of the kavya, that he learnt about some non-Assamese romances like Madhumalati.

This is confirmed by the fact that in his Chandraketu-Kamakala’s episode, he introduced the Baramahi git, which is said to be rather a rare feature in Assamese literature and which forms an indispensable part of the romances like Madhumalati of the Hindi Sufi poet Saikh Manjhan.82

Sulochana aru madhavari Itihas is another Assamese romance of this kind, its author was one Dina Dvijavara who is believed to have flourished in the eighteenth century. The resemblance of certain parts of this work to Madhumalati provides us with some ground to think that the poet might have been inspired to some extent by the latter.

The shaha pari-Upakhyan or Mrigawati-charitra is another romance in the Assamese language which has been composed on the basis of an Islamic theme. From the point of its motif this Mrigawati-Charitra appears

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of Sultan Hussain Shaha of Bengal (1493-1519 A.D) Dvija Rama, the author of the Assamese work, however, does not seem to have been influenced by Kutuban at least directly. He appears to have gathered the story of the latter's work through some secondary source. It was probably for this that Dvija Ram had to rely more on his own creative capabilities to direct the course of narration in his work. Consequently, the Assamese version of Mrigawati Charitra greatly differs in many places from the Mrigawati of Kutuban. In its form and style and even in its motifs, this romance of Dvija Ram appears to be a genuine piece of the Assamese neo-Vaishnavite literature. In his description of houses, orchards, and towns, he had sincerely followed the conventions of the Vaishnavite poets although he had retained the Muslim names like Amir Shaha Malikzada, Amira, etc.

Commenting on this romance in Assamese Dr. Neog has justly observed that the story of Dvija Ram's work is essentially an Islamic one in its content but that the aim of his labours was clearly enough to rouse a vaishnava fervour. But nevertheless, this Kavya is a fine example of the result of the communion of Islamic and Hindu (more particularly, Vaishnava) cultures. Nothing has so far been definitely known about the author of the romance of Madhumalati in Assamese. It, however, appears to be quite certain that its subject matter has been taken ultimately from the Hindi poet Manjhans work of the same name. But Assamese author has greatly altered the details of the story within its original frame work. He has also made no reference to this source or to the sufi poet at all through out his work. On the contrary, he has invariably been at pains to refer its origin to the puranas and in order to give it a religious sanctity, he has shifted its atmosphere and situations from the Islamic to the puranic. There is also no evidence whatever to establish any direct connection between the Assamese poet and Manjhans poetical work. The different situation and the atmosphere as a whole of the Assamese

83 Ibid, P-260-261.
84 Saikia Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Religion and its Cultural Significance, P-262-263.
work are plain and simple and they have been produced with the help of Vaishnava poetical conventions. But the poet seems to have taken more care in driving on with the mere cause of the story rather than in describing subtle situations and producing the necessary atmosphere adequately. The Baramahi git, which formed an indispensable part of Manjhan's work has entirely been left out in the Assamese work. But it is noteworthy that certain portions of the story of this Assamese Kavya have a closer affinity with some of the old Assamese ballads. Scholars therefore presume that the Assamese poet did not actually come across Madhumalati of the Hindi poet, but that he collected its story through some oral source. The study of these Assamese Kavyas thus reveal to us that except in regard to the original source of their story they became in form and style aims and objectives as well as in the treatment of the subject—matter, akin to the neo-Vaishnava literature of Assam so much so that even the sufi philosophical ideas in them have been entirely lost and replaced by the usual Vaishnava religious admonishings.

C. Muslim Influence on a Few of popular Ballads.

Some of the Assamese ballads containing fascinating and scular tales of romance and adventure betray a tinge of Muslim influence. The Jana Gabharur Git is one of such ballads. It is still popular amongst the Muslim braziers (Mariyas) of the eastern Brahmaputra valley. The story goes that Jana Gabharu was reigning over the kingdom of her old father Garuchar rajiya. She proclaimed that any man desirous of marrying her might do so provided he would be able to solve three puzzles set by herself, but that one coming to take up the challenge and fail to succeed in his attempt would have to suffer life imprisonment in her dungeon. This proclamation brought nine hundred youngmen to suffer in her cell. But finally Gopichand a prince from Nagaon passed successfully through the orderals and married her. This story of the Assamese ballad shows its affinity with that of Gul-wasanowar similarly we find that the name of the heroine of the Assamese ballad

phul Kowar and Mani Kower is identical with that of Kalu Ghazi Champawati Pachali which was Composed by Abdul Gaffar of Bengal in the eighteenth century. The Assamese ballad refers to King sankaradeva or sankaradeva of Barkala (which is in Sibsagar) Ferishta also refer to one king Sankal of Assam who founded the city of Gaur in Bengal and who was defeated and taken prisoner by the Persian hero Rustam. Dimbeswar Neog in a paper published in the Asam Sahitya sabha patrika seeks to identify or sankaladeva or sankaladeva of the ballad, with sankal who according to ferishta had an encounter with Afrasiab, before he was taken as prisoner by Rustam. This shows that the original Assamese ballad itself was very ancient. It therefore appears to be quite probable that in later times it was blended with some tales of Islamic origin Kalu Ghazi of the panchali of Abdul Gaffar reminds us of the Muslim invader kalu Ghazi of kamarupar Buranji. A. tomb in the enclosure of the Hajo dargah is still believed to have been the one of Kalu Dewan or Kalu Ghazi It is therefore not unlikely that Abdul Gaffr got his theme from the Assamese Mani Kowrar Git and utilised it for his new composition There is also another similar ballad Known as Chikan Sariyahar Git which narrates the story of how a Muslim damsel was espoused by one of the Assam Kings Sat Nawabar Git is also one of the Assamese ballads of an Islamic origin It relates the advent of some Nawabs into Assam. 86

The name of chikan sariya appears to have been vary popular in ancients Assam, because even now we have folk tales woven around his name Jaidhan Baniyar Baramahi Git is one of the Assamese romances of Considered popularity since the details and the theme of this romance have closer affinity to some of the folk-songs and ballads of East Bengal and Bihar it appears to be likely that it grew under the influence of such ballads. In West Bengal also a romance with an identical story has been discovered. This work is known as Damini Charita and its author was saruf a Musalman.

86. Hussein Muhibul; Hazrat Azan Pir 1972 AD, P-105.
D. The Asamese Zikirs and Zaris or (Marshiyas)

The most outstanding and sustaining contribution of the Assamese Muslims to the popular literature of Assam is the Zikirs and Zaris. A Zikirs is a religious or philosophical poem centering around a point of faith or of philosophy. In several of the songs of this variety a story centering around the life of Azan pir or shah Miran (Milan) to whom these songs are sometimes ascribed is told. A Zari is elegiac in character and content and may be called a form of marshiya and generally relates itself to the tragic tale of Karbala. Some of the Assamse Zaris may be called independent ballads giving the stories of Haider Ghazi. These compositions particularly the Zikirs in their subject matter resemble the Bagits or devotional songs of Sankara deva and Madhavadeva. But unlike the Bagits in the literary Brajabali idiom, they are couched in colloquial homely Assamse, and in their form and expression they are in line with Deh-vicharar. Git, a variety of philosophical songs of the Assamese village minstrels and some other folksongs. The chief objective of the Zikirs appears to be the reorganisation of the society of Assamese Muslims, by regenerating their faith and love for Islam in such a way that there will be no discord in their age old harmonious relation with Hind society, in which the great movement of social reform initiated by Sankardeva seems to have attained its logical culmination already.

Being deprived of the fertilising effect of Muslim life of India for centuries by wars and conflicts the Islamic faith and culture in Assam grew somewhat stale and therefore in the seventh century a few Muslim pirs and Alims devoted themselves to its resuscition. They seem to have tried to usher in a sort of renaissance through songs and lyrics like the Zikirs. It was probably this underlying motivation that some of the Zikirs, while singing the glory of Allan and Islam in a high lyrical vein often came down in part to the level of social satire. But, it is interesting to note that they have been able to score success in ensuring the harmonious relations between Islam and Hinduism.

particularly with the Vaishnavism preached by Sankaradeva. In fact they seem to have been impressed by some aspects of the Bhakti doctrines preached by this saint poet one of the Zikirs even goes so far as to express admiration for this sect of Hinduism as follows.

Sankardeur jiyari madhavdeur bowari
rahpur nagarat ghar
rahpur nagarar rasak namai ani
diya sakaloke bati.

(she is the daughter of Sankaradeva and daughter-in-law of Madhayadeva and she dwells in the city of Rahpur or land of rasa that is the sentiment of love and devotion Bring down the rasa from the city of Rahpur and distribute it among us all) 88

This song has a bearing on the esoteric Ratikhowa school of Vaishnavas, who hold their services at night similarly referring to the relations of the Hindus and Muslims the Zikirs declare:

hindu musalman ek Allar farman
.................. gorasthane kabar sari sari
.................. hinduk puriba mominak gariba..

(Hindus and Muslims are bounded by the same set of the divine rules of Allah ... The act of Cremating a Hindu and the entombing of a Mumin only signify one end — death for all)

and ganga jamunae Allar Kalima namar nakare khati

(The Ganga and the Yamuna sing only the songs of glory of Allah)

Santa mahanta awliya sakale eketi namate khati

(The Sants and Mahantas that is, the Hindu holy men, and the Awliyas also supplicate to one name, the name of God)

with all sincerity and emotion one of the Zikirs declares:

mor manat an bhab nai o Alla
mor manta nai an bhab:

hindu musalman ek Allah farman
akherat ek Allah nam
(In my mind, oh Allah, I have no different thought save that the Hindus and Muslims are under one law the will of Allah and the final word of all services is Allah)

Through being couched in the spirit of Sufism, the Assamese Zikirs sing the glory of Gurus or religious preceptors and urge upon the detachment from mundane pleasures for the sake of the selfless services to God; they appear to be devoid of the high poetic ecstasy of Persian suf poetry. Even in speaking about the services to God they like the Vaishnavas vindicate the path of Dasya Bhakti or loving devotion of a selfless servant to his master. One of these Zikirs also declares:

ati sukhemali swami bhakati.
thakoh ridayate dhari
(The most pleasant is the path of Swami Bhakti, that is the loving devotion of a servant to his master and I ever cherish it in my heart)

The Vaishnavism preached by Sanaradeva is also known as Nama Dharman; because it gives utmost importance to Sravana - kirtana or the listening to and reciting of the name of God with intense love and devotion. An Assamese Vaishnava regards it as the superb mode of worship. The Zikirs also uphold this mode in the same vein:

namehe parama dhan sun mor bhai
(Oh my brethren listen; the name of God is the greatest of all treasures)

These two lines in fact echo two songs of Sankaradeva Again

mtharo paklo chuli

Pamaru manaiy-e- bujiba nowara name he sar katha buli.
(My hair has greyed, yet my sinful mind understands not that praises of the Lord is the essence of all matter) Similarly, the following remark of Azan Pir in one of the Zikirs, against those

who practice love and devotion to God only to wake. His mercy on the day of last judgment reveals how the path of Niskama Bhakti has been glorified in the Zikirs:

makkar duwarat banda anek juguti

Jap mari par ha’le erile priiti

(In the portals of Mecca the devotee makes many a plan but when he leaps across the last tangle he sets aside the love of God)

Islam does not deprecate the value of this world and life as the field of action and the training ground for life. The world to come the present world is of great importance to man; consequently the conception of Maya (illusion) appears to become repugnant to Islam. In the doctrines preached by Sankaradeva we find constant reference to Maya. His idealism can be well compared to Sufi leader Ibn Sina’s conception of ultimate reality as eternal beauty seeing reflection in the universe mirror. In the poem, Veda Stuti, Sankaradeva writes:

Tumi satya brahma tomata prakase jagata ito ananta jagatato sada tumio prakasa antaryami bhagawanta etekese jnanigane awasesa jagatake bole hari (Thou art the eternal and absolute Truth; this unreal world appears to be real only in thee and thou manifestest Thyself in the universe as its inner controller. It is for this that the wise people regard this universe as Hari.)

The Assamese Zikirs also seem to have brought in a similar conception. It is not possible to ascertain whether their authors were directly inspired by the conception of Ibn Sina, which is believed to have found an echo in the thoughts of Kabir, or whether they received such ideas from the doctrine preached by Sankaradeva. It may however be presumed that they were inspired by the latter. In order to prove this contention the following illustration would be perhaps helpful. In one of the Bargits Sankaradeva says

naryana lila janaba koi

jata dekhu kaya suta vise jays

mayako sava dhandha,

90. Ibid, P-27.
( who can understand the divine sport of Narayana? 
All that you see – the body children wealth and wife are vagaries of Maya.
A similar view is found expressed in some Zikirs:

dhan jan puttra bharya sabe akaran
ehaya muthe beri ache mayar karan

( The wealth friends as well as wives and children are all futile. They are only shadows that surround you on account of Maya )
The first line is a clear echo from sankaradevas Bhaga vata, Book X. Again.

Tumi jal pata tumi pahu chanda
Tumi hai mafarak dharn
haria rupe chari eibane somai
vyaghra rupe dhari khowa
Srajan palan ytomare hatat
tumi ji lage kara.
Tumi hai Khuala tumi hai buala
Tumi hai lagala mat
hate bajarat tumi hai furala
matila amatar mat.

( Thou spreadest the net and ambush a deer and trap pest a Mafar:
As a deer Thou enterest forest this and Thou as tiger devourest Thyself
The power of creation and preservation are in Thy hands and Thou actest in whatever way thou pleaseth. It is Thou who feedest me and give me a bath and leadest me through the fares and markets of the world and tend me with the sweetest words ) 91

Such expressions appear to be clear echoes of that Vaishnava conception of the relation of God and the world, Which we have illustrated above with a quotation from the Veda stuti. The spirit of complete surrender as a servant to God and the earnest longing for His Kindness as reward per meates through the Vishnava literature of Assam. The Zikirs are also found to be completely

with such spirit. To cite only a few illustrations, we may quote the following lines from the Bargits of Madhavadeva and the Zikirs Madhavadeva entreats:

moke dekhiyo na kene ahe jagannath
mai bar papera papi
dayar rhakur hari yadumani ai ram
adhame tomar nam dake

(why hast Thou not turned to me oh jagannath, I am the worst of all sinners)

...O Hari Thou art the embodiment of love and this vile person calleth out Thy name). The Zikirs appear to have greatly influenced by such sentiments and expressions. Majnudil Fakir sings: dinar dayal swami bahu pape papi

ami heyday maje karibaha days 92

...guruji ai adhame tomar nam dake
(oh lord Thou art kind to the poor
and I am sinner with diverse sins
withhold not Thine love to me)

(oh my master this vile person calleth out Thy name)

Bigotry was positively repulsive to these Muslim holy men of Assam.

They sing the glory of the Vedas as much as they do of the Qoran:
sari veda giyanake kai ai Allah

(The four Vedas also speak out knowledge

O Allah:)

Beside such utterances most of the Zikirs not only reveal a sense of high esteem for Hinduisim but also clearly show the sincerest endeavour of these

92. Choudhury Dr. Lilabati: Dakshin Kamrupar Mahapurushiya Sara Sanskritit Abhumuki 2002, P-249.
holy men to strengthen amity and respect. The reference to allah as Niranjana or the comparison of the effect of the recitation of the name of God to pious ablutions in the Ganges or to the value of the holy water of the Ganges are illustrations of such endeavours on the part of these men of Islam of Assam. It was perhaps for such persistent endeavours on their part that many of the Zikirs look like attempts at a synthesis of Hindu and Islamic thoughts and ideals. It is again on this account that many of the Zieks tend to be the property of both Hindus and Muslims and to become complements to the popular philosophical songs of the hindu mendicants (baragi) called deh – vicharar git. The imageries employed in some of the Zikirs have a Hindu impress when they refer to the harp of Kailasa so sacred to Lord siva (Kone saji diba kailasar tokari) or to sankaradeva and Madhavadeva. Then again what is most fascinating is the fine blending of these elements with vocables of perso Arabic origin. A few of the expressions coined by these popular poets may perhaps be cited here: ilimar batha (the oars of enlightenment) duniyar swami (the Lord of the Universe) tripani ajur ghat (the place of ablution on the triveni the juncture of three holy rivers) niranjan purushe khela gulistan (the flower garden where the spotless lord plays) savemar bandegi (the golden salutations) ei tanu fana (this perishable body) such expressions while being rooted to the soil bestowed the proper colour and atmosphere on these Islamic compositions. It is interesting how the Muslim fakir Azan is referred to in the body of the text of Zikir as Ajan deva Fakir in the same style as sankradaeva and Madhavadeva are mentioned. It may be noted in this connection how the Hindu baragi was attracted by perso Arabic words and sang in one voic with the Muslim fakir as it were duniyai ediner duniyai dudiner, duniya phulanibari in a few Zaris there are curious reference to the use of vermilion marks on the forehead and of conch-sheel bangles on the hands as symbols. 93

E. Chronicles.
The art of compiling history is indigenous to Assam and it is as old as Ahom.

The Ahoms compiled chronicles which with accounts of some of the ruling dynasties of ancient Kamarupa as well as about those small principalities which sprang up after the disappearance of the Kamarupa kingdom and survived till the time when the Ahoms rose to supremacy in the country. But a deeper contact with the Muhammadan powers of India for centuries widened the scope for this art of chronicling. The growing conflicts between Assam and the Muslim rulers of India necessitated the acquisition of an intimate knowledge on the parts of the Assamese of the diplomacy war strategy customs and history of their formidable adversaries. This again offered them fair chances for the full play of their spirit of enquiry and the historical instinct which had distinguished them from other races of India. As a result a number of chronicles under the name of Padshah Buranji or annals of the Delhi Badshahate soon added to the variety of Assamese historical literature Padshiah Buranji or chronicles of padshah; writes S. K. Bhuyan around in episodes and accounts which are not found in other histories of the Muhammadans in India. They no doubt indulge in gossip and gasconades, but their value as exhibiting the inner life of Delhi and Agra left out by the average historian is supreme and unquestionable while their general tone and spirit are in agreement with those of the contemporary Persian narratives. The facts recorded in the padshah Buranjis are materially corroborated by other accounts Apart from the Padshah – Buranjis other Buranjis containing accounts of Assam Muslim political transactions served like the zikirs and zaris as an important medium for the introduction of worlds of Persian and Arabic origin into the Asamese Language.  

F. Language.

The gradual rise of Arabic and Persian words in the Assamese language is, in fact another note worthy and tangible effect of the age old contact of Assam with the Muhammadans. The main factors which appear to have

94. Ibid, P-252.
played a dominant role in promoting the growth of such elements in the language are: (1) the rise of Muslim population in Assam (2) the travels of pilgrims from Assam in Northern India (3) wars and diplomatic relations between the Assamese kings and the Muhammadan powers (4) religious songs like Zkirs and Zaris of Assamese Muslims (5) cultural exchanges in the later period of Ahom rule in the country.

Though the solitary use of the word 'naphar' or 'pers nafr' by Hema saraswati, a court poet of Kamata king Durabha narayana (who flourished sometime from the middle of the last quarter of the thirteenth century to the close of the first decade of the next century) appears to have been the starting point of the flow of such words to Assam, it is held that such words entered in larger number and a more continuous stream only from the beginning of the seventeenth century when Ahom Mughal political contact set in. It is interesting to note here that in the Bargaon inscription of the Kamarupa king Ratnapala, who flourished in the ninth century, there is a reference to Tayikas. The capital of the king Durjaya is described as inspiring terror in the hearts of the Bahikas and Tayikas, where Tayika has been considered as the same as Tarjika as in Hemchandra's Abhidhan chintamani or Dajik by Dr. Hoemle and other scholars, we are inclined to think that this was perhaps an indirect reference to Gushtashib Shah of Azam, who is said to have entered Kamarupa where he concealed some treasure on his way to India from China. 95

In our discussion about the effect of the invasions, we have shown that the numerical strength of the Muslim population in Assam, till the close of the sixteenth century, was very small. From the account of Shihabuddin Talish who visited the country in the middle of the seventeenth century, it is learnt that these early Muslim settlers of Assam became the victims of local influence so much so that they lost everything of Islam save the name. Through this appears to be only an exaggeration of facts we have to admit that these Muslims of Assam came under local influence to a great extent.

Consequently, it is unlikely that they could promote a substantial growth of Arabic and Persian elements in the language. Nevertheless, it also appears to be quite certain that through close contact of the indigenous people with these early Muslim settlers at least a few Arabic and Persian words used by the latter in everyday life found their way into the Assamese vocabulary during this period. It is however not possible, at present, to ascertain the number and type of these words. Dr. S. K. Chatterji observes that many of the practices of sultans durbar at Gaur were already adopted by the petty chief of Bengal and engrafted on the old Hindu court customs and etiquette before the rise of Mughal supremacy in Bengal from the last quarter of the sixteenth century. But the royal courts of Kamrupa and other neighboring states of Bengal remained free from such Muslim influences during the period. It however appears to be true that Muslim court practices were not popular in Assam till the rise of Koch King Viswa Singha (1523-1545 A.D.) who was perhaps the first of the Assamese kings to have reorganized his army in the line of the Muhammadans, having created posts like Umraos, Nawabs, and Hazaris. Even the term Dewan was used for his son Chilarai. But we have reasons to hold that some of the Muslim customs became popular in Assam even before the rise of Viswa Singha.

From the biographers of Sankaradeva, we learn that many Assamese Bhuyans delighted in the use of the terms Khan after their names in the Muslim fashion. K. L. Barua is inclined to think that the name Khen by which the dynasty of Kamata king Nilambara (who by the way married a princess from the Family of Gauda sultan Hussain Shah) came to be known in history was derived from the term Khan. It is also learnt that the title siqdar was used by some of the Hindus of Kamrup region in the period. This shows that some aspects of Muslim system of administration were also introduced in Assam by some of its rulers at least about the close of the sixteenth century. Consequently, we can affirm that some of the Muslim


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customs gained popularity in the kingdom of Kamarupa or Kamata in the early period of its contact with the Muhammadans.

With the foundation of the powa Mecca and other Dargahs in the present day Kamrup region as the centres of propagation of Islam in the early fourteenth century some Arabic and Persian words might have come to be used in the country. But they seem to have remained confined among the Muslims including a few converts who formed a very small part of the whole population of Assam in the period and as such they had little effect on the language in general.

Through this channel the Assamese vaishnava pilgrims are said to have brought home many Arabico-Persian words (mat boil farsi, as one prose biography puts it). This practice among them however does not seem to be a consistent one and therefore their contributions in this direction do not appear to have been of much significance. Sankaradeva whose language is marked for its boldness of experiments uses quite a few words of Arabic and Persian origin oachil baki (Ar. Wasul Baki) farman (pers) omra (Ar) sayab chaheb (Ar sahib) chakar chakari (pers) haram harmkhor (Ar. + Persian) Besides these the makes of musical instruments like Rabab (Arb) and nagera (pers Naqqarah) used by the Vaishnava musicians of the period appear to be interesting. Sankaradeva also composed with skilful use a large number of such words a panegyric to be presented to Koch king Naranarayana extolling his heroism with reference to his warding off an attack of the Muslims (under Hindu renegade kalapahar as Gait surmises) of Bengal. But in the Vaishnavana poetry posterior to Sankaradeva the percentage of Arabico-Persian words did not increase but are observed to have diminished considerably. Even the kavyas like Madhumalati and shaha pari upakhyan written on popular Islamic themes are almost devoid of such words save the names of characters in the latter work. 97

We have noted earlier that the flow of Arabic and Persian vocables into Assamese language came in a continuous stream only from the early

seventeenth century, when the Ahom and Koch kings of Assam for the first time came into direct contact and conflict with the Mughal power of India. The conflicts which soon culminated in the outbreak of a series of wars between the Mughals and the Assamese rulers in the early seventeenth century continued till 1682 A.D. The Ahom monarch Gadafdhar singha having worsted the army of nawab Mansur khan in the battle of Itakhuli finally shattered the hopes of Mughal emperors of conquering Assam. During the time of armistice which intervened the wars of this period there were exchanges of diplomatic letters missions and envoys between Ahom and the Koches on the one hand and Dehli as well as Dacca on the other. This necessitated the culture of Persian in the courts of the Ahom and koche kings. As a result of this many words of Arabic and Persian origin found their way into the Assamese language mainly through diplomatic correspondences. The Kamrupar Buranji contains as many as twenty six diplomatic letters. This chronicle has been compiled by Dr. Bhuyan from several original sources including the padshah Baranji or the history of the Dehli Sultanate and the old manuscript chronicle collected between 1840-50 A.D. By Rev. Nathan Brown who was in charge of American Baptist Mission in Sibsagar.

This manuscripts chronicle deals with the conflicts of the Mughals with Cooch Behar and Assam commencing from the dismemberment of the Koch kingdom after the death of Manraja Naranarayana when the rival princes Parikshit and Laksminarayana visited the court of emperor Jehangir in solicitation of the emperor intervention in their claims to the throne. The Muhammadan wars of Assam during the reign of the Ahom kings pratap singha Jayadhwaja singha Chakradhwaja singha and Gadahar singha are then narrated in full giving prominence to the campaigns of Allah yar khan strajit Mirza (Nathulla) Mir Jumla Ram singha and Mansur Khan out of the twenty six letters inserted in the Kamarupar Buranji as many as thirteen were taken from this manuscripts chronicle. These twenty six letters

can be divided into two groups (i) correspondences between the Mughals and Assam during the reigns of the Ahom Kings, Pratap Singha (1603-1641 A.D.), Jayadhwaja Singha (1648-1663 A.D.), Chakradhwaja Singha (1663-1670 A.D.) and Ramadhwaja Singha who was succeeded by Gadadhar Singha in 1681 A.D. (ii) letters exchanged between the Koch prince, Prananarayana and contemporary Ahom kings, Jayadhwaja Singha and Chakardhwaja Singha. The first group contains twenty letters and fourteen of them were sent from the Mughal side to Assam and only six were from Assam to Delhi and Dacca. In the second group there are only five letters which were exchanged between the Koch and Ahom kings. The fourteen letters received from the Mughals contain as many as 211 words of Arabic and Persian origin whereas in those six letters from Assam to Mughals there are only about 49 such words of which twenty percent are found in the letters from Mughals. 99

Similarly in the second group of letters there are about 38 Arabic and Persian words. But many of them are also found in the Mughal letters. In this context it is essential to note that there are about thirty six diplomatic letters between the Ahom kings and the neighbouring tribal chiefs like Jayantias khasis and kacharis but there are only sixteen Arabic and Persian words used by the Ahoms or the tribal chiefs in all these letters. Nevertheless, the use in their letters of such words, however small their number might be by the Ahoms, Koches and the tribal chiefs of Assam confirm that in the seventeenth century many of the Arabic and Persian words came into common use of the people of Assam, including the tribals. We have shown these words found in all the above sources separately in Appendices A, B, C. Apart from this many Arabic and Persian words are found in Kamrupar Buranji and the Assam buranji recovered from the house of Sukumar Mabanta of North Gauhati. These two Buranjis contain vivid accounts of Muhammadan wars in Assam during the reigns of Koch and Ahom Kings. The compilers of the Buranjis use these words mostly in the

descriptions of Assam Muslim conflicts lone. The Arabic and Persian words used in these two chronicles are also found in other Buranjis. But their number in the latter sources seems to be less than that in the above two chronicles. These words can be roughly classified as Dr. S. K. Chatterji has done for Bengali under the following heads

(1) words pertaining to state, warfare,

(2) words relating to revenue and administration and to low.

(3) intellectual culture: education, music, literature, general refinement,

(4) material culture: objects of luxury, Trades art and crafts

(5) Muhammadan Religion.

Through the Assamese Zikirs and Zarins which were probably composed by several Muslim Pirs in the seventeenth century many Arabic and Persian words pertaining to Islamic faith and rituals entered the Assamese language. The naturalized words of this kind as understood by the Hindus and others are however not many but the native Muslims employ a large number of Arabic and Persian words connected with their religion. The words collected from Buranjis and those connected with Islamic faith and ritual are shown separately in the list inserted in Appendices D. and E. 100

G. Phrases and etc.

In the common colloquy of the people there is also distinct impress of Perso the Arabic vocables which is best seen in certain popular saying and translation compound. we give below a few examples:

Ol-mal hostage, gage
Kadamat chal to trot
Kabul katar confession
Kamar bandha get into harness
Kagaje kalame in black and white
Gariya khodal the lond of Musalman
Gariyar gosain a muslim priest
Galdhan dhara aulders (pers garden)

100 Seikda Mohini Kumar; Assam Muslim Relation and its cultural significance, P- 266.
In the field of fine arts mutual influences had become more effective and conspicuous. Before the rise of the Mughals Painting seemed to have been neglected by the earlier Indian Muslim rulers. But they were captivated by music. The birth of Khayal is ascribed to sultan Hussain sharqui of Jaunpur. The sultan of Bijapur even wrote a book on the subject called Nauras. During the Mughal period Indian painting developed a new style which made characteristic deviations from the other Rajput style. This new style developed and combined in it the old Indian and Persian techniques under the patronage of Akbar. In the field of

architecture when the extensive use of aspacious designs, curves and domes as well as the introduction of mortar by the Muslims brought new probabilities for the Hindus the subtle and the delicate decorative art on the buildings by the letter and their capabilities to erect capped rock columns of elegance, opened a new horizon for the Muhammadan architects. As a result of this the majestic construction of new forms and designs and styles soon dotted the heart of India.

Although the culture of the Indo-Islamic Music and paintings in Assam began only from the reign of Rudra singha, some elements of their influence, particularly that of music appears to have trickled into the country. Probably through the Vaisnava pilgrims even in the earlier period when the age-old cultural relations of Assam with other parts of India was greatly impeded by its prolonged hostilities with the Muslimans. The uses of musical instruments like nagara or angera and rabab by the Assamese Vaisnava musicians can be cited as a good evidence of this. Bhaskara vipra one of the followers of sankaradeva is attributed with the skill of playing on the rabab, the fine Muhammadan instrument which is said to have been the invention of Mir Tansen of Akhybar’s court (1542-1605). 102

The naxqarah war drawn, in which Akbor is said to have been adept has also found its importance in the Vaishnava Namakirtana performances particularly in Kamrup and Goalpara Districts of Assam where it came to be known as nagara or nagera. Even the pakhwaj which is believed to have been introduced into Assam, for the first time during the reign of Rudra singha, subsequently entered through the influences of this king, some of the Vaishnava satras directly patronised by him. This instrument in its somewhat degenerated form later came to be known as pasauj or dholok. But these influences appear to have been merely external and they had nothing to do with the melodies and other essential elements of Assamese Vaishnava music of different types such as Bargitas, Bhatimas Ankar Gitas etc. That the Assamese music of the kind enjoyed such freedom from perso

102 Saikia Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, pp. 286-287.
Arabic influence can also be asserted from the fact that there is no lightness of the Kheyal type of Hindustani music in the Bargitas. Rudra Singha (1696 – 1714) is said to have shown high appreciation for the Hindusthani music and musicians of this school delighted him in his court and he imported and settled a number of them in the country. Besides this it is also learnt from Buranjis that he sent Assamese artists to Delhi and other places to be trained in Indian music as well as in the playing of different musical instruments used there later these musicians not only adorned his court but also might have popularized and trained many Assamese in the art. It is Believed in some quarters that even the king himself composed songs of different melodies such as Thumri and Gazal. But he does not seem to have ventured to blend Assamese music with the Hindusthani on the contrary. 103

He took steps to reorganized the indigenous musicians into different guilds such as Gayan, Bayan, Biyah gowa and Pad gowa Oja etc and introduced legislation for their well being and encouragement towards further development of their art. Thus it seems that he helped paralleled development of both Hindustani and indigenous music in the country and these two schools continued to flourish during the subsequent period. Since the Hindustani music developed in the country through royal patronage and the Ahom palace an became important centre of its culture, it appears to have been of a very high order. But being devoid of strong religious sentiment, it did not seem to have been able to attract or impress deeply on the people in general in whom influences of and appreciation for Sattriya music of Assam by that time had become deep-rooted. Consequently, the influence of Hindustani music on the melodies and other similar elements of the Sattriya or Vaishnava music cannot be imagined although it is true that some musical instruments like rabab nagara and pakhwaj were used by the Vishnava musicians. Such conviction grows stronger when we find that during this period the latter school of indigenous music received equal

appreciation and encouragement from the king. In the face of these facts it appears to be certain that the culture and the influence of Hindustani music in Assam, during the period remained confined only among the privileged few. The specimens of old Assamese paintings so far available to us are chiefly the products of artists of Assamese Vaishnava monasteries and the painters of the courts of Koch and Ahom kings of Assam in the eighteenth century. Most of these works of art were created for illustration of books. We have of course references to some paintings done by Sankaradeva before this period. But none of these creations are available now. The publication Chitra Bhagavata reproduces the miniature illustrations from Sankaradevas; Assamese verse renderings of Bhagavata Purana Book X, recovered from the Bali-Sattra in Nowgong. The original manuscript bears the date 1461 Saka corresponding to 1539 A.D. Commenting on this date K. K. Handique in his introductory notes to Chitra Bhagavata observes that this date is remarkable in view of the fact that these paintings pertain to the school of Rajput Mughal art and that the words of this school are fairly rare at such an early date. Silpaacharyya Nandalal Bose, however, finds resemblances of the Assamese paintings to the Jain Oriya, or Newari school. Rabinda Majumder another writer on the other hand observes that while these Assamese illustrations have resemblances to Jain manuscript illustrations, most of the figures being depicted in abhnaga and a few in tribhanga and also their composition being linear they come closer to folk art.

At the first glance we note that in the Assamese Paintings men folk mainly soldiers, warriors, drummers, and pipers are draped in Muslim fashion with long robes and characteristic head gears similarly, the rude characters which are generally depicted with long beard resemble the Muslim warriors of the time. Even in religious scenes we note that in most cases men with bare bodies adorned with garlands and sandal paste wear a Muslim type of cap which is known as Mugalai topi in Assam. The firmness of lines with sharp turns and short breaks is considered to be one of the

104 Ibid, P.183.
important Characteristics of the Mughal School of art. This Characteristic is also found to be a predominant one in the Assamese paintings. Again like the Mughal hunting scenes, we notice here that groups of selected figures of men and animals busy in their respective works and it is the action of each which gives the action to the whole and not the movement of the whole manifested through each. But the Assamese paintings lack the intricacy of designs of the Mughal art. Moreover, while the monographs of the Mughal school save some of the illustrative works which deal with the mythical strive after no spiritual conception but embody a general statement of fact, these Assamese paintings are mainly Vaishnava in their parport and the Assamese artists seem to have endeavoured to evince there the intense pressure of restless energy of Krishna, the Divine Lord in all His acts. Thus with these Characteristics, the Assamese School appears to be akin to the Rajput Mughal school of art. 105

We have stated earlier on several occasions that the Muslim type of garment was introduced for the first time in the royal court and among the Assamese officials by Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.) The male characters mainly the warriors and royal attendants in these Assamese paintings being depicted with such wears it leads us to think that these works of art do not belong to the time anterior to the reign of Rudra Singha. Consequently, we subscribe to scholar's view that 1539 A.D. Cannot possibly be the time of the illuminated Bhagavata of the Ball-Sattra, which can so far be regarded as the earliest specimen of the Assamese painting done in Vaishnava Sattaras. We can there fore affirm that these were the the products of eighteenth century Vaishnava artists of Assam and in their themes spirit and style they fall in the line with Mughal – Rajput paintings.

The miniature of Hasti-Vidyarnava a treatise on elephants, Sankhasura – Vadha – Kavya, Dharma purana and perhaps the Gita-Govinda which were written during the reign of Siva Singha (1714-1744 A.D.) the successor of Rudra Singha marks the most remarkable period in the

105. SAHITO MOHINI KUMAR: ASSAM MUSLIM RELATION AND ITS CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE, P. 290.
development of Assamese painting at the Ahom court and under Mughal influence. The pictures inserted in the Hastividyaranava are well-known for their artistic merit. In their style and character these paintings appear to be the true representatives of the Mughal school of paintings; in Assam, we perhaps cannot provide better description and comment on them than the following remarks of Dr. S. K. Bhuyan:

The greatest landmark in the age-long contact between Assam and the Islamic world is however, the gorgeously illustrated Assamese manuscript Hastividyaranava, compiled by Sukumar Barkaith in 1734 A.D. under the orders of king Siva singha and his chief queen Maharni Ambika Devi. This book is a treatise on elephants. When the author insert an elephant of docile class which is a suitable animal for the king to ride upon, he actually places king Siva singha on the howdah of the elephant to illustrate his theme. Similarly, elephants which bring prosperity to the king are illustrated by a continuous stream of boxes of presents from foreign courts as they being delivered to the monarch. An obstinate and untamable elephant is depicted as being turned out of the royal presence.106

Having thus prepared the canvas, the author inserts in the book a large number of pictures depicting the king and his queen, their son Ugra singha Tipam Raja, Junior queens, maids, and attendants of the palace, nobles, officers, subjugated chieftains, processions, Hindustani musicians and dancing girls and wrestlers. He also inserts the portraits of eight kings who have heard the fame of king Siva Singha opposite every picture of the Ahom court there is a painted scene of the portals of a Mogul palace with the Nahabatchana and other attendant in details inserted as a set off to the Ahom counterart. Ahom king and his nobles are shown in the pictures of Hasti Vidyaramava as wearing the Mughal head-dress. Occasionally a fully blossomed rose is inserted in the hand of the monarch in the fashion of Mughal portraits. The drawing are the handiwork of two painters portraits. Dilbar, a Muslim and Doshail a Hindu. Dilbar was

obviously employed to furnish the mogul settings. Similar paintings in the manuscripts of the period of Sive singhas reign bear indelible marks of the influence of the Mogul school of paintings. 107

If the Mughal painters balanced the stiff and formal nature which their portraits reveal at the first sight by delicate drawing and subtle modeling of likeness it seems that the Assamse artists carefully avoided the necessity for such balancing by their system of modelling. Again unlike their Mughal counterparts they seem to have been not so much keen on depicting the inner character of the individuals. They as it appears, are content with indicating the personality of individual and his racial characters. Thus at the first glance the portraits by the Assamese artists reveal that the persons in their paintings are moderately short and hafty built with compact nose having high bridge. Their eyes appear to be sufficiently lean and long in comparison with their wider cheek and jaw bones. As the main objectives of these Assamese artists were to delineate the inner character of the elephants as described in the treatise and not the accurate protraiture of the people of the court, they had to remain within the bounds of depicting the general individual features and the racial characters of the latter. But in spite of their close resemblances these paintings with their settings, themes and atmosphere are truly Assamese. 108


108. Tamizi, Mohammed Yahya: Sufi movements in Eastern India, New Delhi, 1992 A.D, P-30
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2. Ibid, P-12.
5. http://www.india.gov.in
6. Ibid.
10.http://www.india.gov.in
11.Ibid.
13.Ibid.


25. Ibid, P-240.


27. Tazkirat-ul-Awliya, Faridud-Din-Attar, Delhi, 1317 A.H., P-52.

28. Salikta Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Relation and its cultural significance, P-257.


31. Salikta Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Relation and its cultural significance, P-258.

32. Ibid, P-258-259.

33. Ibid, P-259.

34. Ibid; P-186.


36. Ibid, P-188.

37. Ibid, P-188, 189.

38. Ibid; P-189-190.


40. Ibid; P-193, 194.

41. Ibid, P-194, 195.
42. Sai Kha Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, p. 195-197

43. Ibid., p. 197-198.

44. Ibid., p. 198-199.


48. Ibid., p. 47.


52(B). Ibid., p. 84.


57. Tamizi, Mohammed Yahyi: Sufi movements in Eastern India, p. 49.
58. Tara Chand: "influence of Islam on Indian culture" P- 81.
60. Salim, Gulam Hussai: Riazussalation. P- 257.
62. Ibid, P- 228-229.
63. Ibid, P- 229-231.
64. Ibid, P- 231, 232.
65. E. A. Gait, A History of Assam; P- 145.
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70. Saikia Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, P- 240.
71. Ibid, P-241.
73. Ibid, P- 243-245.
74. Saikia Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, P- 245, 246.
75. Ibid, P- 247.
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77. Misra Sri Harekrishna: Sanskrit Sahityat Assam Prasanga 1998, P- 1 5 0.
78. Satkia Mohini Kumari: Assam Muslim Relation and Its Cultural Significance, P- 2 5 1 - 2 5 2.
81. Ibid, P- 2 5 8 - 2 5 9.
82. Ibid, P- 2 5 8 - 2 6 0.
83. Ibid. P- 2 6 0 - 2 6 1.
84. Ibid, P- 2 6 2 - 2 6 3.
86. Hussein Muhibul; Hazrat Azan Pir 1972 AD, P- 1 0 5.
90. Ibid, P- 2 7.
93. Choudhury Khan Amanatullah: Itihas (Bengali) 1936 AD, P- 2 5 0.
94. Ibid. P- 2 5 2.


100. Saikia Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, P- 266.

101. Ibid., P-266, 286.

102. Ibid., P-286, 287.


104. Ibid., P-183.

105. Saikia Mohini Kumar: Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, P- 290.


107. Ibid., P- 59.