CHAPTER II
Education.

1. Materials used for writing :-

From the existing manuscripts we can make some idea of the materials used for writing. About writing materials of the early period, it is said that they consisted of the Bhurjapatra, aloeswood, sāncipāt (aquilaria agallocha), tulāpāt (leaves made by pressing cotton), wooden board, palm leaves, animal substances, clay, metal, stone, brick etc. \(^1\) 'Yogini Tantra' mentions a number of materials used. They are Bhurjapatra or teja-patra, tālapatra (palm leaves), agaru (aloe wood), svarna-patra, tārā patra, raupya patra, barks of trees, mṛt pātra, ketakipatra and baṭa patra. \(^2\) During the Medieval period, the most common materials used for writing are the 'Sāncipat' and 'Tulāpāt'. The Tulāpāt was generally used for inferior manuscripts. \(^3\) For the manufacture of the leaves from the sancibark, to make it fit for writing, a scientific but longdrawn process was adopted. The procedure of manufacturing the leaves is fully discussed by Edward Gait in his work- 'A History of Assam'. \(^4\) Copper-plates were used by the kings of this period in issuing grants. According to Sri Benudhar Sarma, bamboo leaves (prepared from the outer fibrous portion covering the bamboo) and the leaves of a plant which resembles the leaves of the plant called Maduri, were also used as writing materials. \(^5\)

The Assamese equivalent of the word 'masi' (ink) is 'mahi'. In Assam, ink was generally prepared with 'silikhā' (terminalia citrina) and bull's urine. Ink was also prepared in early days from the extracts of 'amalaka' (phylanthus amblica), 'elāndhu' (soot) and barks of some of the trees. The sap of the earth-worm was used for invisible writing. \(^6\) There are some manuscripts where scripts are found written with lac. It is said that there are some 'bidhis' (manuscripts containing the mantras and the procedure of...
worshipping Gods or Goddesses) written with golden ink. We have seen some of the manuscripts preserved in the Buddhist monastery at Dishangpani, in the modern Sibsagar Subdivision where golden ink was used in writing the contents. The ink used in the old Assamese manuscripts was of the best quality; after so many hundreds of years the writings are found still legible and distinct. Dr. S.K.Bhuyan observes:

"The ink that was used in old Assamese manuscripts was made of very peculiar ingredients, the formula of which is known to men of olden school. The chief characteristic of Assamese ink is its tenacity to glossy and slippery surfaces. Its durability has been proved by the old manuscripts whose ink has not appreciably faded, though the folios have crumbled down through the destructive influence of insects and the no less destructive agency of mildew and damp." 7

It is said that ink was also prepared from 'keheraj', a kind of dark green creeper.

The pen used for writing was a goose-quill or reed. 8 'Yogini Tantra' mentions about holders of pen made of various materials such as bamboo, tār̥a (copper), svarṇa (gold), brhannala (reed), agnimaya (iron), raitya (brass) and kangṣya (bell metal) etc. 'Yogini Tantra' further mentions the length of a pen. 9 'Khagani' and 'Dhekia' are also used as quills. The other materials used are 'mahi-chungā' (ink-pot), 'kutani' (cutter), 'ākmārī' (roller) and a 'bindhana' (a borer). 10

2. Writers and Preservation of Manuscripts:

There were writers working on individual line or under the management of the Government, who wrote original works or translated from the original Sanskrit. There was yet another class of writers-cum-scribes, known as likharu or likhak in Assamese, whose business was to copy manuscripts for others. These 'likharus' or 'likhakas' were always busy with the transcription of
manuscripts which was a subsidiary means for their livelihood. Their "penmanship was so much on demand that one scribe usually specialised in the copying of one particular book instead of becoming a free-lancer in his profession". Under the management of the Ahom Government, attached to the secretariat, there was an array of clerks and copyists under the supervision of an officer known as Likhakar Barua. It was the practice of the Brahman scholars and priests to write the 'bidhis' required for worshipping different gods or goddesses or for performing other functions and ceremonies. As a result of the vigorous Neo-Vaisnavite movement a band of 'poet-transcribers' flourished in the State whom we owe a large number of manuscripts. The temples, the Satras and the courts, like the Buddhist monasteries, served the purpose of libraries where manuscripts were preserved as well as scholars also assembled for discussion. The Satras were the main centres where translations from Sanskrit works, copying of manuscripts, writing of 'bidhis' and text books for the students were carried on to a great extent, besides the writing of other original works such as epic, drama songs etc. Each of the Satra institutions was a great library itself as they were the veritable repositories of learning and education. The royal archives of the Medieval kings were also full of different original works and commentaries. It can be safely inferred from what had been said by Ramsaraswati in his translation of the Vanaasaarva of Mahabharata, that the royal archive of the Koch king Naranarayana was undoubtedly a very rich one. Along with his request of translating the Mahabharata he sent to Ramsaraswati all the commentaries lying in the royal archive, on a bullock cart. Attached to the palace of the Ahom kings, in the capital, there was a set of apartments for the preservation of royal manuscripts, records, letters, despatches and
maps, in charge of a high official called Gandhiva Barua. The courtiers 
and nobles of the Ahom court compiled chronicles and other works either individually or by appointing scribes, for preservation in their family archive. Apparently every distinguished family, in those days, had a number of manuscripts in their family archive. The Brahmin priests and scholars had their own archives full of 'bidhis', 'smritis' and other original works for their own use.

There were always some spare leaves attached to each manuscript called 'beti-pat' to record changes of ownership or other important events in the life of the owner or his family. Then the whole manuscript is generally wrapped up in a piece of cloth - preferably of red colour. Those who could afford enclosed the manuscript in a wooden box. If the manuscript is a valuable one then the box is coloured and decorated with pictures - "the pictures being generally appropriate to the subject matter of the book itself". Rightly infers E. Gait that Assamese people attach much importance to an old manuscript or 'puthi' than to a new one. The manuscripts were carefully preserved and handed down from father to son. Edward Gait writes:

"Many of them are black with age and the characters have in places disappeared. The subjects dealt with are various. Many are of a historical character; others describe the method of divination in use among the Deodhais and Baimungs; others again are of a religious nature, while a few contain interesting specimens of popular folklore."

That the Assamese people have attached more value and regard to the manuscripts in their possession is best revealed in the preamble of the 'Tungkhungia Buranji' (vide Chapter - The Subject-matter and the Sources). Like the Sikhs the worship of a manuscript copy of a religious book, particularly of a 'Namghoṣā', or a 'Kirttana' or a 'Bhāgavata' etc. was introduced in Assam by the Vaisnavite movement. This practice also taught the people to regard books with respect. Besides, it is the common custom with every Hindu to
show respect to books, - the embodiment of knowledge, the presiding deity of which is represented by Goddess Saraswati.

3. Aim of Education :-

"Individual attainments, State and social service, and a preparation for the realisation of the higher ends in life were the main aims of education in ancient times. The emphasis laid on the moral and spiritual aspects of life greatly shaped the type of education and the subjects for studies, and it was, therefore, primarily based rather on theory than on practical or vocational training.... It was perhaps culture and not literacy which was the highest aim." 21 S.V.Venkateswara observes: "objective of education was cultural rather than utilitarian as in the case of Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia- Indian education had much more in common with that of the Hebrews. It was next door to the Persian where dharma and moksha satya were the social ideals. It resembled the the Chinese in that it saw education in every art - the main point of contrast with the Greek was in the relative importance given to art and religion." 22

The aim of education in Medieval Assam was almost the same. Its primary object was the moral and spiritual development of the people. The books that were included in the curriculum of the students, also, corroborate this view. The Vaisnavite movement laid more stress on the moral and spiritual development of the people and as subsidiary means for the attainment of that goal, it introduced among the people the culture of different branches of art such as singing, dancing, playing of musical instruments, painting etc. Although the majority of the people, at the time, were quite ignorant of reading and writing, yet most of them were conversant with the teachings of the epics, the Purāṇas and other religious books. Because in the temples, the Naghars and in the Sātras, there were people to read these books and to explain the contents to them. Dr. S.K.Bhuyan rightly points out: "There grew in Assam, what we may conveniently term 'illiterate literacy' of a form unknown in any part of India. An Assamese villager of the older type still carries this tradition about him; and if we can make him speak
freely we shall see that he possesses a fair acquaintance with the
general contents of the epics and the purāṇas." 23 The poet and the
translators have written their works not merely for readers, who were very
few, but mostly for the listeners. Very often the poets frankly confess that
they have been composing their verses mainly for the listeners. For example,
Pitambar Dvija in his work, 'Usaparinaya' writes:

Sri Bhāgavata kathā amṛta madhumai /
Sunile pāthaka khande bighni dura hai //
Hena madhumatta kathā kahe dhīra jāne /
Suni Pitambare hena gune mane mane //
Sloka bandhe bykta kathā Vyāsa risimukhe /
Rachilo pānchāli yena buje sarva loke //

Translation - The facts narrated in the Sri Bhagavata are like nectar and
honey, the hearing of which removes sins as well as obstacles. Hearing
such honey-like sweet facts from the mouth of learned and steady persons,
Pitambar began to think; then rendered it into 'Pānchāli' verse (in
Assamese), which was first expressed into Sanskrit verse from the mouth
of Vyāsa, so that all can understand. 24

While the religious circles attempted for the spiritual and moral
development of the people, the political circles laid more stress on making
every individual dutiful, patriotic, intelligent, and self-dependant with a
high sense of self prestige. It is the chronicles composed during the Ahom
period which inspired the people with these ideals. The nobles and the high
officials of the court, though some of them were not lettered, were dutiful,
truthful, intelligent and of imposing personalities. Further, the administrative
system kept all people from the highest officer down to the 'paik', informed
of the political situation of the State. The people were very much interested
in the news of Gargaon, the capital of the Ahoms. The court politics was freely
discussed in the villages through the lips of the periodic servitors (paiks).
This made them politically very conscious and helped them a great deal in
taking their decision at any moment of critical situation or rising into
prominence by their superior knowledge and efficiency.

4. Institutions and Centres of Education:

The responsibility of imparting education was mainly the concern of the Brähmanas in Medieval Assam. The 'Guru-grhas', that is, the houses of the Brahmin teachers, were the institutions where education was imparted. About educational institutions in early Assam, scholars are of opinion that neither epigraph nor literature supply us with definite information regarding the existence of regular schools, except the 'Guru-grhas', Sanskrit 'Tolas' and village schools provided by the 'Agrahāras'. The rulers of early Assam created and patronised such 'Agrahāras' for the maintenance of Brähmanas. Those Brähmanas who were provided with 'Agrahāras' maintained village schools and were keen in discharging their six-fold duties, one of which was 'adhyā-pana' (teaching).

During the Medieval period also, we have seen that the 'Guru-grhas' were the main institutions for imparting education. There were Brahmin scholars who maintained 'Tolas' at different places patronised by the local people. It was the custom till recently in vogue that the Brahmin boys were educated about 'Nitya-naimittika-karma' and other rites and rituals by their fathers at home. The educational institutions maintained by the Brähmanas were known as 'Tolas' or 'Chhātra-Sāls'. From the biographical works we know that a number of 'Chhātra-Sāls' existed in Assam, at the time of Sankardeva. Sankardeva himself was reading in such a 'Tola' under Mahandran Kandali at Bardowa. Madhavdeva was reading under one Rajendra Adhyapak at Banduka. There was another 'Tola' or 'Chhātra-Sāl' under one Jadavendra Bhattacharyya at Srihati on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. From the biographies it is learnt that the places such as Hajo, Vyaskuci, Kochbehar, Ratnapur were centres of education in Medieval Assam. King Naranarayana
of Kochbehar was a great patron of education. Sanskrit and other elementary subjects in vernacular were assiduously studied in his kingdom. Rai Gunabhiraṇa observes that king Naranarayana highly encouraged the spread of education in Kamarupa. Book on arithmetic in vernacular language came to be written by the Kayastha and Kalita scholars under his auspices. But in upper Assam, as stated by Gunabhiraṇa, there was no educational institution even in the capital up to the reign of king Siva Singha. Of course, there were individual scholars called 'Adhyapaka' in the court or under the patronage of the nobles. The 'Adhyapaka' taught students at different places also. It was the Bar-raja (queen Phuleswari, consort of king Siva Singha) who first established a 'Pāthsala' at the capital where education was mainly imparted in Sanskrit. There were no institutions to impart education through the vernacular medium. The only subject which was taught through the medium of the vernacular was arithmetic. This provision was mainly meant for those who were intended to be engaged in the census work. There are references in the biographies that Brahmin scholars coming from other parts of India imparted education to students by establishing 'Chhatra-sals' which were patronised by the local people. For example, one Kalap Chandra Dvija, coming from Navadvipa of Bengal, have established a 'Chhatra-sal' under the patronage of Satananda, father of Damodardeva, one of the chief Vaisnavite preceptors of Assam. Damodardeva himself was student of Kalap Chandra Dvija in his 'Chhatra-sal'.

The Vaisnavite epoch brought about a tremendous intellectual awakening in the State. The preachers were responsible for educating the masses. The daily routine of the Brahmin preachers, as mentioned above, included teaching also. For example, we have referred to above the routine of the daily works
of Bhattadeva and Banamali deva, who daily taught students for a certain period. It was the regular feature of the major Satra institutions to maintain 'Tola' under reputed scholars to impart education to students. Students from different parts of the State flocked around the Satras for education.

There are references that students from Assam went to acquire proficiency in different branches of knowledge to the all-India reputed centres of education, such as Navadvip, Mithila, Benaras, etc. On the other hand, scholars from these places also came to Assam at different times, in the Medieval period, to hold scholarly discussions with the reputed scholars of Assam.

It cannot be said with authenticity whether there was any authority to inspect 'Chhatra-sals' and to advise the teachers on important matters. From certain references it can be only surmised that there were probably learned representatives from the public to inspect the 'Tolas' or 'Chhatra-sals' and to advise the teachers on important matters now and then. For example, from the biographical works it is gathered that one Raghabendra Bhattacharyya, after having received a complaint from the students mildly rebuked Mahendra Kandali, the teacher of Sankardeva, for going against the existing social rule in his 'Tola', when the former paid a visit to it.

5. Students:

It is evident from our discussion in the preceding chapters that the principles of the 'Varnasrama dharma' were not strictly adhered to in Assam and hence the caste system was very liberal. From the biographical records, it is learnt that the educational institutions were cosmopolitan in character and admitted pupils from all castes. Further, there was no age-bar for
the admission. Sankardeva himself entered into the 'Chhātra-śal' of Mahendra Kandali at the age of twenty. Sometimes old pupil also evinced keen interest in acquiring knowledge. From the biographical records, it is learnt that one old disciple named Budha-Xta showed keen desire to join the school. From another instance recorded in the biographical works, it is learnt that Bhawanipuria Gopal Ata made Laksman Ojah remember the entire book XI of Bhagavata without the aid of slate and pencil.

6. Honorarium for the Teacher:

Nothing is known definitely about tuition fees or honorarium of the teachers. Those teachers of scholars, who were under the royal patronage were probably provided by their royal patrons with all substantial aids. The teachers of the other 'Chhātra-śals', perhaps managed their institutions with voluntary contributions from students and the public. According to the age-old custom, the pupils were provided with lodging in the compound of the teachers' house. So long the students remained in the 'Chhātra-śal', they were to look after the house-hold affairs of the teacher. At the end of the student career, he was required to offer a lump-sum honorarium to the teacher after making a collection from the public. That the students were provided with lodging is supported by the existing custom and the biographical records. Sankardeva was also provided with a hut that was lying vacant in the compound of the house of Mahendra Kandali. The students were perhaps allowed to leave the school by their teachers after the completion of their course. From the epigraphic records and the existing system, it is evident that students after the completion of their course in the house of their teachers, used to visit the court of the kings for help or go from house to house collecting money to be paid as honorarium to their teachers.
The kings also considered it a pious duty to offer money to such a supplicant. Such references are found in the epigraphic records. In the Nowgong grant of king Balavarman (10th century A.D.), it is said that the king granted land to one Srutidhara, who attained proficiency in 'Srutis' on the day of the equinox. There are two equinoxes during the course of a year; one in the month of 'Asvin' and the other on the last day of the month of 'Chaitra'.

According to M.M. Dhireswar Bhattacharyya, the last mentioned equinox, i.e., the 'Chaitra-Visuba Sankranti', was considered auspicious for making grants and gifts. Therefore, it is believed that the grant was issued on that day.

From the grant of king Laksminarayana of Sadhayapuri, issued in the Saka year 1323, it is known that the said king granted a Brahmin named Rabideva, two hundred 'puras' of land, on the sacred day of Visuba. The view held by M.M. Bhattacharyya seems to be more reasonable, because till recently the students of Sanskrit 'Tolas' are found collecting money and other materials on the month of 'Chaitra', particularly on the day of the vernal equinox. The teachers started education of the students formally on an auspicious day. After the students were admitted, the guardian as a mark of respect and honour offer a few gold or silver coins and some daily necessities, such as cloth, rice, etc. to the teacher.

7. Examination:

As regards the system of examination, nothing can be definitely said for want of materials at our disposal. Probably there was no examination system like the modern one to judge the efficiency or ability of the student in the subjects of their study. The efficiency and the ability of the students in their subjects were perhaps determined by the recognition granted to them by the teachers and other scholars, particularly the scholars of the
court, after the completion of their studies. After the completion of the course, the teacher granted recognition to those students who were considered by him to be well-versed in their respective subjects, by holding a 'Samāvantana' ceremony. In the court too, the student had to prove his efficiency in his subject among the court-scholars.

The students were perhaps now and then tested by their teachers by holding some tests. As for instance, one day Mahendra Kandali, the teacher of Sankardeva, asked his students to compose a verse in the class; none but Sankardeva alone could compose a poem to the entire satisfaction of his teacher. Students competed among themselves in making verses offhand orally and this was a popular intelligent test in those days. Besides, as stated above, it was a custom that the reputed scholars tried to justify their proficiency by defeating their rival disputants in the scholarly discussions held in the courts of the kings or in the assembly of learned gatherings. The victory of a scholar in such a discussion brought fame and enhanced his reputation in the society.

8. Curriculum of Studies

The syllabus or curriculum of the students in ancient India includes a long list of subjects. The subjects are Vedas, Vedangas, Upavedas, Sarpa-vidya, Pisaca-vidya, Raksa-vidya, Asura-vidya, Itihasa, Purana, etc. The Vedic learning included 'Siksa', 'Chandas', 'Vyakarana', 'Nirukta', 'Jyotisa' and 'Kalpa' including the study of the self and God. The local grants of the early Kamarupa kings mention the study of 'Vidya' and 'Kalā' (art). 'Kalā' (art) has again sixty-four branches. 'Vidya' includes four 'Vedas', four 'Upavedas' consisting of the 'Ayurveda', 'Dhamurveda', 'Gandharvaveda' and the 'Tantras'; the six 'Vedangas', 'Itihasa', 'Puranas', 'Smritis'.
'Arthasastra', 'Kamasāstra', 'Silpa-sāstra', 'Alankāra', 'Kavya' etc. From the epigraphs of the early period we know that some Brāhmānas and also some kings of Kamarupa attained proficiency in different branches of knowledge mentioned above. During the Medieval period also, the curriculum of studies was as extensive as it was in the early period. In Darrang Rajvamsāvalī it is stated that Sarva-bhauma Bhattacharyya, the royal priest of the Koch kings, was a versatile scholar having mastery over the four 'Vedas', the fourteen Sūtras, 'Smrtis', 'Vedāngas', 64 fine arts, the 'Purāṇas', the 'Tantras' etc. (vide 'Social Divisions' above). Towards the last part of the early period, Kamarupa became a well-known centre of 'Tantrism' in India. Therefore, the study of 'Tantras' became a special feature of the learning in the Medieval period. In the early period, 'Tantra' was extensively studied. From the Gauhati grant of Indrapala, it is learnt that 'Tantra' was a subject to be studied at that time and the king Indrapala himself was conversant in the lore. We are discussing elsewhere that this 'Tantrism' is mainly responsible for the prevalence of witch-craft and magic in Assam. The evidence of the works called 'Yogini Tantra' and 'Guptamani' and 'Guptasāra' of the Ahom period bear testimony to the study of 'Tantra' during the Medieval period. As revealed in the biographical works, the syllabus of books read by Sankardeva under Mahendra Kandali was very wide. It included a large number of works including the four 'Vedas', fourteen 'Sūtras', eighteen 'Purāṇas', the 'Mahābhārata', the fourteen 'Vyākaranas', the eighteen 'Kāvyas', the eighteen 'Kosas' etc.

During the period under review, Sanskrit was mainly studied in 'Tolas' and 'Satras'. All the Vaisnavite teachers and theologians were erudite scholars in Sanskrit language and literature. Sankardeva, Madhabdeva, Ananta Kandali,
Bhattadeva, Ramsaraswati were all extraordinary scholars in Sanskrit. Bhattadeva, besides his rendering of the 'Gita' and 'Bhagavata', wrote a few works in lucid Sanskrit explaining the philosophical significance of the 'Bhāgavata Purāṇa'. Ananta Kandali, while translating Book X of the Bhāgavata, expresses that he could make verse in Sanskrit well, but he desisted from doing so only for the sake of the women and the Sudras who could not follow or understand Sanskrit. Koch king Naranarayana and his brother Chilarai attained proficiency in Vyākarana, Purāṇa, Smṛti, Mīmāṃsā, Atharvaveda, Tarka-Śāstra, Jyotisa, archery and politics in all its aspects. Further, the king in order to make the learning of Sanskrit easy for all classes of people advised his court-scholar Purosattam Bhattacharyya to write a Vyākarana in a very simple method. Prayoga Ratnamala, a Sanskrit grammar, was written at the instance of Naranarayana. This work is still used extensively in Assam and North Bengal. The other famous scholar of the court of king Naranarayana is Pitambar Siddhanta Vagisa and he wrote eighteen works on 'Smrtis' known as 'Kaumudis' (vide Chapter- 'Racial Admixture and Hinduisation'). As stated above, scholars from other parts of India also came to Assam to hold scholarly discourses with the scholars of Assam. From the biographical works, it is known that king Naranarayana directed his officers, high as well as low, to run the administrative works through the medium of Sanskrit. There is an interesting incident recorded in the 'Katha-Guru-Charit': There came a profound scholar named Kavichandra with two hundred disciples as his followers in search of a rival disputant to the capital of king Naranarayana. The scholar and his followers while moving in the capital in search of the residence of Sankardeva found to their utter surprise that
all their enquiries with the passers-by were replied in Sanskrit. At this, Kavichandra made a very significant remark to his followers: "Look! this seems to be the country of Scholars." 53

9. Spread of Education:

It is clear from the above discussion that though educational institutions were not wide-spread in Medieval Assam yet the Vaisnava movement and patronage of kings contributed towards uplifting the cultural level of the people and thus helped in creating a condition which Dr. Bhuyan termed as 'Illiterate literacy'. During the Ahom rule a knowledge of the Buranjis was indispensable for every Assamese gentleman. The vast majority of the village people living at a distance from the capital were enlightened with a sort of education in the form of information or news. This made the people politically more conscious and enabled them to put up with any sort of political emergency that arose in the country. That the different subjects such as engineering, hawk-training, military training, medicine etc. were studied by different guilds of the people are evident from the treatises that were written under the management of the Ahom Government. There were treatises compiled under the Ahom Govt. describing the procedure to be followed by different guilds or professions while doing their duties, as well as treatises laying down the duties of princes and rules of precedence at the court and the functions of the various officials. 54

The nobles and the courtiers were highly conversant with Indian politics; this is evident from the innumerable diplomatic letters that were dispatched from the Ahom court and the political statements made by different personalities of the Ahom Govt. at different times. We have come across a treatise on
politics, called 'Niti-latankura' compiled by one Bagis Sarmajin a mixed language of Sanskrit and Assamese, during the later part of the Ahom rule, under the patronage of king Kamaleswar Singha. The higher section of the officials of the court showed interest for the subjects like painting, verse making, sexology etc.

The Vaisnavite movement, besides making the general people conversant with the contents of the epics, puranas and other religious scriptures, taught the arts of singing, dancing, the playing of instruments etc., through cultural activities.

10. **Faculties of Art and Science**: 

(a) **The Study of Ayurveda and Medicine**: 

Evidences of the study of Ayurveda or Medicine, concerning human as well as animal, are found both in the early and Medieval sources. In early Assam we find one Nagarjuna whose name is associated with the compilation of a medical work called 'Yoga Sataka'. According to K.L. Barua there are still certain specific remedies, in the Kamrupi Ayurvedic pharmacopoeia, which are associated with the name of Nagarjuna. It is further believed that this Nagarjuna was contemporary of Ratnapala of the 11th century A.D. and belonged to the Bajra-yana school. Moreover, this Nagarjuna of Assam was a different person from the Nagarjuna of the 2nd century B.C. who is believed to have revived the 'Susruta-sanhita'. In the Subhankara-pataka grant of the king Dharmapala, we find the name of a Vaidya, Prasthana Kalasa, who composed the grant. The term Vaidya is considered to be a professional class of physician. The Nowgong grant of king Balavarman III mentions 'Bhisaja' -- a class of physicians.
The proverbial sayings, particularly the 'Dakar-bachan', furnish evidence to the fact that the study of Ayurveda was widely prevalent in the country. The influence of Assamese medical works, known as 'Mrdana', and other Ayurvedic works, particularly of 'Bhava-prakasa' of the 11th century is quite manifest in the Assamese proverbial sayings. These sayings make us believe that even the common people were aware of what was good for health and what was not. According to Hunter, the professional people called 'Vaidya' or 'Kaviraj'

"Practise medicine according to rules laid down in the Hindu religious books.... Of the surgery they were quite ignorant. The medicines used by them take the shape of large pills or boluses, containing many ingredients possessing different and sometimes antagonistic properties".

Hunter gives a long list of medicinal herbs in his work 'Statistical Account of Assam'. The study of Ayurveda or medicine in the Medieval period is proved by the existence of manuscripts also. Gunabhiram Barua points out that though the Sanskrit works on Ayurveda were not entirely rendered into Assamese yet parts of them were rendered into it. There are many manuscripts written in both prose and verse, where names of different diseases along with antidotes are found. The Assamese physicians known as 'Bej', which is a debased form of the term 'Vaidya', used both medicine and versified incantations or charms for the removal of diseases and other evil spirits from the body of a man.

In Assam, the 'Bejali' (the profession of physicians) is the result of the people's experience acquired from their day-to-day contact with the herbs and knowledge acquired from the Ayurveda. They apply these medicine prepared from local herbs. The knowledge of these medicines or incantations traditionally has been handed down from father to son, or mother to daughter or from mother-in-law to daughter-in-law and so on. In treating diseases
under 'Bejāli' system, medicine and mantras are equally applied. ‘Mantras’ were mostly applied, as is the practice prevalent even now, to cure bodily pain or pain caused by the bite of venomous insects, reptiles and animals.

There are manuscript copies, written in Medieval Assam, regarding treatment of disease by Ayurvedic system and by uttering incantations. There is a Sanskrit work written in Assamese called 'Vaidya-Sāroddāra', by one Jagannatha with 121 folios; this is a voluminous manuscript having detailed discussion on Ayurvedic treatment with particular references to 'tridosa'. Therefore, the treatise is believed to have dealt with scientific Ayurveda. The other manuscript works on Ayurveda are 'Cikitsā-Sanhitā' (in Sanskrit) by Damodara, containing 19 folios and 'Vaidyavati' (in Assamese) containing 29 folios. There are works on indigenous medicine and incantation such as 'Vyādhi-guchibar-kathã', 'Cikitsā-mantra-tantrādi', 'Jvarar-laksan', 'Cikitsā-grantha', 'Sāpar-dharani-mantra', 'Sāpekhowā-mantra' etc. The manuscripts called 'Vyadhi-guchibar-katha' and 'Cikitsa-mantra-tantradi' deal with in the symptoms of different kinds of tumour, carbuncle, boils etc. and prescribes medicinal herbs for these diseases. The work 'Jvarar laksan' deals in the symptoms of fever as well as prescribes medicine for it. The two works 'Sāpar-dharani-mantra' and 'Sāpekhowā-mantra' contain incantations mainly for curing snake-bite; the first one contains 'mantras' for curing dog-bite, stomach-ache and sprain etc. and gives medicine for cough and rheumatism etc. We have a manuscript copy called 'Jarjarā-mantra' and Bīrjarā-mantra preserved in the library of the Kamrup Anusandhan Samity. The manuscript contains 'mantras' for curing fever and driving away the evil spirit called 'Bīrā'. In fine, agreeing with Dr. P.C. Choudhury, it
may be said that "Kamrupi system of indigenous medicines was worked out with
details and it has not been difficult with village 'Ojah' to find out a herb
from the neighbouring jungles." Our tradition has however kept alive, and the
Ayurvedic treatment of what is called 'Asuri' type is very popular at least
in the villages". It is true that the surgery in the strict sense was not
known to the Assamese people, but if they suffer from any boil or carbuncle,
they can cure it by applying medicine to it or by removing the pus with the
help of a thorn.

The Koch and the Ahom kings patronised the study of Ayurveda in Assam.
Under the Koch kings there were 'Vaidyas' well-versed in the Ayurvedic studies.
From the 'Darrang Rajvamsāvali', it is gathered that the physician of the
Koch king was not only well versed in Ayurveda but also knew the 'Abhichāra'
Mantras' (Mantras for doing harm to others or Mantras of Māraṇa, Ucchātana etc.).
The cook of the Koch king was also acquainted with Ayurveda, as stated above
(vide Chapter - 'Food and Drink'). About the physician of the Koch king it
is stated in the 'Darrang Rajvamsāvali':

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Āṭa pare Vaidyara charitra 'suniyoka} & / \\
\text{Jahāra kārane guche roga 'soka} & // \\
\text{Veda śāstra jāne vyādhi chinaya niśesa} & / \\
\text{Mahausādhi gūna-gāna jānaya biśesa} & // \\
\text{Save vyādhi nesta kare ausadhara bale} & / \\
\text{Abhīchāra mantra bale, mantra-yantra jānaya sakale} & // \\
\text{Sāma ye Atharvaveda Śaṭī karma yata} & / \\
\text{Bhojanara hitāhitā jānata samasta} & // \\
\text{Save guṇānvita sito parama pradhāna} & / \\
\text{Yāta pare Vaidya āra nāhi āna āna} & // 
\end{align*}
\]

Translation—After this, please listen to the qualities of the physician for
whom there is neither disease nor sorrow in the country. He is well versed
in the Vedas and can diagnose all sorts of diseases. He knows the 'Mahausa-
dhis' with all their properties. He can cure all diseases by applying
medicine. He also knows Sāma and Atharvaveda and other rites and rituals. He knows what food is good (for health) and what is bad. He is adorned with all good qualities and a physician second to none.

Under the Ahom Government, there were separate Departments under trained officers and physicians to look after and prescribe indigenous medicine for both men and animals. The head physician known as 'Bezbarua' was in charge of looking after the health of the king in particular and of the ministers and nobles. The Daradphara Barua had to taste and examine the medicine which is prepared for the king.

There was another side of the Ayurvedic treatment concerning the animals. The Koch and the Ahom kings had maintained departments for looking after treatment of animals. Ralph Fitch, an English traveller, who visited the Koch capital during the reign of Naranarayana, writes: "They have hospitals for sheep, goats, dogs, cats, and birds and for all living creatures. When they become old and lame they keep them until they die." Therefore, the veterinary science was well developed in the country and it was an important department of medicine. That this veterinary science made a good progress under the Ahom kings is corroborated by ample evidences. One Sukumar Barkait under the order of the Ahom king Siva Singha and his consort Ambika Devi (A.D.1734) compiled a profusely illustrated voluminous work entitled 'Hasti Vidyārnava'. The work is a descriptive account of elephants, their diseases with all illustrations. In this connection, it would be worth mentioning here that a scientific treatise called 'Hastavurveda', for the treatment of diseases of elephants, was compiled by one Palakapyamuni, believed to be a sage from ancient Kamarupa, whose "region is described as the region where the river Lauhitya flows from the Himalayas to the sea". But the later-day work 'Hasti-vidyārnava' was not compiled on the basis of 'Hastavurveda' of
Palakapya muni. The materials of 'Hastividyārṇava' was taken from the work 'Gajendra Cintamani' of Sambhunatha, as known from the text. The Assam Government published another work called 'Ghoru Nidān' of an unknown author, edited by late Tarini Charan Bhattacharyya, in the year 1932. Like 'Hastividyārṇava', the work deals in the types of horses, their ailments and their treatment with medicinal herb. The work was not based on any Sanskrit work of the type. The learned Editor writes thus: "The method, style and treatment of the subject are so peculiar that it can be recognised at a glance that it is not a translation from other Sanskrit treatises. Unlike any other medical treatise in Sanskrit which is commonly met in other parts of India, this treatise has no mention either of spices or herbs which are rare in Assam. It is striking to note that the custom of weaving the author's name into the text of a literary composition has not here been adhered to, nor does it contain any prologue or epilogue or invocation either in the beginning or at the end of the 'puthi' (Manuscript). I am, therefore, naturally inclined to believe that the 'puthi' embodies a compilation based on experiences of horses acquired specially in the Mangaldai subdivision, which has long since been the main gate for horse import from Bhutan". The Editor ascribes the authorship to Sagarkhari. There are other treatises dealing in the kinds of ailments and the treatment of hawks both in the custody of the D.H.A.S. and in individual persons. Under the Ahom Govt. there were physicians for the treatment of hawks and 'kanuas'. There is a manuscript work preserved in the D.H.A.S. which deals with the subjects of training hawks and the treatment of hawks. All these prove that Ayurveda and medicine, concerning both bipeds and quadrupeds had been thoroughly studied by the people. Perhaps as a result of this, the people could get rid of some loathsome diseases, which prevailed in Bengal, as observed by Shihabuddin who came to Assam with

* D.H.A.S = Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies.
(b). The Study of Astrology and other Allied Subjects:

It is interesting to note that the people of Assam made a significant progress in the allied subjects of Astrology, Astronomy and Almanac which are important branches of human knowledge. The prevalence of astrological culture is supported by the existing remains at Gauhati and by the recovery of a number of important and significant manuscripts. Of these manuscripts the most important and significant one is the 'Kamarupa-Nivandhaniya-Khanda-Sadhya' of the early period. From the local epigraphy it is gathered that the rulers of the early period maintained Astrologers. The professional Astrologers are generally known as 'Daivajna' or 'Ganaka' in Assam and their rank in the society is just next to the Brahmans.

The Ahom kings maintained Astrologers in the royal court at the capital and in the court of the Barphukan at Gauhati. The chronicles of the Ahom period recorded that Astrologers from other parts of India came to Assam and settled here (Vide Chapter- 'Social Divisions'). The Ahom kings patronised the Daivajnas who were allotted specific duties both in the battle field and in the court. Such office-bearers came to be known as 'Dalai'. There were gradations of 'Dalais' as said above. The 'Daivajnas' under the patronage of the Koch and the Ahom kings rendered invaluable services to the progress and development of Astrology and Astronomy in the State. This is amply testified by a number of manuscripts composed during this period now preserved in the libraries of the 'Kamarupa Anusandhan Samity' and the 'Deptt. of Historical and Antiquarian Studies'.

It is needless to mention that a greater number of such works are still lying in the hands of individual who mostly belong to the families of
traditional Astrologers. From the 'Darrang Rajvansavali', it is learnt that the Koch king Naranarayana advised Sridhara Kandali to render the 'Kamarupa-Nivandhaniya-Khanda-Sadhya' into Assamese verse.

Treatises on Hindu Almanac, palmistry, and arithmetic have brought to light the study of these subjects in this period. Two of such manuscripts, the 'Jyotiśa' and 'Samvatsara-ganana' are preserved by the 'Kamrup Anusandhan Samity'. The first one contains 30 folios and deals with the calculation of Almanac. The second one, that is, the 'Samvatsara-ganana' consisted of 16 folios. This is a treatise on the method of preparing the forecast of a year. The manuscript describes the method of calculation to find out the important events in each year. The yearly Hindu Almanac contains account of the coming events of the year to which the Almanac relates, and this manuscript is found to have given a detailed account of such calculations. The tradition has come down to this day and the Kamarupi Pandits are adept in the preparation of the annual Almanac, based on the old and somewhat distinct system of astronomical and arithmetical calculations. Arithmetic was also studied under the Koch and the Ahom kings. King Naranarayana advised one Baku! Kayastha to render the 'Lilavati' into Assamese verse. It is further stated above that under the Ahom rule arithmetic was mostly studied by the Kayasthas and the Kalitas who were willing to be engaged in the Census work. The system of the arithmetic prevalent in Assam came to be known as 'Kāintheli anka' perhaps owing to the fact that the Kayasthas were mostly concerned with arithmetic in Assam. The system has got some peculiar characteristics of its own. It is known that there are some manuscripts of 'Kāintheli anka' preserved in the custody of some individual persons of the State.

(c). The Culture of Witch-craft and Magic :-

Assam, particularly with its ancient name Kamarupa, is known throughout India as the land of magic. The culture of Witch-craft and magic has
developed in Assam since early times. In this connection it should be noted that the names of Kamarupa and Kamarupa Kamakhya are invariably associated with mantras and magic. It is believed that the Tantrik Buddhists are mainly responsible for the spread and development of the culture of witch-craft and magic. Babu Nandalal Dey has given us a clear account about how Mahayana cult has ultimately developed into Tantrikism which further developed into mystic mysticism and sorcery. This view is also supported by other scholars. K.L.Barna writes: "It (Tantrikism) ultimately spread into Kamarupa and established for itself a strong-hold in Kamakhya..... The Kamarupa kings, probably after Brahmapala, adopted Tantrikism as their tenet and as a result of this patronage Kamakhya soon became a renowned centre of Tantrik sacrifices, mysticism and sorcery."

It is further gathered from a work called 'Sankara Digvijaya' that Abhinava Gupta, the famous Tantrik Buddhist scholar with whom Sankarachayya had a long disputation, flourished in Assam in the 9th century A.D. Besides, as revealed by different sources, it is learnt that there were a number of Buddhist Siddhas and scholars who are said to have composed a number of works on 'Tantras'.

During the Medieval period the culture of the black art, that is, witch-craft, magic and potioning was carried on to a great extent. There are historians like Gunabhiram who say that though the Assamese people, particularly the women, have an ill-repute as being very fond of black art, there is no truth in it. The historical investigation does not support Gunabhiram's view. In fact, the culture of witch-craft, magic and potioning are still in vogue in Assam, particularly in places like Kamakhya, Mayang, the southern portion of the district of Nowrong and the Cachar district. It is stated above that the physicians ('Bej') along with their knowledge
of medicine, knew mantras, tantras and the 'abhichāra'. Sometimes they apply both medicine and mantra. To subdue a male person or to bring a woman under one's control or to put an end to the life of one's enemy, the evil practice, such as potioning, or the application of incantations, or the application of the both, are still in vogue in Assam. To do mischief to one's enemy, sometimes, the hair, nail or piece of cloth used by the person are taken away secretly and after being incanted are put under earth. To find out a stolen property or a culprit, the practices of 'Saukā-chalowā', 'Bāti-chalowā' or 'Bāchani-Cowā' are still prevalent. These are performed with the help of incantation, as stated in a previous chapter. The other evil practices of doing mischief to the health of a man are 'herā-diya' and 'bān-mara'. There are counter systems of 'herā-diya' and 'bān-mara'. 'Bān-mara' is perhaps an affair of injurious incantation only. In the system of 'herā-diya', an effigy of the enemy is made and then along with the utterance of incantations 'kharikās' (spits) are thrust into the body of the effigy. It is a well-known fact that some 'Bejas' domesticate an evil spirit called 'Birā' with whose help they can do harm to a man or kill him in a supernatural way.

The culture of 'Tantra-mantra' or magic was prevalent among the tribal people as well. The remark made by F. Hamilton in connection with the chief of the Dimarua territory, deserves mention here; he writes: 'In fact he is a Garo Chief and the recent occupant is supposed to know many powerful incantations, by which he can kill his enemies or at least render them foolish. On this account he is very much respected and the Governor of the province carefully avoids giving him any manner of offence.'

The 'Tantras', the 'Samhitās' and the 'Yamalas' are the main sources of the 'mantras' and spells with the help of which one can perform miraculous feats. It has been said above that during the last part of the early period
many such 'Tantras' and 'Yamalas' have been composed in Assam. The 'Yogini Tantra' is a remarkable Tantrik work. It mentions about 'mantras' called 'Svapna-vati', 'Mṛta-sanjibani', 'Madhumati', 'Pādmāvati' and 'Vasikarana'. It also states, how and when these incantations are to be meditated, describing the supernatural feats one can perform with the help of each of these mantras, after getting mastery over them. There are a number of manuscripts dealing with sorcery, magic and incantations. Of these works, one called 'Kamaratna Tantra', published by the Assam Govt. and edited by late H.C. Goswami, is noteworthy. This is a translation of the Sanskrit 'Kamaratna Tantra' by Goraksanath; but the name of the translator is not attached herewith unlike other manuscripts. The manuscript describes how by uttering incantations and applying other methods a man can be subdued, charmed, made hostile, paralysed, killed, freed from evils, excited etc. It also prescribes the methods to be adopted for the performance of the above mentioned feats in the form of medicines, mantras and yantras (talisman). Another manuscript called 'Mantras and Medicines' contain both mantras and medicines. Some of the mantras of this manuscript are for effecting happy relationship between husband and wife. The others are meant for curing of fever, driving away of evil spirits and curing of the biting of rabid dogs. There is another work called 'Jarjara mantra and Birājara mantra' about which discussions have already been made above. The second part of this manuscript work contains incantations to conduct 'Birā', an evil spirit.

It is true that as a result of the Vaisnavite movement the culture of these evil practices came to be checked and obstructed to a certain extent. That these evil practices were prevalent in Assam even during the Vaisnavite movement can be known from some of the works composed under Vaisnavite influence.
influence. According to 'Katha-Guru-Charit', while Sankardeva was at Dhuahat there were two Buddhists who earned their livelihood by magical feats. It is said that one of them, with the help of incantations, made people suffer from fever and the other with the help of the same cured people and thus received cloth, rice etc. It also states that there was a Buddhist monk under the protection of the Koch king, who being enraged at the behaviour of Chilarai, brother of Naranarayana attempted to kill him (Chilarai) by administering 'herā'. References to such attempts to kill one Arjun Medhi by the application of 'Bisabāṅ' are found in the 'Gurulila' of Ramrai.

A biographical work entitled 'Adicharit' confirms the existence of a book called 'Dhātu-Tāmrāksari', popularly known as 'Kalpataru Jāstra' in the custody of the Moamarias of the 'Kālasanhati' sect. According to this biography, the founder of the Moamaria sect, Aniruddha, the founder of the Moamaria sect, had stolen it. Of course, the matter is subject to controversy. It was commonly believed that Aniruddha could have performed many wonderful feats with the help of the incantations and spells contained in the book. When the Ahom king Sukhampaha, alias Khora Raja, came to know about the magical power of Aniruddha, he invited him to his court and asked to show some magical feats for which he became famous in the country. The king, accordingly, put some articles in an earthen pitcher without the knowledge of Aniruddha and then covering its mouth with a cloth asked Aniruddha what it contained, giving him the indication that in case of a failure to give the correct answer, a terrible punishment would be inflicted upon him. Aniruddha uttered the 'Bijmantra' and told that it contained a Cobra. When the king's men removed the cover, the audience found to their utter surprise that it really contained a Cobra.
Then Aniruddha hushed the serpent to death by touching the side of the vessel. In interpretation is that the monastery established by Aniruddha came to be known as 'Mayā-mara' Satra as he killed the serpent by his magic power.

The chronicles composed during the Ahom rule and the contemporary Mogul sources supply evidence of the existence of witchcraft and magic in Assam. There are references to performing sorceries by the Ahom soldiers a day previous to the battle. The way in which they perform the sorcery has been described by the writer of the 'Bharistan-i-Shaybi'. On the day previous to the battle "They send some magic objects floating down the river towards the enemy's side. If it floats down towards the enemy's side then take it as a good omen. If it travel upstream out of its own accord they take it as forbidding something against them and consider it as a sign of their defeat and do not go out to battle. In short, according to custom they built one raft of plantain trees which is a well-known fruit of India and performed puja, i.e., worship of devils on it, in the following manner. They sacrificed a black man, a dog, a cat, a pig, an ass, a he-goat and a pigeon, all black. Their heads were collected together and placed on the raft with many ripe bananas, pan (betel-nut), chuwa (a plant), various kinds of scents, rice paste, coloured red, yellow, and cotton seeds, mustard seeds, mustard oil, ghee and sindur and then the raft was pushed adrift." 96 When Ramsingha, at the head of the Mogul army, came to invade Assam, he brought with him the Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur and five Muslim 'Pirs' to undo the effects of the Kamrupi black art.

Another reputed Persian work 'Alangir-namah' mentions the Assamese people as being high experts in witchcraft and magic. There is some exaggeration in 'Alangir-namah' when it states that whoever from other parts of Hindusthan comes to Assam cannot return but to live here being fooled and charmed in this land.
From our sources it is known that the kings, the nobles and the generals, in those days, took 'Kavacha', an amulet or a talisman. It is believed that when a soldier or a man takes such a 'Kavacha', he cannot be easily killed by his enemies. In the 'Darrang Rajvamsavali' it is stated that king Naranarayana and his brother Chilarai received such 'Kavacha' from their teacher Brahmananda Samyasi of Benaras. Deoraja, one of the Ahom princes, is said to have a very powerful 'yantra' (talisman) on his arm. Lachit Barphukan is said to have a Brahma-kavacha. Badan Barphukan is also said to have a very powerful talisman. It is recorded in the 'Tungkhungia Buranji' that during the reigns of Rajeswar Singha and Kanaleswar Singha, parties of Bengali sorcerers visited the Ahom capital and earned money and reputation by performing many magic feats.

(d) Architecture:

In the Medieval period, people both high and low have built their houses with common materials such as bamboo, timber, cane, thatch etc. The difference between the houses of the nobles and those of the common people is very little; the difference is in style only. Even the palaces of the Ahom kings, till the beginning of the eighteenth century, were constructed with these materials. Of course, the palaces were far more superior in quality and artistic skill. In connection with carpentry, we have referred to the great audience Hall of the Ahom king Jayaddhaja Singha as described by Shihabuddin Talish. He writes, "My pen fails to describe in detail the other arts and rare inventions employed in decorating the wood work of this palace. Probably nowhere else in the whole world can wooden houses be built with such decoration and figure carving as by the people of this country." 102

The common people generally constructed their houses with two flat roofs and thatched by 'ulu' grass, 'Birina' grass or 'Takau' (a kind of palm tree)
leaves. During the long period of the Ahom rule—at least till their
fulfledged conversion to Hinduism, the stone workers of the country had
lost their craftsmanship to a great extent for want of royal patronage.
Therefore, R.M. Nath surmises that the artists of the 'Satras' had to fall
upon "indigenous products—the timber, bamboos, and thatching grass to
give vent to their ingenuity in sculpture and architecture". 105

We have already discussed in detail about the construction and
composite parts of a Namghar (Vide, Chapter—'Temples Namghars and Satra
Institutions'). The Sanctum Sanctorium of the temples may be identified
with the 'Manikuta' of the Namghars, constructed as a separate house,
generally with two roofs and sometimes with four roofs. In front of the
Sanctum Sanctorium, that is the Manikuta, is constructed the big prayer hall
known as 'Namghar' or 'Kirttanghar'; this is a commodious building constructed
upon wooden posts and beams. The frame of the roof is made of bamboo and
thatched with 'ulu' grass. About the architectural design of this Namghar
or Kirttanghar, R.M. Nath observes: "The two roofs were of the 'Docala'
pattern but the front of the house was provided with a rounded slanting
roof of the same pattern as the vestibule in front of the 'Gopuran' of
the Kamakhya temple. The ridge of both the Kirttanghar and the Manikuta
or 'Bhanj-ghar' was invariably finished with a round-roofed garret
over it called the 'Stupi' or 'tupi'. In design and nomenclature the
influence of the Dravidan architecture is clear". 104 In short, Manikuta
and the Namghar resemble the two principal structures of temple architecture.
Manikuta resembles the 'Deul' and Namghar resembles the 'Mandapa'. About
other composite parts of the Namghar, detailed discussion has already been
made in the chapter on 'Temples, Namghars and Satra Institutions'. 
According to 'Darrang Rājvamsāvalī' and other sources, the Koch kings have built a number of temples in their kingdom. But for the study of the architectural designs we have at our disposal the temple of Kamakhya only, which was rebuilt by King Naranarayana and his brother Sukkładhvaja (Chilairai). R.M. Nath writes, "The general lay out of the temple follows the ancient Kamrupi style. The plan conforms to the 'Sri-cakra' and from the outer end there are respectively the 'Nat-mandir' or 'Mandapa', the 'Gopuram' and the 'Garbha-grha'. Each one of them has a 'Sikhara' raised on its top". Further about the type of the 'Sikhara' of the temple, he writes, "It is neither 'Nagara nor 'Vesara', but evidently a combination of both. Apparently it has the Siddheswari temple of the Pala period as the model, though a local variation has been made by lengthening its height. If any nomenclature is at all necessary it may be called the 'Nilacala' type. 105 Sukkładhvaja's son Raghudev constructed the Hayagriva Madhava temple on a hillock at Hajo on the north bank of the Brahmaputra at a distance of 16 miles west of Gauhati. Raghudev's "architect followed the same principle of general lay out of the temple and its adjuncts, but the Sikhara is an absolutely different type with pyramidal plane faces finishing to an apex point."

Though the Ahoms ruled the country for a long period of about six hundred years yet their zeal for the construction of temples has been noticed towards the last part of their rule. The Ahom kings from Rudra Singha down to Rajeswar Singha, each spent a good deal of the revenue in the construction of temples dedicated to Durga, Śiva and Viṣṇu. During the reign of king Rudra Singha (1696-1714) a few brick buildings were erected at Rangpur, closed to modern Sibsagar. The great tank called Jayaagar and the temples on the bank of it were constructed under the order of this great king. During the reign of king Sīva Singha (1714-1744) the tanks and temples at Sibsagar, Gaurisagar and Kalugaon were constructed. Under the order of king Pramatta
Singha new buildings and masonry gate-ways were constructed at Gargaon and the amphitheatre for animal fights called Rang-ghar was built at Rangpur. The Rudreswar and Sukreswar temples were erected at Gauhati. Besides, many other temples of minor importance were also constructed. The tombs of the Ahom kings and queens, known as 'Maidams' in Assamese, also deserve mention in this connection. All the details of the construction works were recorded by Changrung Phukan, who was in charge of the State construction work. The palace, the buildings and the 'Maidams' were constructed with bricks; but in the construction of the temples both bricks and stones were used. The other materials in the construction of the temples, Maidams and buildings are 'Mātimāh', 'San' (fibres of hemp), stones, bricks, lime, molasses, oil, 'dhunā' (resin) and fish.

The main temple at Sibsagar, i.e., Siva-dol consisted of 'Gopuram', the 'Mandapa' and the gate. About its architectural design, R.M. Nath writes, "The 'Sikhara' is a modified 'Nagara', the 'Sukanasa', curvilinear faces, however, are fluted with vertical lines. The main 'Sikhara' is surrounded by fac-similae of the main 'Sikhara' hugging the chest in its lap in quarter half and three quarter depths. This kind of hugging 'Sikhara' is called 'Uramanjari' (Ura = lap, chest; Manjari = spring of corn or flower as in the 'tulasi' plant). This is a common feature of temples in northern India and Bengal." The temples at Gaurisagar called Devī-dol shows the tilakas and a clear view of the Gopuram with the Bangagrha roof of the brick. The temple contains the familiar 'amaloka' in the standard pattern, instead of a tier of gold-plated kalasas in gradually diminishing sizes, is placed on a solid circular base made of bricks. The places and the court buildings were generally constructed with brick, and each one of them is a style in itself.

* For photographic illustration of these temples please see plate No.1, & figure No.1, plate No. II, figure No.3 and figure 5, and plate No.III, figure No.7, plate No.IV, figure No.9 and 8 in the 'Heritage of Assam'. 
The Kachāris had left behind considerable number of architectural relics. Of them the two rock cut temples of Ranachandi at Maibong, Śāna Mandir at Khaspur and the brick built temple of Ranachandi at Khasnur are important. * R.M.Nath is of opinion that the Kachāri kings at Khaspur after coming into contact with the Ahom court improved the architecture in the capital. He holds the view that the Kachāris "perhaps with the help of masons of Rajputana side constructed the Śāna-Mandir or the bathing temple for the deity, in the Aihola pattern with a Versara dome adorned with 'Sajyas' (Chajja) i.e. Cornices all round the dome". The Mohammedans in spite of frequent reverses at the hands of the Ahoms, gained supremacy over the western part of Assam from 1595-1654. During this period they constructed a mosque and a town at Rangamati which deserves mention.

The specimens for the study of sculptures are quite insufficient. The reason for the paucity of materials is the same as mentioned above. The art lacked support of the Ahom kings till their full-fledged conversion to Hinduism and as a result of this the artists had lost their skill to a great extent. The specimens of sculptural skill of this period are mostly found in Sibsagar which served as their capital for a long time. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the Ahoms constructed a number of palaces and a large number of temples throughout the district. Among these temples, the temples at Sibsagar, Jaysagar and Gaurisagar are most prominent. The palaces are well decorated and the walls of the temples are found inset with icons of various denominations.

* For photographic illustration vide plate XXVII, in the Background of Assamese culture by R.M.Nath, 1948.
(e). The Art of Painting:

Nothing is definitely known about painting in the early period. In the literary works of the Medieval period we get reference to paintings in early Assam, but they are all descriptions in a conventional way. The only significant reference found in the works 'Usa-parinaya' of Pitambara and 'Kumara-harana' of Ananta Kandali is that of Chitralekha, friend of Usa, the daughter of Bana, king of Sonitpur, who is described as an extraordinary genius in the 'Chitravidyā' or the art of painting. It must be admitted that the enthusiasm for the culture of painting during the Medieval period, in comparison to those of poetry, drama, or music, is not inspiring. The religious movements, particularly the Vaisnavite movement greatly enriched the art of painting; but in Assam, the Vaisnavite movement in this respect remained far behind. The adherents of Vaisnavism in Assam, mainly confined themselves writing to poetry and drama and learning music. Still then, to the credit of the Vaisnava movement we have got some manuscripts, the contents of which are illustrated on the border of each of the folios. But the greater and the important part of the paintings of the period so far come to the light goes to the credit of the royal patrons, specially to the Ahom kings of the 18th century. Paintings are found on the folios of manuscripts which are either 'tulā-pāt' or 'sānci-pāt'. The writers left sufficient margin where the painter reproduced the contents by miniature illustrations.

As stated by Dr. S.K. Bhuyan the scribe was sometimes a painter himself and if not, then a regular painter was requisitioned to illustrate on the spaces left by the scribe for the purpose. The epics which were written for the entertainment of the princes, the nobles and the principal 'Satradhikars' were illustrated with great care and skill. Occasionally, when it was not
possible to insert pictures, then the margins were illuminated only and such
'Puthis' are known as 'Lata-katā puthi'. Dr. Bhuyan further observes:

"Many manuscripts contain pictures of the deadly sins and of the
Hindu incarnations according to Hindu conception. The secular
pictures usually represented kings and queens sitting on thrones
or elephants or soldiers in battle fields. The pictures are avail­
able in all combinations of colours, the most prominent of them
being yellow and green. The formulae of the colours, which are so
fast, have now been practically forgotten. Pictures of Sankardeva
sitting in a Siṣa mudra posture and surrounded by his apostles
are met with occasionally in his biographies". During the
Medieval period, the ligiras or lackeys maintained by the
aristocratic people or the nobles of the State, sometimes played the part
of painters. Dr. M. Neog attempts to deal with the subject in detail in
a little brochure entitled "The art of painting in Assam". From an
examination of two half-finished manuscript copies of the 'Lava-kusar-yuddha'
preserved in the library of the Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti, Dr. Neog surmises
that when the scribes or painters had to prepare one or more copies from an
already existing illustrated manuscript, the miniature paintings come
first to be followed by the scribe.

Under the Ahom rule, the painters generally belonged to a 'khel'
guild called 'Khanikar'. Under the management of the Ahom Government
there was an officer known as Khanikar Barua. Khanikars belonged both to
the Mohammedan and to the Hindu community. Dr. Neog rightly maintains the
view that "a Khanikar might be an illiterate person; but he could all the
same copy paintings as well as writings." The Khanikars, besides, drawing
pictures knew the art of making idol both of wood and of earth and masks
for the theatrical performances. They could draw mural paintings, wood
carvings and also could do other coloured and artistic materials, such as
'Sarāi' (raised tray made of wood), 'Singhāsan', 'Tamulixirā' etc. as said above. The posts and beams of the Namghars and the royal courts were decorated with painted wooden panels and wood carvings. "The Barpeta Satra prayer house which has since been demolished, was decorated with many beautifully engraved and painted wooden panels, depicting scenes from religious works". From the chronicles composed during the Ahom rule it is gathered that the 'Khanikars' who knew the art of making earthen images, came to be established during the reign of the Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-1641) who deputed a batch of Assamese people to Kochbehar to learn the art.

The most significant/illustrated manuscripts which has borne Vaisnava influence is 'Chitra Bhagavata'. This 'Chitra Bhagavata' is the Book X of the Bhagavata-Purana, rendered into Assamese by Sankardeva, the manuscript copy of which was obtained from the Balisatra, in the district of Nowgong. The material on which writing and painting are done, is 'tuḷāpāṭ'. Although the date of the work is believed to be sixteenth century by a certain section, yet according to Dr. Matichandra of the Bombay Museum the manuscript belongs to the end of the 17th or the early 18th century. The illustrated portion of this manuscript was published by H.N. Datta Barua in 1949. The manuscript is considered to be the early specimens of illustrated manuscripts in Assam, by a section of scholars. The illustrations contain some peculiar features which deserve attention. On the subject-matter of paintings and its peculiarities, K.K. Handique, ex Vice-Chancellor, Gauhati University writes: The pictures reproduced here (Chitra Bhagavata) illustrated the stories of Krisna's childhood as narrated in the Assamese version of the tenth 'Skandha' of Bhagavata. These stories were popular with Rajput painters; and scenes from Krisna's early life form the subject.
matter of some of the best known examples of the Kangra School which flourished in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Assamese manuscript, dated A.D.1539, is of special interest in view of the paucity of known examples of Rajput painting earlier than the 17th century and represents one of the earliest attempts to illustrate a version of the Bhagavata composed in the Vernacular." Prof. Handique further writes: "The painting in the original manuscript deserve careful study in relation to those of other Indian schools. The pictures of trees with flowers or birds have considerable charm; and animals life is vividly portrayed with observant sympathy and tenderness of feelings. The maneless Indian lion occurs more than once, and the bison (methon in Assamese) which is almost extinct in the province will attract the attention of the student. The costumes followed a conventional pattern, but it is interesting to find the drum and the horn (Pepa) the familiar auxiliaries of the Bihu festival. The technique and the finish of the work betray strong Rajput-Nogul influence, although local conventions, here and there are not rare to find out. The other illustrated manuscripts so far known are, 'Lava-Kusas Yuddha', 'Darrang Rajvamsávali', 'Banamali-devar-charitra' by Ramakanta Dvija and illustrated by Bijoy Khanikar, 'Kumar Haran', of Ramananda Kayastha, preserved in the Bareghar Satra, in the Sibsagar district, 'Sankhachar Badhi' by Kaviraj Chakravarty of Rudra Singha's court, 'Gita-Gobinda', illustrated under Rudra Singha, 'Sundara Kanda' of Madhab Kandali's Ramayana, Ananta Acharya's 'Ananda Lahari', 'Hasti-Vidyārnava', a treatise on elephant compiled by Sukumar Barkath and illustrated by Dilbor and Dosai, under the order of king Siva Singha and his queen Ambika Devi, 'Dharmapurana' by Kavichandra Dvija, 'Lanka-kanda' of Madhav Kandali's Ramayana and 'Udyog paryan' of Ramasaraswati's Mahabharata, the ornaments of which have been painted in real gold. Of the illustrated manuscripts mentioned above, the 'Hasti Vidyārnava' is the most remarkable work belonging to the secular branch. It is believed,
the manuscript originally contained 193 folios, but now there remain only 135 folios. The other folios are believed to have been stolen for the sake of the illustrations. The folios are profusely illustrated with paintings representing various types of elephants and scenes from the royal Ahom court. The pictures depict how the Ahom kings used to hold their courts and how the game of hawk was played in presence of the kings and how an Ahom king rode an elephant in a procession. The importance of the manuscript is great both from the view point of their artistic skill as well as historic value. That the illustrated paintings are of far superior skill and workmanship there is no doubt about it. The pictures are in water colour and a large number of them are gold plated. "They have beautifully preserved their colours and lustres of the gold in spite of age and rough handling." 124

(f). The Art of Music and Dancing :-

It is obvious that modern Assam enjoys a rich legacy in the spheres of Music and dancing. Music and dancing, both of the nature of folk art as well as classical, are found; in their motive and treatment, some of them are purely secular and the others are religious. But the classical and religious type of music and dancing arrived at a vigorous stage from the Vaisnavite movement of the 15th - 16th century. The Vaisnavite movement not only endowed the culture of music and dancing with new vigour and spirit but also made it available to the people of all categories. In other words, like literature this movement brought about a renaissance in the field of music and dancing through the vast number of Satras and Namghars. The contribution made by the innumerable temples that existed in the country, in this sphere, cannot be underestimated. Whether there were particular institutions to learn the art of music and dancing, cannot be said definitely as our sources are quite
silent about it; but it can be reasonably inferred that the temples and the
Namghars and also the Satras were the main centres where the intending
people were trained by the elderly artisans in the art of singing, playing
on musical instruments and dancing. In this connection it should be noted
that singing, playing on musical instruments and dancing very often go
together.

The cultivation of music and dancing is supported by sculptural and
literary records. The description of musical instruments in the literary
works give support to the existence of the art of music and dance in the
Medieval period. The musical instruments are generally divided into 'tata-
yantra' (stringed) and 'ghana yantra' like cymbals, gongs, bells etc.,
'anadha yantra' including drums tabors etc. and 'susira yantra' consisting
of all the wind instruments. In our literary works, viz., Rāmayana,
Rukmini-haran Kavya etc. we find a large number of musical instruments such
as different kinds of Vinas, Cymbals, drums, tabors, flute, double pipe etc.
The following is an attempt to give a list of the musical instruments
referred in the literary works of the period.

Rudrakavilāsa, bipanci, rabāba, sarod, arđanga, khol, mandira, kahāli
(kāli ?), muhari, bheri, dundubhi, dhāka, gomukha, śankha, dhol, taval,
dagara, bhemacā, kṣaimacā, jhājhāra, rāmatāla, karatāla, tokāri, kendara,
dotāra, viṇa, Bāsi, (Bānhi), jijirā, singā, nāgera, rāmabena, khanjari,
rudra tokāri, turi, sarinda, gagana, muruli, rāmasingā, singhabān, dambaru,
panava, machuai, dindi, rāmoci, pepā, taka, etc.

The Bodo people have their long drums and long flute called Chiphung
Bānhi. Some of the instruments mentioned above resemble the musical instruments
Musical Instruments.

Dhol

Pepa

Takā

Kāli

Dhak-Tal

Tāl

Mandika

Bānhi

Chiphunga Bānhi

Māsāl
of the non-Aryan tribes. The contribution of the different groups of Bodo people to Assamese musical instruments, is indeed very great. 127 Some of these instruments are connected with pastoral songs and dance—particularly with Bihu songs and dance. As for example, the drum called dhol, Cymbal, pepa (a pipe made from the horn of buffalo), gaganā, and taka, are connected with Bihu music and dance in which the tribal influence is predominant. 128 The musical instrument called gaganā made of bamboo, is generally played on by woman.

A substantial portion of the Assamese music consisted of pastoral songs, some of which are accompanied by playing of instruments and dance. Among such songs and dances, the Bihu songs and the Bihu dances are most significant and most common. The songs sung by the women-folk in connection with ceremonial functions and performance of their rites and rituals generally go without dancing and playing of instruments. The vast non-Aryan tribes had their own pastoral songs mostly connected with their ceremonial functions and other rites and rituals. The pastoral songs of the tribes are generally associated with dance and playing of instruments.

Music and dance have a long tradition in Assam. The dancing of Deva-dasi in the Siva-temples at the time of worship, and prayer was an integral part of it about which we have already discussed. 129 During the rule of the Ahom kings, the practice was carried on in the temples of Hajo, Biswanath, Dergon and Dubi. In the last mentioned two temples the Deva-dasi dance was in existence till recently. 130 In Assam the Deva-dasi came to be known as 'Nati' meaning temple dancer. 131 As mentioned above, in the Natghars of the temples, performances of music, dancing or both, on the occasion of religious or social functions were held. For example, the choral song known
as 'Ojah-pali' had its existence even prior to the Vaisnavite movement, and such 'Ojah-pali' nṛtya-gits were instituted in the temples also.

From the innumerable references found in the literary and biographical works, it is learnt that Pitambar, Durgabar, Sankardeva, Madhabdeva and a host of others of this period were expert singers. During their life time Sankardeva and Madhabdeva themselves taught the art of devotional music and dancing and also the histrionic art for to their disciples. Later on, the responsibility shifted to the Satra-institutions and the tradition is still being continued.

The 'Deva-dasi nṛtya' is now completely lost in Assam; so nothing can be said definitely about it. From an examination of what remained of the 'Deva-dasi nṛtya' in some parts of the State, particularly at Dubi, in the district of Kamrup, it is inferred that it was a classical type of dancing.

The 'Ojah-pali nṛtya' consists of narrative songs sung by five persons. Of the five persons, one is a leader called ojah (leader) of the party. The other four persons are called pālis. The four persons take their seats in the four corners of a quadrangle with the leader in the midst, at the time of singing. The right hand pāli of the ojah is called 'Dainā-pāli (Daksīnā-pāli) and he supports and helps the ojah at whatever moment the ojah needs it. The ojah sings the songs and the pālis continue it along with the playing of little cymbals called 'Mandira'. The ojah tries to make the contents of his narrative more clear to the spectators through the manipulation of his hands and inter-twining of fingers, known as 'mudras'. Among the pioneers of 'Ojah-pali nṛtya-git', Mankar, Pitambar, Durgabor and Narayandeva were the most notable. From the works left by them as well as other records,
it is evident that each one of them was expert dancer and instrument player. Next we come to the Vaiṣṇava school of dancing, the tradition of which still continues in the Satras. Including Sankardeva and Madhabdeva, many of the Vaiṣṇava preachers of the Medieval period were expert dancers and singers. Sankardeva refers to his father Kusumbara as an incarnate of Gandharva, who left a rich legacy of classical dancing. Dr. M.Neog has noted some common features of Assamese and Manipuri styles of dancing. In the opinion of experts, the Vaiṣṇava or Satra style of dance possesses a number of 'hastas'. It has got some distinctive costumes and masks. The music depends upon 'khol' or 'mrdanga' and various kinds of cymbals. The Ankia dramas of Sankardeva and Madhabdeva are predominant amongst Satra dances. The master of the show is the 'Sutradhāra' or 'Sutradhāri'. No woman dancer or actress is allowed in this school.

Mudras, i.e., postures and manipulation of hand is an essential part of dancing both in the popular type of dancing and in the classical type. As said above, there was no institution exclusively meant for teaching the art of dancing or singing. It is the Vaiṣṇavite Satras which have been transmitting the art of dancing and music from generation to generation among their disciples. We have got a copy-manuscript entitled 'Hastamuktāvali' by one Subhankara. The owner of the original manuscript was His holiness the Adhikar Goswami of Auniati Satra. This is a treatise on the art of dancing; it teaches the method of communicating ideas by gesture and manipulation of hands instead of articulation. Under the auspices of the Vaiṣṇava movement large number of dramas have been written by the Vaiṣṇava poets including Sankardeva and Madhabdeva themselves. The dramas, especially written by Sankardeva and Madhabdeva, called 'Ankīā-नाट', have been very often played among the
congregations of people and the tradition is still maintained by the Satras.

During the later phase of the Vaisnava movement, under the patronage of the Ahom kings some dramas in the style of the Vaisnava Ankas were written in Sanskrit and in Assamese. Reference to the performance of the 'Anka' dramas or 'Ankīā Bhāona' are found in the historical records. The Ahom king Rudra Singha encouraged the cultivation of music and dancing in Assam. King Rudra Singha and Siva Singha themselves composed songs eulogising goddess Gauri and Durga. King Rudra Singha invited musicians from other parts of India, particularly from Bengal. Since his reign, Bengali music and Pakhowaj, a kind of musical instrument found place in the orchestra of the royal court of the Ahoms. In the chronicles of the Tungkhungia dynasty it is found that during the reign of the Ahom king Rajeswar Singha the party of the musicians under one Jayananda, displayed musical performances accompanied by the musical instrument 'Pākhōwaja' while his Majesty Joy Singha of Manipur was received in the court of the Ahom king. In honour of his Majesty, the king of Manipur, Bhūonā performance of the drama called 'Rāvanavadha' was staged with seven hundred actors. The management of the performance was conducted by the Deka Barbarua. Elsewhere in the book, we have said that queen Anadari, wife of king Siva Singha had brought many girls from different parts of the country and was herself in-charge of teaching the art of music and dancing.

It is evident that the songs and dances prevalent in Assam are either connected with festivals or with religion or with rites and rituals. The statement holds good to a great extent as regards the music and dances of the tribal people also. The point has been elaborately discussed by Dr. B.K. Barua in his work, 'Asamar Loka Sanskriti'. Among the different types of
dances prevalent among the plains people the 'Deva-dāsi' nrtya or 'Nati-nāch'
is associated with Śiva temples, the ojāh-pāli nrtya is mainly connected with
the worship of Goddess Manasa and almost all types of dances of the Vaisnava
school, such as 'Natāā nāch', 'Krīṣṇa-nāch', 'Sutradhārī nāch', 'Chāli-nāch'
etc. are directly or indirectly connected with religious motto through which
attempts have been made to spread their cult and develop spiritual attainment
of the people. 141

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