Chapter – IV

Historical Background of Assam
Ancient Assam:

Assam is the eastern most state of India. In the most ancient times, it was known as Pragjyotish and in medieval times as Kamrup. Assam in the modern name for the country which under the Ahom rule came to be called 'Asama' means 'peerless' or 'uneven'.

The kingdom of 'Kamrupa' or ancient 'Assam' existed in between India and Southeast Asia. The territorial limit of this Kingdom at the peak period of its existence seems to have covered the basins of both Brahmaputra and Barak with the river Karatowa on its west which flowed down in a southerly course from Nepal to Join the Brahmaputra near Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh.

In its earliest phase of history, Assam was known as 'Pragjyotish' with its capital 'Pragjyotishpur'. As the very meaning of this word signifies, this city was known as the earliest (prag) city (Pur) of astronomical studies (Jyotish). Originally this region was outside the ambit of Aryan influence and it was inhabited by the Kiratic races. The well known philologist Bani Kanta Kakati has shown that the very word Pragjyotish might have an Austric origin and have been derived from the clause Pager-jo-tis which means together a hilly region of high (jo) and long (tish) mountains (pager) which has been Sanskritized in later times to carry a meaning in the India context. 

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1. Prof. Dutta. P.N. - Glimpse into the History of Assam, Shillong, 1986, P-1
2. Dr. Sarma Pradip - Assam and Indo-china, Guwahati-2008, PP-09-10
The modern name of the province ‘Assam’ is actually of quite recent origin. It is connected with Shan invaders who entered the Brahmaputra valley in the beginning of the thirteen Century A.D. and who were known as Ahoms. The tradition of the Ahoms, themselves is that the present name, is derived from ‘Asama’ in the sense of ‘unequalled’ or ‘peerless’. They say that this was the term applied to them at the time of their invasion of the valley by the local tribes, in token of their admiration of the way in which the Ahom king first conquered and the conciliated them.¹ Kakati suggests that ‘Asama’, ‘Peerless’, may be a latter day Sanskritisation of an earlier form ‘Acham’ in Tai Acham means, ‘to be defeated’. With the Assamese prefix an Asam would mean ‘undefeated’, ‘conquerors’. If this is its origin from the people the name was subsequently applied to the country.²

Assam is the frontier province of India on the north east. The boundaries of Assam lie between latitudes 28 degree 18 inches and 24 degrees north and longitudes 89 degree 46 inches and 97 degree 4 inches east. It contains at present an area of 53,226 square miles, of which a little over 24,000 square miles constitute the plains districts, 19,500 the southern hill tracts and the rest is the tribal hill tracts of the north.³

The state forms the core of the North Eastern region of the country and Guwahati, the biggest city of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. The temporary state capital

¹. Gait Sir Edward, -A History of Assam, PP- 245-246
². Baruah B.K. -A Cultural History of Assam(Early Period) Guwahati,2003, P-4
³. Op.Cit. P-1
area of Assam is 78,438 square K.M. (Rural=77,476.23 square K.M. and Urban =961.77 square K.M.) There are 27 districts in Assam; the number of inhabited village is 26312 and the number of uninhabited village is 1188; there are 125 towns and 49 subdivisions, 219 development blocks and 145 revenue circles, 2489 gaon panchayats. The major rivers of Assam are Brahmaputra (Barluit), Barak (Surma), Beki, Kalong, Kapili, Dhiju, Puthimari, Kulchi etc. The total population on Assam is 2,66,55,528 consisting of 1,37,77,037 male and 1,28,78,491 female. The literacy percentage is 93.25 and the density of population is 340 per square K.M.¹

On three sides the province is shut in by great mountain ranges, inhabited by the people mostly of Mongolian Stock. To the north lie the Himalayan regions of Bhutan and Tibet. Below the mountains is a range of sub- Himalayan hills, inhabited to the west by small races of Bhutia origin and further eastward by Tibeto Burman tribes, Akas, Daflas, Mieis, Abors and Mishimis, to the northeast lie the Mishimi hills, curving round the head of the Brahmaputra valley. With reference to these northern frontier tracts, it is noteworthy that the international boundary between Assam and Tibet has not been clearly defined, however 1914 a tentative agreement was reached embodying a line on the map called the ‘Me Mahon Line’ continuing the east is the Patkai Range, which defines the western boundary of Ava, the intervening ranges, being inhabited chiefly by various tribes and Nagas and the native state of Manipur. Though the great natural boundary between Assam and Burma consists of tangled

¹ As Per Census 2001 and the Statistical Hand Book, Govt. of Assam, 2005
mass of mountains whose summits rise to 12,000 feet yet the geographical barriers are not in separable, the passes crossing these mountainous regions are actually not very difficult and inter communication has been plentiful and constant. To the south lie the Lushai Hills, Hill Tippera and the Bengal districts of Mymensingh, Sylhet and Rangpur are in (present Bangladesh). Here also native state of Coach Bihar, which was once an integral part of Kamrupa (Assam).¹

Before the coming of the Ahom (1128 A.D.) the country was known as Kamrupa with its capital at Pragjyotishpur (Modern Guwahati). The word ‘Kamrupa’ means the land where ‘kama’ (love) regained his ‘rupa’ (form). Ancient Assam was known as ‘Kamrupa’ in the puranas, Muslim historian gave different names to ancient Assam a ‘Kamru’ by al-Beruni while Minhajuddin called it ‘kamrupa’. In one coins of the sultan Sikandar in ancient Assam was mentioned ‘kamru- Urf- choulishan’ but it is known as kamru and kumata as appears from coin of Hussain Shah. Another reliable source like Aini Akbari and Baharistani Ghaibi mention it as ‘koch- kumara’ while in Badsha Namah and Shah Jahan Nama the ancient Assam is known as ‘koch- Bihar’ and ‘Koch-Hajo’.²

The ancient ‘Kamrupa’ kingdom, which spread from Kartoya River (in West Bengal and Bangladesh) on the west to the Dikhow River on the east. In ancient names of Assam was ‘Pragjyotish’ but during the king of ‘Narakasura’, the name of the land was change to ‘Kamrupa’ which

². Dr. Ali C.M. -Unpublished ph.d Thesis Gauhati University , 1994, P- 226
roughly included the Brahmaputra valley, Bhutan, Rangpur (now in Bangladesh) and Coach Bihar (in West Bengal). This name of the land i.e. Kamrupa was continued to 1228 A.D. When the ‘Ahoms’ invaded and established the Ahom kingdom, the name of the land has been changed from Kamrupa to Assam.¹

In the ancient Sanskrit literature both the names ‘Pragjyotisha’ and ‘Kamrupa’ were also used as designation for ancient Assam. In Kalika Purana and Jogini Tantra ‘Kamrup’ alone appears to be the name Assam.

India gained freedom in 1947 and as a result of partition between India and Pakistan, the district of Sylhet, Mymensing and Rangpur exclusive Karimganj subdivision went to East Pakistan (present Bangladesh). Assam is now a north eastern state of the Indian Union. At present the state Assam stretches west word from Bangladesh, Tripura, Meghalaya and West Bengal to Arunachal, Nagaland and Manipur in the East and from Bhutan and Arunachal on the north to Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya in the South.²

**Assam and its People:**

India presents a picture of great variety. The same is true in case of Assam, where people of diverse religion, language and customs lived through the ages. It has hills and forests, rivers and streams, plain lands and wide valleys and in a very real sense, it seems to be an India in mini nature.

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¹ Gait Sir Edward, -A History of Assam, P-11
² Assam Book Dept. -Natun Asomiya Bhuchitrabali, Guwahati, 1990, P- 5
Assam, the eastern most sentinel of India is endowed with enchanting, picturesque and fascination natural beauty. It has been the living place of various races, tribes and ethnic groups since time immemorial. The dynamics of synthesis and assimilation of the races make Assam glorified and rich. The Ahom a Shan or Thai tribe of North Burma entered Assam in the third decade of the 13th Century, fully assimilated and ruled Assam for nearly six hundred years. The period of Ahom rule is a glorious chapter in the history of Assam; it is the Ahom who unified Assam. Several migratory streams under the patronage of British colonial administration since the later part of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th Century entered Assam; one such migratory force was the Muslim farmers from Eastern Bengal.¹

The majority of the people of Assam are belonged to Mongolia Stock. There are Assamese caste Hindus, Harijans and Muslims, and Bengali Hindus and Bengali Muslims who speak Indo- Aryan languages such as Assamese and Bengali. There are also Tibetan- Chinese ethnic groups consisting of Bodo, Nago-Bodo, Upper Assam tribals and Tais among the Bodo- ethnic groups. There are the groups such as Bodo-Cacharis of Goalpara, Kamrup, Lalungs of Nagaon and Karbi Anglong, Sonowals of Lakhimpur and Dibrugarh, Chutias of Lakhimpur and Dibrugarh, Mishings of Lakhimpur and Sibsagar, Manipuris of Cachar, Karbis tribals of Karbi Anglong and Dimacas on North Cachar Hills.

¹ Chetterji S.K.—The Place of Assam History of Civilization of India, 1970, P-43
It is for this reason that Assam is described as a land of remarkable variety, from the point of view of ethnology. The appellation, an 'anthropological museum' is therefore, justly applicable to this land of variegated racial and cultural patterns.

The other classification of Assam tribal is made as Hill tribal consisting of Karbis and Garos. And the plains tribal consisting of Bodo-Cacharis, Mishings, Barmans, Lalungs, Rabhas, Kacharis, Hajongs and Maches.¹

Language of Assam:

Assamese is an Indo-Aryan language. This language is mainly spoken in the Brahmaputra valley. The Assamese Language is developed from the Sanskrit Language origin, directly connected with 'Pracya-Magadli Apabhramsha' as early as in the 7th Century A.D.²

This language developed through centuries of cultural fusion with various tribes and races. The influence of the Astro-Asiatic, Mongoloid and Tibeto-Burman dialect is very marked in the Assamese Language. There is a significant impact of Persian and Arabic also on the Assamese Language.

The earliest specimen of Assamese Literature is found in the Buddhist 'Gan-o-Doha'. Minanath a Kamrupi fisherman by caste

¹ Rafiabadi H.N. –Assam from Agitation to Accord, Delhi, 1988, P-vii
² Baruah B.K. –History of Assamese Language, P-1
composed several Buddhist hymns. Bengali Hindus and Muslims have also contributed a lot to enrich Assamese.1

The Assamese community is a composite community of different caste and its culture is also composite culture. In the true sense, none of the communities in Assam could claim its absolute majority; however, a dominant class claimed itself as language majority by including tribal, tea garden labourers and particularly Muslims to have Assamese as their language. Tea garden workers are neither entirely Bengali nor entirely Assamese in origin. They came from many parts of India, from a group of their own. Their language is a mixture of Bengali and Assamese. If the tea garden workers and tribal are excluded, Bengali Hindus and Bengali Muslims will attain a majority on the basis of Bengali language in Assam. In fact, it was true that the Bengali Muslims were directly influenced by Assamese Hindu intellectuals for which they willingly accepted to be registered as Assamese in the census of 1951. Thus Assamese could claim their absolute majority.2 It would be worthwhile to mention the statement of Dr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, Ex-President of Assam Sahitya Sabha. According to him, “The same truth applies to the Muslim immigrants who have occupied citizenship on the basis of a linguistic state. It must be said to the credit of the immigrant Muslims that they have

1. Rafiabadi H.N. - Assam from Agitation to Accord, Delhi, 1988, P-viii
2. Shehabuddin. - Muslim India, vol. iv, No. 38 February, 1986, New Delhi, P-55
been always in the forefront of the struggle of the state to make ‘Assamese’ the state language and medium of higher education’.  

In order reconstitute Assam as Assamese’s state on the basis of majority language, the Bengali Muslim accepts Assamese language as their mother tongue and the medium of institutions. They argued that the Bengali Muslim as permanent settler of Assam; should co-operate and integrate with the local Assamese as the earlier Muslims i.e. Goria and Maria had already been integrated with the local Assamese. They were nick-named as ‘Na- Asomia’ or New Assamese.

Bengali Muslims raised their voice in support of Assamese Hindus saying that they are now purely Assamese Muslims and all the institutions established in their areas are having Assamese medium. But on the other hand the Bengali Hindus for the establishment of Bengali language in Assam, schools having Bengali language as the medium of instruction were already existed. Thus Bengali Hindus raised their voice to keep Bengali as the medium of instruction in their schools in the state as the official language of the state.

It is therefore, not surprising that Assam should be racially and linguistically homogeneous; that is to say, its inhabitants form a distinct entity among the people of India, united, by a common tongue, an Aryan dialect of great antiquity, even in the early part of the seventh Century,

1. Bhattacharya Dr. Kumar, -Some Thoughts on the Assam Satyagraha, Saptahik Mujahid, Guwahati, 17th February 1984, P- 4
2. Ahmed Tajuddin as Quoted in saptahik Mujahid, Guwahati, 16th August 1979, P- 1
Huen Tsiang, the eminent Chinese scholar, visited Assam alias ancient Kamrupa in 638 A.D. was able to report that the language of Assam differed a little from that of Mid-India.

**Brahmaputra and Barak valleys:**

There are two divisions of Assam 1. The hill ranges of the north, the east and south and 2. The valleys of the Brahmaputra and the Barak; the Brahmaputra valley or (Assam proper) does not have any obstacle in the west where it is connected with Indian by the plains of north Bengal. The area of the Brahmaputra valley is 24,283 square miles and the Barak valley or (Surma Valley) which includes Chachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts and the area of Barak valley is a small area of 7,500 square miles. The Manipur valley is separated by a series of hills from the Brahmaputra valley. But past Barak valley was included the present sylhet, a district of Bangladesh.¹

**Climate of Assam:**

The climate condition of Assam rough and tough, that is very harsh. As regarded the nature of climate in Assam Dr. Goswami narrates, "Copious rainfall between March and May in the province brings in a different climatic condition, which is hither to unknown in the other parts of India. During this period the rainfall is at its lowest ebb in upper India, where hot session of extreme type prevails the precipitation is abundant during the rainy session. Average rainfall at Silchar is 124 inches. at

¹ Dutta P.N. -Glimpse into the History of Assam, Shillong, 1981, P- 4
Goalpara and Lakhimpur is 155 inches and at sibsagar it is 85 inches. Neglecting the local conditions, the annual fall of precipitation in surma valley is 70 inches and 68 inches in the Assam valley”.

Dr. J.P. Wade stayed in Assam for 18 months and compiled a note as an authentic history of a country entirely unknown and in accessible to Europeans and submitted the note to Lt. Col. Kirkpatrik in 20th March, 1800 highlighted the climatic and agricultural scenario as “That the soil and climate of Assam partaking in a moderate degree of the rainy season of the northern and southern mountains during seven or eight months of the year and of the benefit derived from numerous rivers, are in the highest degree favourable too luxuriant vegetation nor has scarcity even occurred in the country from natural causes”.

Such heavy and incessant rainfall caused devasting flood over flowed the river tributaries and damaged the crops lives and properties during the monsoon the mighty Brahmaputra and Barak took ferocious look and people had to suffer a lot due to devasting floods. In Assam a great flood miserably destroyed crops, human lives, cattle etc. in 1954. Its capacity recorded as a total area of 25,650 square miles and nearly 95 lacks of the people have been affected and a large number of cattle heads have perished, serious damage to crops, roads, railways and brides have also occurred in scale never experienced before.

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1. Goswami D.N.D., -Geology of Assam, 1st end, P-109
2. Acharyya N.N. -Assam and Neighbouring States Historical Documents, 1983, P-37
3. Rahman Abdur, -Migration of Muslim from Eastern Bengal, 2004, P-123
The climate of the parts on the banks of the Brahmaputra suits natives and strangers alike. But at distance from the river through the climate agrees with the natives, it is rank poison to foreigners. It rains for eight months in the year and even the four months of winter are not free from rain. In the cool weather the diseases of cold and moisture affected the foreigner with greater severity than natives, while in summer excessive secretion of bile grasps foreigners more violently than natives. The people of this country are free from certain fatal and loath some diseases such as leprosy, white leprosy, elephantiasis, coetaneous eruptions, goiter and hydrocele, which prevail in Bengal. They are also immune from many other lingering maladies.1

Agricultural State:

Assam is predominantly an agricultural state. The state economy is basically dependent on agriculture. Besides providing food and raw materials agriculture contributes 35 percent to states exchequer. More than 85 percent people of Assam are living in the rural areas of which nearly 75 percent are dependent on agriculture. On the other hand, nearly 65 percent of the workforce of the state is engaged in the rural section. Mighty river Brahmaputra covers a vast area of 725k.M. in length and 80 K.M. in width. On the other hand the river Barak covers the area 201K.M. in length and 96K.M. in width which has made the valleys fertile a great

soon for crop production. The alluvial soil of the valleys provides ample facilities and advantage for bumper cultivation to the agriculturists.¹

Francis (Buchanon) Hamilton conducted a survey in 1807-1814 and compiled a report on the kingdom of Assam in 1820. His report provided account on the agricultural production of Assam. He says, "Trans planted rice forms nearly three fourths of the whole crops but a little spring rice are also raised, which is the principal food of Assam. Mainly the people used buffaloes and bulls for ploughing."²

Products of Assam:

The principal agricultural products of Assam are rice, wheat, jutes, cotton, and tea, orange and other fruits. The tea industry is one of the main foreign exchange earners. At this point, it is worth nothing that the immigration from Bihar and West Bengal was encouraged by the British mainly for the cultivation of tea. In this sense Assam is purely an agricultural state. Its largest and most important industry, namely cultivation of tea, is mainly agricultural and tea gardens do not make for urban communities. In the forties, when Assam had 17 municipalities and 8 small towns including the Shillong cantonment, 97 percent of its total population lived in villages and tea gardens. Before the forties, for 25 years the total number of immigrants from Eastern Bengal brought to Assam for cultivation of tea reached 5lakhs. Nowadays along with tea industry, the oil industry has also progressed and plays a vital role in the

¹. Goswami P.C. –An Introduction to the Economy of Assam, P- 2
². Acharyya N.N. –Assam and Neighbouring States Historical Documents, 1983, P-42
country's total oil production. The Digboi oil refinery of AOC Ltd, the Guwahati Refinery and the Bongaigaon Refinery and Petro Chemical complex are the prominent oil refineries. Yet despite the growth of the oil industry agriculture accounts for the livelihood of about four fifths of the state's population and it the key to the Assam's economic growth.¹

In modern times, Assam tops the list of the tea producing states in India. The state contributes about one quarter of the world’s entire tea producing countries. The Muslims of Assam especially its Bengali Muslims have been largely engaged in the agricultural growth of Assam from the very beginning and are still contributing to the largest quantity of agricultural products such as rice, wheat, tea, fish, jute etc. and Assam occupied a unique position in India in respect of jute and tea production.

Besides these the forest of Assam played a great role in the Indian economy because it is full of valuable trees such as agar, segun, shal, karai, gamari, sishu trees etc. Agar wood and agar oil are attractive and valuable perfumery items in the international market. So the plantation scheme of agar and chandan wood might enrich Assam and the economic growth of the state might rise to higher level as it is forest products. In Assam the base of agar tree commonly known as ‘Suchi tree’ which is valuable wood likes the chandan, was located at sylhet, presently in Bangladesh. The agar tree is found in Assam, Manipur, Bhutan and so on. But gradually and naturally matured trees have become scarcity and rare

¹. Rafiabadi H.N. —Assam from Agitation to Accord, Delhi, 1988, P-viii
in the forest and the alternative product plantation in the fields, it has now become a house hold product in Assam.¹

Kaziranga, Manah, Nameri, Dibru; Saikhowa and Orang are the National Park in Assam for which the visitors come from far and away of the Globe. The one horn Rhinoceros is found in the forest’s of Assam.

Regional Festival of Assam:

Bihu is the regional festival of Assam and it is also the special festival for the Assamese people. There are three Bihus in an Assamese year which belongs to the agricultural activities such as Ranganli Bihu makes the advent of the coping season which is celebrated in the Assamese month of Bohag, Bhogali Bihu or the heaviest festival is celebrated in the Assamese month of Magha and Kongali Bihu or Bihu the lean period is celebrated in the month of Kati, the Assamese month. The Bihus are popular for the indigenous dances of Assam. Besides a large variety of tribal dances are prevalent in the state. The Bodos, Rabhas, Misings and other tribes have ten distinctive rich and colourful dances for which Assam is called a land of diverse cultures.²

Capital city:

Guwahati is the biggest city not only in Assam but also in the North Eastern region. It is the gateway of North- Eastern India. It houses the state’s present capital Dispur and had been the capital of many past kings.

¹ Rahman Abdur, -Migration of Muslim from Eastern Bengal, 2004, P-148
² Rafiabadi H.N. –Assam from Agitation to Accord, Delhi, 1988, P-ix
It is located on the south bank of great Brahmaputra. Sibsagar is another well known town of Assam which is famous for Rangghar, Karengar Talatalghar and other tanks and massive temples.\(^1\)

**Migration to Assam:**

Migration of people from one place to another place is as old as the development of civilization. It is a natural and social phenomenon. The composite nature of culture, nationality and social orders throughout the world is the outcome of migration. Within the recorded history it is found that human races have transformed the entire aspects of land useful for living, settler through the nook and corner of the world. Till the end of 10\(^{th}\) Century, there was not a single German in Berlin, nor a single Russian in Moscow. Similarly there was no Hungarian in Budapest no Turk in Ankara. In India till fifteen Century the name of the great Mughols who ruled India for centuries was not heard of. Till the 15\(^{th}\) Century there was no Ahom in Assam who ruled Assam nearly six hundred years and during whose rule the region is named as Asom.\(^2\)

The growth of ancient civilizations usually centred round the river valleys. This is due to the fact that there was availability of social and water which acted as potential factor for agricultural production. The ancient civilizations were flourished the bank of the Nile in Egypt, Indus in India, Euphrates and Tigris in Middle-East, Huanghu in China and in Assam the mostly the great river Brahmaputra and Barak.

\(^1\) Rafiabadi H.N. –*Assam from Agitation to Accord*, Delhi, 1988, P-x
\(^2\) Rahman Abdur, –*Migration of Muslim from Eastern Bengal*, 2004, P-1
Since time immemorial, people have been migrating from one part of the world to another. Many of them have been settled permanently in new places and began to adopt new social orders. Regarding our ancestral settlement, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said, “Think of them, those distant ancestors of our marching on and on and suddenly reaching the banks of the noble Ganga flowing majestically down to sea.¹

The process of migration in different period of human history have been dramatically changed the population pattern of the world. As for instance, the spread of Islam may be cited. Islam since the 7th Century spread over the world within a short span of time. It spreads from Arabia to France, Africa to Mediterranean and so on through the migration of Islamic people in the various parts of the world. The preachers of Islam, especially the Islamic Saihts, Pirs, Awliyas, Darbesh, Sufis etc. overwhelmingly worked for the Islamisation among people of the different areas, where they migrated by preaching the liberal views and fraternity of Islam. The Islamic missionary force as stated, instructed their disciples of followers to spread the gospel of Islam. Today the followers of Islam constitute the second largest global community and the credit of Islamisation goes mainly to those preachers who were successful in convincing the people to this place.²

But large scale influx of migrants into Assam effected many changes as Dr. Datta says, “Migration is although as old as human history,  

¹. Nehru J.L. -Glimpse of World History, 1982, P- 13
². Rahman Abdur, -Migration of Muslim from Eastern Bengal, 2004, PP-3-4
the massive population movements of the modern times have wider social, economic, political, demographic and ecological implication”.

**Historical Background of Settlement of Muslims in Assam:**

In Assam, both Ahoms and Muslims entered as invaders. Ahom entered Assam from the Eastern border in 1228 A.D. while Muslims from the west in 1206 A.D. Ahoms could establish their permanent empire, but Muslim could not do so successfully. However, Muslims were able to conquer some parts of Assam and administered them temporarily. From that time Muslims started to settle in Assam. The entrance of Muslim in Assam can be stressed at the time when Muhammad bin Bakhtiyer (Khiliji) the Turkish wanted to conquer Tibet (China) through Assam. It was year 1206 A.D. (saka year 1127). Muhammad bin Bakhtiyer attacked Kamrup (Assam) and was himself defeated. His second attack was in 1227 A.D.²

The commander in chief was Ewaz Khan who went up to Nowgong (present Nagaon), the central part, in the same year Nasiruddin attacked Kamrup and defeat the King Prethu, who died later. In this way Muslims came as invaders some of them were defeated while others could establish their rule in some parts of Assam, especially in Hajo. Thus some Muslims in Assam remain willingly, while others remained as captives. Once they

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² Gait Sir Edward, -A History of Assam, P-37
got mixed with local Assamese and married their girls to live there permanently. They are known as Goria Musalman.¹

The ancient name of Assam was known as ‘Kamrupa’ till the end of the Koch (17th Century) and the kingdom included not only Assam valley, but also of the northern and eastern Bengal, part of Bhutan, the Khashi and Garo Hills and the northern portion of Sylhet district. The ancient Assam or Kamrup came into contact with the Muslims for the first time in 1198 A.D. when the Turkish army, led by Muhammad bin Bakhtiyer Khiliji, conquered Bengal. It has been learnt that during the reign of Laksman Sen, western Assam (Rangpur, Coch Bihar, and Jalpaiguri) was under his domination.

In 1257 A.D. Malik Yuzbeg Tughrit Khan occupied Assam and developed himself as the king of Kamrup Nagar (North Guwahati). It is clear from the accounts of Minhajuddin that the invasion of Malik Yuzbek Tughril Khan built two mosques (one at north Guwahati and other at Hajo).² Which the first mosques of Assam; where the khutba (خطبة) read on Friday prayer (الصلاة الجمعة) on the soil of Assam celebrating his victory. Though there is some short time expeditions were continued in Assam during 13th Century. Yet till the middle of the 15th Century, we found no evidence of any notable conflict between two powers (Assam and Bengal). Therefore, it appears that trade and commerce between Assam and Bengal might have flourished during this period and it is

¹ Dutta Pronath Nath, -Glimpse into the History of Assam, Shillong. 1986. P-66
² Minhajuddin, -Cultural History of Muslim in Bengal, vol. II, P- 765
therefore possible that people of different vocation, including some of Muslim traders and travelers from Bengal had entered and settled at least in western Assam.¹

The influx of the Muslims into Assam continued with a regular and systematic process. In the middle of the 15th Century, Gauda Sultan Barbak Shah (1459-74) invaded kamata, but he was defeated by Niladhwa. He gave permission to preach Islam in Kamata. In 1460 A.D. Masland Gaji (Ismaile) the army general of Barbak Shah, occupied a vast area of Kamata during the reign of Charadhwaj, the successor of Niladhwa, Nilambara, the last king of Khen dynasty of Kamata, was completely defeated by Hussain Shah, the Sultan of Bengal. He conquered the greater part of Kamata and the Kamrupa region and established a Muslim colony at Hajo which was ruled by his son Danhiel.² It was the high time for Muslims of occupation the Kamrupa and Goalpara reign and a large number of Muslims could find an opportunity for the first time to settle here permanently. Even after the Ahoms had recovered the entire territory of western Kamrupa up to river kortoyas, sizeable section of those Muslims settlers in these two districts appears to have stayed there in harmony with indigenous people and thus finally composed the pith of the Muslims in the eastern region of Assam began from 1530 A.D.; when the Muslim army under Turbak, invaded Assam and those were taken as

¹. Saikia M.K. -Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, 1986, Golaghat, P-57
². Baruah R.A. -Islamiyo Aytiya aru Asom, 1989, PP- 16-17
prisoners were settle permanently in different parts of Assam and they subsequently came to known a 'Mariya'.

Besides these the second phase of Muslim influx into the western region of Assam began with the Koch-Mughal alliance and it seems to have reached its highest point during the Mughal rule in the Koch-Hajo region 1613 to 1667 A.D. In regard to the growth of Muslim population, Gait writes, "Mukaram Khan, the governor of the newly acquired territory of Koch-Hajo is said to have brought 10,000 to 12,000 well equipped foot soldiers under several Muslim nobles to settle here in order to ensure the imperial hold permanently over the region. Thus, for the second time after a Century of the conquest of Hussain Shah, the Koch-Hajo region fell down under the Muslim power. In this period, many of the Muslim soldiers settled permanently and enriched Islamism in Assam."

In between 1614 to 1682 A.D. many Muslims were serving in the fighting forces of Mughal in Assam and employed in other activities might have been pouring into this region in continuous streams from different part of Mughal empire to help the local Muslim authorities in the war and the civil administration besides trade and commerce. In regard to the Islamism in Assam it should be noted that the Muslims obviously did not bring their wives with them and therefore they had to marry of non-Muslim women from Assam. However, the Muslim invaeions of this

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1. Allen B.C. Census report of Assam of 1901, P- 43
country completely disappear with the ‘treaty of Rangamati’, which begun in 1205. But the influx of Muslim has not been closed.¹

During these four hundred and eighty four years (1198-1682) the Muslim invaded this region (land) seventeen times but they never conquered Assam wholly; although these invasions of the Muslims were not successful, yet it was fruitful in regard to the growth and development of Islamism in Assam.² So the Muslim chroniclers referred to this country as ‘Kamru’, ‘Kamrupa’, and ‘Kamata’. But in the chronicles of the still later time we found that the country was mentioned as Koch and Koch-Hajo Koch and Koch-Hajo as well as the Ahom kingdom which again in much later times came to be known only as Ahom Kingdom or Assam, such as use of different names Kamrupa in this period by different Muslims chroniclers is indicative of the various phase of social and political changes which swayed the country throughout this whole span of more or less five centuries. These of the changes separately indifferent chapters are namely (1) Political relations of Kamrupa with Muhammadans (Turkish) conquerors of India in the early 13th Century. (2) Political relations of Muhammadan powers of India with the Kamarupa-Kamata kings (1256-1389). (3) The relations of the Ahom and Kamata kings of Assam with the sultans of Gauda (1430-1530) and (4)

¹. Gait Sir Edward, -A History of Assam, P-149
Relations of the Koch and Ahom kings with later sultans of Gauda and Mughal emperors of Delhi (1625-1682 A.D.).

Mir Jumla who is said to have continued his attack on Assam, with effect from March 1662 to January 1663 A.D. accompanied with a vast army in road by water by boat in the Brahmaputra. He was able to capture Gargaon capital of Ahom kingdom, in an event which took place at Kaliabar (present Nagaon district). The field king of Ahoms, Jaydhwaj Singha at last was compelled to make a treaty with Mughals. And in 1672A.D. Ramsinig, the general of Aurangzeb invaded Assam but was defeated by Ahom general Lachit Barphukan in the historic battle Saraighat at Amingaon near about modern Guwahati. But Mir Jumla the Mughal Commander defeated the king Jaydhwaj Singha and occupied the Gargaon Ahom dynasty and he who settle down Muslim dynasty in Assam more than six month only. Hadira Choki Ghat of the southern side of the Brahmaputra was the area of Ahom and Mughals region.

The inflexion result also helped to strengthen the Muslim population in Assam. In the other hand, during these periods the Assamese people in their cultural, social as well as in their political life enjoyed the most nourishing effects of their contact with the Muslims, especially the Mughals through different types of cultural exchanges.

2. Tamizi Yahya, -Sufi Movement in Eastern India, Delhi, 1983
trade and commerce. Thus, Islamism in Assam was further enriched with the Ahom-Mughal socio-cultural contacts.¹

The diplomatic relations between Assamese people as well as kings and the Muslim conquerors and rulers have played an important role in the cultivation of Arabic language and literature. The Muslim conquerors and rulers of Bengal and Assam during the first Century of their rule were mostly men of arms who appeared to have been more interested in conquests as well as advancing the cause of Islam than patronizing education. As such Arabic language and literature as well as other Islamic subjects could not influence upon the people of Bengal and Assam during the early stage of the Muslims way here.

A number of Muslim dynasties ruled over Bengal and Assam about three hundred years of these dynasties two were illustrious namely the Shahi Dynasty and the Hussain Shahi dynasty. Some of these two dynasties were themselves educated and patron of Arabic and Persian education, but cared a little for taking proper measures of cultivating the Arabic language and literature during their rule especially in Bengal and Assam.²

The long political contact and conflicts between the Ahoms and Muslims which began in 1613 A.D. and ended at ‘Itakhuli’ in 1682 A.D. could not produce any cultural and literary exchange and it was only during the time of Rudra Singha who ruled from 1696-1716 A.D. that the

¹. Saikia M.K. –Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, 1986, Golaghat, P-115
². Roy A.C. –History of Bengal, New Delhi, 1986, P-221
door of Muslim influence was opened and flooded the country a larger scale probably he was the first ruler who executed some steps with boldness in the modes of creating literature by giving a free hand to the entrance of Islamic influence.¹

The Arabs, the pioneers of Islam, have had commercial relation with India since the dawn of history. The developed relations with India in the spheres of culture and commerce influenced ultimately the lives and culture of the Indian people. The Arabs have had commercial relation with China also for long periods. They were undisputed masters of the trade in the east. The Arabs as well as Persians who did not hesitate to penetrate into the remotest parts of India visited these regions in spite of the dangers associated with such journeys. The Arabs, being an adventurous people by necessity and trading nation by nature, carried on their commercial enterprises as far as China. It is well known fact that a large number of people embraced Islam through the efforts of the Arab traders, we come across in books of travels composed by Arabs and Persians the arabisized forms of importing towns like Sadjan (Chittagaon), Salahit (Sylhet) Kuru and Kamrupa (Kamrup). These regions were frequented and scoured by them and as a result of their frequent contact with the native people of these regions they influenced by their character, language, religion and culture.²

². Wasey Akhtarul, -Islam and the Modern Age, New Delhi, 2007, PP- 59-60
Commercial relations by sea had been established between Arabic and China long before the birth of holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The author of Tabaqat e Nasiri, Maulana Minhajuddin Siraj mentions in detail the different routes from India China through Kamrup (Assam) and from China to India, Arabia to Persia through Kamrup in different incidents. Prominent historians of Assam, N.N. Acharyya and H.K. Barpujari, mention the trade route through which Arab and Muslim traders went to China and Tibet through Kamrup. From this trade route it is clear that long before the conquest of India by the Muslims, the Arab traders found their way into Bengal and Assam.¹

Although the invasion of Assam was undertaken by the Muslims at a much later date than that of the rest of India even before the Muslim conquest of these eastern regions, especially Assam, there had been missionary activities by Muslim preachers quite independently at the political centres of the Muslim rulers. They explain well the existence of quite a large number of Muslim elements in the population of Assam after their establishment, first in Bengal, the geographical cultural and religious conditions of these regions encouraged them to carry of their activities in the neighboring Assam.²

². Wasey Akhtarul, -Islam and the Modern Age, New Delhi, 2007, P-61
Sufis and Saints of Assam:

Sufism: Mysticism in Islam is known as Sufism or Islamic Mysticism. According to Hans Heinrich, a scholar and leading western Orientalists the Islamic mysticism is the attempt to reach individual salvation through aliening the trace Tauhid i.e. the unity of Allah. In the words Annemarie Schimmel the quintessence of the long history of Sufism is to express a new, in different formulations, the overwhelming truth that 'there is no deity but Allah; and to realize that He alone can be the object of worship.

Sufism traces its origin back to the Prophet of Islam and takes inspiration from the Quran and Tradition. The Prophet is the first link in the spiritual claim of Sufism and his ascension through the heavens into the divine presence became the prototype of mystics, spiritual ascension into intimate presence of God. The tradition attributed to the Prophet also served the Sufis to elaborate their various stages of spiritual development. The Sufis generally follow the tripartite way that leads towards Allah. The tripartite division may be described as Shariah, Tariqah, and Marifah or Haqiqah.

The 'Tariqah' i.e. the path on which the mystics walk in described as the path that comes out of 'Shariah'. The mystics consider the path of their mystical education as a branch of that high road based on the revealed laws on which every Muslim is supposed to walk. According to them,
without following the binding injunction of Shariah, mystic experience cannot be realized.¹

According to Khawaja Bande Nawaz, there are five stages of love on which all phases of Islam, faith and fight doing are based as:

1. Shariat i.e. to pay heed to the attributes of the beauty of the beloved so that an urge or longing to be held is created.
2. Tariqat i.e. to seek the beloved and to in search of him.
3. Haqiqat i.e. to be always present before the beauty of the beloved.
4. Marifat to wipe off every form of self regard.
5. Wahdat i.e to annihilate one’s own moral existence and to regard the beloved as the absolute being.²

Islam was propagated in India mainly by the Sufis, humble folk, who lived and worked among the Indian masses. They were men of education and knowledge of Arabic and Persian languages but did not hesitate in learning and using the languages of the masses. The task of spreading Islam was accomplished in India only by the Sufis and Saints.

Now it is worthwhile to give a description of the Muslim Saints, Sufis, Aowliya, Peers, Darbesh, Faqirs and Gazi etc. who came to Assam and settled down there and also exercised tremendous religious influence upon the religious and cultural life of the state. They preached the gospel of Islam and fraternity in Assam. Many of the indigenous people inspired toward Islamic faith, which led them to convert into Islam. Even the King

¹ Qutubuddin al-Ibadi, -Al-Tasfiya fi Ahwal as-Sufia P- 15
² Mir Valiuddin, -Love of God, Delhi, 1968, P-103
of Kamata, Chakradhwaj (1460-1480 A.D., in the last time of his life, adopted Islamic faith. Most of the Muslim Saints had entered Assam with the invading Muslim army at different periods and a few of them entered Assam along with trades while some of them were specially sent to this land by their spiritual guides with the particular intention of preaching of Islam and its doctrines.¹

Many Sufis entered Assam with the invading Muslim armies who invaded Assam. Some of these Saints stayed in this region, while others possibly returned after a short stay. Now it discuss the Sufis whose names are associated with some Muslim places in ancient Assam. The name of Kheraj Peer is held in high esteem in western Assam. This Sufi of the Qutb and Abdul order was also known as Khwaja Khidr and term ‘Baliyan’ belonged to Siraj in Persia. Actually he was a merchant as well as chemist but he became a traveler, having dedicated the service of Allah. Curiously, a rock inscription in Persia saying ‘Ab-chayat chshm -e-khidr’ is found near a stream in the foot of the eastern slope of the Kamakhya Hills, in the north of the steps leading to the temple peer Shah Madar, whose title is said to be Badiuddin has been believed to be a resident of Medina and a disciple of Muhammad Bustani and from Shah Madar the community of ‘Madari Faqir’ developed the name of Pagal

Peer still has an influence on many people in Koch Bihar and West Assam.¹

From a chronicle preserved in the Damdama Sikh Guduswara in Goalpara district, it is learnt that when Raja Ram Singh, the noted Rajput general of Emperor Aurangzeb led his punitive expedition against Ahom king Chakradhwaj Singh in 1667 A.D., he brought with him five peers Shah Akbar, Shah Bagmar, Shah Sufi, Shah Sharan and Shah Kamal to overcome the Assamese black art and magic. The general notion is that these peers stayed together till their death in ‘Panch Peeran Dargah’ of Dubri (Assam).²

**Ghiyasuddin Awliya (R.):**

Among the Saints Ghiyasuddin Awliya is a renowned Saint who entered Assam at the age of 35 with the invading armies in early 14th Century A.D. (721 A.H.). He first stayed at Garigaon area in Guwahati; but later he went to Hajo on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra in Kamrup district and stayed there on the top of ‘Gurudacha Parbat (hillock)’ which is popularly known as ‘Puwa Makka’ (ربع العمة) among the people of Assam. Kalu and Gaji, the sons of Shah Sikandar Badsha and Kamala Sundari, accompanied with him along with seventy followers.

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¹ Dr. Saikia M.K., *Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance*, Guwahati, 1985, P-186
² Wasey Akhtarul, *Islam and the Modern Age*, New Delhi, 2007, P-63
Another tradition relates that Hazrat Ghiyauddin Awliya came to India from the Arab land sometime around 642 A.H. when a famine ravaged the letter country. Having passed several years in different parts of India, he came to the Brahmaputra valley with three of his companions, Hazrat Jamal, Hazrat Shah Gudur and Hazrat Shah Buzrug and passed the rest of his life here on the top of 750 feet high mountain of Hajo. Assam District Gazetteer the Dargah on the top of this mountain in Hajo. One of these accounts relates that a mosque was built on the mountain by Sultan Ghiyasuddin. But he died before it was completed and was buried there within the conclosure 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 Kamrup Buranji it is recorded that one Sultan ‘Balawanta’ Ghiyas, the son of Gauda Sultan Hussain Shah ruled over Kamrup region for sometimes. His seat of his government was on the top of Kuverachal Mountain where he died. In the land grant issued to Hajo Dargah by Sultan Shuja, son of Emperor Shah Jahan, it is recorded that the mountain of Gurudachal contains the tomb of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balwan. The Dargah on Gurudachal hillock Hajo has been declared as an important national Monument from the day of Sukafa (1919 Regular Act).

This is corroborated by the Kamrupar Buranji, from the account of which it becomes clear that Balawant Ghiyasuddin flourished long before the rise of Ahom supremacy in the Kamrup region. The first of the

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1. Hussain Muhammad -Powa Mecca Dargah. Assam Bani, February 20, 1959
local traditions referred above identifies Ghiyasuddin Awliya as Hazrat Jalaluddin Tibriz. It states that the latter came to be known as Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah. But this does not appear to be convincing. In another place it again states that after the investiture of the ‘Gaushiyat’ of Asia, Hazrat Jalaluddin Tibrizi came to be popularly known as Ghiyasuddin and he stayed in Hajo till his death.¹ The area of Puwa Makka (Hajo) is surrounding by the three mandirs, namely Madhav Mandir, Kedar Mandir and Kameswar Mandir.

The government of Assam under the leadership of Tarun Gogoi has sanctioned Rs. 10 Crore for the development of Hajo ‘Puwa Makka’ as a Tourist city (city of pilgrimage), which is announced by Mr. Rockibul Hussain, hon’ble Minister for Forest and Tourism, Assam.²

Among the preachers of Islamism in Assam, the two famous and notable Saints are Ghiyasuddin Awliya and Hazrat Shah Millan who is known as Azan Faqir or Peer.

Ghiyasuddin Awliya preached Islamic faith in lower Assam in 13th Century. Many of the lower caste Hindus inspired with the Islamic Doctrine of brotherhood, equality, fraternity etc. embraced Islam to get rid of social inequality of caste system.

¹ Bhuyan S.K. –Kamrupar Buranji, P-4
² Dainik Asomiya News Paper, ‘Khabor’ 27th October, 2009, P-7
Azan Faqir (R.):

The credit for preaching Islam in Assam goes to the Muslim religious Saints, poet popularly known as ‘Azan Faqir’ or ‘Azan Peer’ (the original name of Azan Faqir is Shah Miran or Shah Millan Alias) came to Assam in approximately 1635 A.D. from Baghdad. He was called Azan Faqir for calling out the people for prayer through ‘Azan’ (أذان) for the first time in Assam. He acquired a congenial atmosphere for propagating unity between the two religious groups, the Hindu and Muslim. The other factor behind the spread of Islam in Assam was the Muslim war prisoners who were settled in Assam, during various reigns. The presence in Assam attracted the people towards the humanitarian values prevailing among them. The local people were impressed by the simplicity and logic behind the Islamic belief and way of life.¹

The renowned saint Azan Faqir spread Islam in upper Assam and later on married two local women and breathed his last as a permanent inhabitant of Assam. He had three sons from one of wives named Siddiqa Bibi. They were Shah Khowaz, Shah Mir Qasim and Shah Masume. The descendant of Shah Milan mingled with the local Assamese and formed a contributory addition to Assamese Muslim population for the aim of spreading Islam. He acquired a proper knowledge of Assamese language and composed a new form of lyrics ‘Zikir and Zari’ through which he contributed to the Assamese language and literature.²

¹. Rafiabadi H.N. – Assam from Agitation to Accord, Delhi, 1988, P-20
Azan Faqir was popular for creating his immortal 'Zikir aru zar'ī the 'folk song' in Assamese which was collected and published by Syed Abdul Malik in 1985. He composed the Zikir aru Zari songs in a popular and chaste language on the topic of religious metaphysics and spiritual experiences and the Zari songs had a popular appeal to Muslims with whom the composer came in contact. Zikir songs also composed by the other saints like Chand Khan (Chand Sai), Sheikh Farid Muriya Dewan, Bandar Faqir, Majnudil Faqir, Sayyid Murtaz, Gulam Hussain etc. Zikir and Zari songs are nothing but devotional songs which embody the teaching of Islam, this aim at the glorification of Allah and his Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and at the in calculation of those human at tributes and graces which bring peace to the soul and establish harmony between man and man.¹

Maulana Abdul Jalil Choudhury (R.):

Maulana Abdul Jalil Choudhury, a famous northeastern Sufi-Saint and a well known politician, was born in 1925 (12ᵗʰ Rabiul Auwal) at a village called Turkkhola in the district of Sylhet (present Bangladesh) in a purely Muslim family. The name of his father is Asgar Ali Choudhury and the name of his mother is Shamsun Nessa Choudhury.

He took his early education on Islam from his mother at home and early schooling in his native village school. After completing his secondary education from Daudpur Junior Madrasah, he admitted in Sylhet govt. Senior Madrasah and passed F.M. degree with student

¹ Wasey Akhtarul, Islam and the Modern Age, New Delhi, 2007, P-65
fellowship in 1939. He did his M.M. degree from the same Madrasah in 1941 with 1st class 2nd position and he was awarded the silver medal from Assam Madrasah Education Board. For further studies he joined Darul Uloom Deobond and completed Fazil Degree as a regular student in 1952.

Maulana Abdul Jalil Choudhury was also a freedom fighter under the banner of All India Jamiyat Ulama-e-Hind and participated in Quit India Movement in 1942 for which he was imprisoned in Naini Jail in Uttar Pradesh.

He started his professional life as a school teacher in Persian in Sylhet High School. After a span of time, he joined as a superintendent in Josuhar Senior Madrasah at Bangladesh. He also worked as an assistant teacher in Phulbari Azizia Senior Madrasah.

Maulana Abdul Jalil Choudhury was migrated to Assam on September just after the independence in 1947 and joined as a Muhaddith at Deorail Title Madrasah on 1st October, 1947. The Deorail Title Madrasah is the first madrasah on the soil of northeastern India of its category founded by Maulana Yaqub Ali Badarpuri. Moreover it is the only Madrasah which has its own Education Board under Nadwatut Ta’mir granted by the Govt. Assam in 1986 which is a special effort of Maulana Abdul Jalil Choudhury.

He was an outstanding Muslim politician who became continuously sixth time M.L.A. from Aglapur L.A.C. nearly 28 years. Though he was offered ministry by the Assam Government, he denied it for his religious duties as well as personal responsibilities.
Being a politician in profession, he was very interested in Sufism and he became a disciple of Hazrat Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani ® (d. 1957) a great Sufi-Saint from whom he learnt about Sufism. As a Sufi-Saint he was became very famous among the disciples of the northeast region of India.

During his life time he was also serve the Muslim society by taking the responsibilities of Islamic organizations. He was the founder of Nadwatut Ta’mir and Ameer-e-Shariyah north east India. He was also the founding member of All India Muslim Personal Law Board. He dedicated his service to All India Majlis-e-Mashwara as a member. He is also a member of All India Fiqh Academy. In this the field the statement may be made that he was the only member of these organizations from the north east region.1

Hazrat Maulana Ahmad Ali (R.):

Hazrat Maulana Ahmad Ali (R.), a great Sufi-Saint and social reformer of Assam, was born in 1919 in a religious family in Khadimbari in the district of Cachar, Assam. The name of his father is Hazrat Naser Ali and the name of his mother is Bibi Faridah.

Hazrat Maulana Ahmad Ali (R.) took his early education from Maulavi Muzammil Ali in his native village Maktab. After passing primary education from govt. M.E. Madrasah at Badarpur he joined Badarpur Senior Madrasah where he did his F.M. with satisfactory result.

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In 1938 he passed M.M. Degree from Deorail Title Madrasah and joined Darul Uloom Deobond for further studies but he could not complete his education there for physical problems of ‘Bad Sight’ and came back to home. He was an owner of firm determination and sharp memory for which he memorized the Holy Quran only in three months.

In 1938 Sheikhul Islam Syed Hussain Ahmad Madani came to Sylhet and Maulana Ahmad Ali met him and became his one of the most obedience disciples. During this time he translated the ‘What is Jamiatul Ulama’ in Bengali language. For this work the Sheikhul Islam praised him highly. As a result the Islam spread out among the Bengali as well as Assamese people. In this time he was also became busy for the collection of funds for Darul Uloom Deobond. In 1971 he again joined the Darul Uloom Deobond and completed his studies on Hadith and Tafsir.

In 1955 he went to Medina for the performance of Hajj (Pilgrimage) with Sheikhul Islam. During his stay at Medina Sheikhul Islam supposed him to serve in Darul Uloom Baskandi. After completing the Pilgrimage he came back directly to Darul Uloom Baskandi and he was appointed as Sheikhul Hadith by the request of Sheikhul Islam Syed Hussain Ahmad Madani. As a result Baskandi became the centre of Islamic knowledge and culture within a few span of time.

Maulana Ahmad Ali was a great Sufi-Saint in Northeastern region of India. He visited every villages of Assam and conveyed the peace and brotherhood nature of Islam and he propagated the Sayings of the Prophet among the common people. Influencing by his call toward Islam people
came to him and became his disciples groups after groups and he became very popular among the Mystic world in northeastern India. Finally he became successful in making an Islamic society in this region.

Besides a social reformer, he was very interested to give the lessons of Hadith in Darul Uloom Baskandi. He was selected as the chairperson of Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind in Northeast Branch. Moreover he was the Ameer-e-Shariat of Northeastern India.

Though he was very much busy in social reforming works, he find out his valuable time to compose books related to Islamic knowledge and culture among all the famous books are:

1. What is Jamiatul Ulama (Bengali)
2. A’lim Burzukh (Assamese)
3. Salasil Tayyiba (Bengali)
4. The History of al-Harfain al-Sharifain (Bengali)
5. The Basic Things of the Jamiat (Bengali) etc. ¹

He left the earth in 11th June, 2000 (8th Rabiul Awwal) at Lilabathi Hospital, Mumbai.

There are many Khanqahs are named by his name mainly Sijubari Mazar, Moirabari Madrasah Masjid Khanqah are very famous. Everyday so many devotees are coming to his Khanqahs for darshan. A Junior

¹. Raghibi, Maulana Abdul Jalil –Mashair Ulama aur Mashaikh-e-Assam, Nilbagan, Nagaon, Assam
College has also founded after his name at Baskandi and there are many welfare foundations and organizations are founded after his name.

**Dargahs and Khanqahs of Assam:**

In the middle of seventeenth Century, Azan Faqir has entered into the Ahom kingdom with his Shah Salih alias Nabi Pir from some place in the western country. Shah Salih is that he stayed in Turu Pather near charai hill in sibsagar district. The Muslims of Nazira in Sibsagar believe that he was entombed at place in the vicinity of the Ahom royal palace at Gargaon (Nazira). Shah Abdul Gani alias Khondokar pir stayed in Assam during the time of Azan Faqir. He descendant still claim themselves as Sayyids and they are known as the Komaldaiya Dewans in Assam.¹

Sawal Pir was popularly known as Bander Pir. He also came to Assam during the time of Azan Faqir and this pir was always been roaming in jungles in order to avoid the 'mad crowd' due to this, he was entombed on the bank of the river Dichang in Sibsagar. Pir Muhammad came to Assam with Azan Faqir and used to stay at Sibsagar, Farzand Gaonboorah was his son and Abdul Jalal Dhul Qad Ali Sufi was given Islamic education in Dhaka then after he learn Islamic theology in Jaunpur (UP) under the renowned scholar Maulana Keramat Ali and after the completion of his Islamic education, he was honoured with the title 'Sufi' for his devotion to Islam. He wrote a good number of books in religious rites and rituals of Islam. Three important books among those

¹. Dr. Saikia M.K., -Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, Guwahati, 1985, P-201
recently have been discovered that one book in Persian language and another two books are written in Persian script where as they are in Assamese language. One of them was entitled ‘Tariqul Haq fi Bayani Nuril Haq’ (طريق الحق في بيان نور الحق) which has been published by his grandson Maulvi Saleh Kazim in the name of ‘satyar path’ in 1967.1

The impact of Islamic faith and Islamic culture among the people of Assam through the holy places like Maqams, Dargah, Khanqah, and Mazar etc. scattered in the Assam valley. These places are associated with the names of many saints, pirs, Awliyas and faqirs; like dargah of Sawal Pi; the mazar of Baga fakir, the dargah of saleh pir etc. In Upper Assam, the dargah of gargaon, the dargah of Ulubari, the dargah of sijubari, the mazar of khorasani pir, the dargah of dakaidol and the panch pir dargah of Dhubri etc. are situated in lower Assam.

The dargah of Ghiyasuddin Awliya at Hajo as well as the dargah of hazrat shah Miran alias Azan Faqir of Assam situated in the heart of saraiguri chapari on the bank of Dekhow Noi (river) near the confluence with the Brahmaputra in sibsagar district. The ancient dargah id said to have continued about 100 bighas of land. The ruins of two earthen ramparts around the dargah can still be seen there. It now stands as one of the important religious places for the Muslim masses of Assam, remembering the great Faqir.

1. Wasey Akhtarul, Islam and the Modern Age, New Delhi, 2007, P-64
Here we can produce a list of the ancient dargahs, mazars, masjids, maqams and khanqahs as below:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>District</th>
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<tr>
<td>Puwa Makka Dargah of Ghiyasuddin Awliya</td>
<td>Hajo</td>
<td>Kamrup</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garigaon Dargah</td>
<td>Guwahati</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Guwahati (Sijubari)</td>
<td>Kamrup</td>
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<td>Dargah of Zahir Shah Awliya</td>
<td>Guwahati (Ulubari)</td>
<td>Kamrup</td>
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<td>Dargah of Shahnur Dewan Faqir</td>
<td>Bhella (Barpeta)</td>
<td>Barpeta</td>
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<td>Pirpal Masjid</td>
<td>Bathan</td>
<td>Kamrup</td>
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<td>Patidarrang (karara)</td>
<td>Kamrup</td>
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<td>Near Mirza pahar</td>
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<td>Dhamdhama</td>
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<td>Dargah of pagal pir</td>
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<td>Dhubri town</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Panbari</td>
<td>Dhubri</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mir Jumlar Masjid</td>
<td>Mankachar</td>
<td>Dhubri</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rangamari Masjid</td>
<td>Gauripur town</td>
<td>Dhubri</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boga pirar mazar</td>
<td>Dibrugarh Railway station</td>
<td>Dibrugarh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mirza Beg Masjid</td>
<td>Amola Patti</td>
<td>Dibrugarh</td>
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<td>Japi Sajia mazar</td>
<td>Japi Sajia</td>
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<td>Khondkar pirar mazar</td>
<td>Khondkar para</td>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Azan pirar dargah</td>
<td>Saraiguri chapari</td>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nabi or Saleh pirar Dargah</td>
<td>Simaluguri</td>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
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<td>Bandar pirar Dargah</td>
<td>Ririya</td>
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<td>Lashkar Shahar Dargah</td>
<td>Golaghat town</td>
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<td>Lal Faqir Dargah</td>
<td>Golaghat town</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kala Faqir Dargah</td>
<td>Kachari Hat</td>
<td>Golaghat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garukata parbat</td>
<td>Near Udhagaon Hat</td>
<td>Nagaon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaliyabar Masjid</td>
<td>Kaliabar</td>
<td>Nagaon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Panch pirar Dargah</td>
<td>Hailakandi</td>
<td>Cachar</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Mirar shringar
Dargah

Hailakandh

Cachar

Shah Kamalar
Dargah

Garo pahar

Garo pahar

Maqam of shah
sarpin (sharifin)

Gomaghat

Khasia jayantia
pahar

Assam Origin or Local Converted Muslims:

With the advent of Muslims in Assam, the process of Islamization had started. During the entire period of Pathan and Mughal’s invasion of Assam many pirs, Ghazi, Awliya, Darbesh, Saints, preachers, and propagator also entered in Assam. Their aims and purposes were to propagate Islam among the Non-Muslims. The kings of Assam highly honoured them which helped to spread Islam among the masses, some of the Ahom kings, even sanctioned grants or allotted land property to build Khanqah or Dargah to practice and preach Islam. Many Ahom kings including Rudra Singha appointed Muslim Imams (religious preachers) to lead the prayers and pray to Allah for the welfare of Assamese kings as well as for state. Shah Nawas was one of the appointed Pir in the days of Sargadeu Rudra Singha and he was highly honoured.¹

Ali Mech was one of the kings of Mech tribes who embraced Islam. He was the great encouragement for the Mech along with other tribes to convert to Islam. “Kings Religion was the Ryot’s religion”, hence hundreds of mech tribes accepted Islam. Existing caste system and

¹ Sarma Sushil, -Asomiyar Itihas, P-343
contemporary social conditions had permitted low caste Hindus and tribes to accept the religion, ‘Islam’ Mr. Amalendu De pointed out in his book, “Islam in Modern India” that like eastern Bengal, the local converts of Assam also originated from amongst the lower caste and original tribes.¹

Dr. Lila Gogoi also pointed out that there was a great saint Azan Faqir, who had spread Islam among the inhabitants of ‘Goria PARA’ of Dekhow much. Responding to this Islamic Calling, they had willingly accepted Islam, there would be no doubt that hundreds of Musalman villagers, which originally were Hindu. Kanaisuba, Gohaiparam, Nagarbahai, Harinkhuja marai and Dampur, Ghopa of Darrang district (old) Degali, Bhogpur, Madhabpur of Nalbari district, Danadua, Ruwadhara, Panikhati, Pathari, Jajari, Jaluguti, and Tarabari etc. of Nagaon and Morigaon districts are the few examples of Muslim villages; for-fathers of these villagers were Hindus.²

When Mir Jumla, invaded Assam, some other pirs like Shah Akbar, Shah Bogmar, Shah Shoran and Shah Kamal also came with him. It is to be noted in this connection that besides the conquerors the Sufis also played a vital role in the spread of Islam in Assam. However, these Sufis were linked with the Sufis of Bengal Sufism was first introduced in northern India in the 11th Century at the time when Muslim rulers established their rule in India. Through that channel it entered into Bengal and from Bengal to Assam. It should be noted that the Sufis of the early period belong to different orders performed various duties as saints,

¹. De Amalendu, -Islam in Modern India, Calcutta, 1982, P-195
². Dr. Leela Gogoi, As Quoted in Agrodood, November 10, 1985
warriors and preachers. Shah Jalal played a great part in the spread of Islam in eastern Bengal and a large part of Assam bordering Bengal. His shrine in Sylhet had been a place of pilgrimage to the Muslims of Bengal and Assam. Thus this influx of Sufis into Assam was possible because of the existence of various Sufi centres in Bengal.¹

From the evidence mentioned above it is clear that with that the calling of Islam many lower caste Hindus converted to Islam. According to Mr. Jinnah 75% Indian Muslims are of Hindu origin. In fact Nehru also says that 95% of Indian Muslims are converted Muslims. So some rules and regulations, customs and traditions, which are not permitted by Islam, are still continuing among them. They are no doubt local Assamese and their mother tongue as well as spoken language is Assamese though they are not Gorias. Yet people of Assam but wrongly called them to be Gorias based on Assamese language spoken at home as mother tongue since ancient times.²

The Employment of Muslims under Ahom Kings:

During the Ahom rule in Assam, Muslim people were found very lucky as the kings gave them many opportunities. The kings imported weavers, sculptors belonging to the Muslim community. As a result the number of Muslims increased in Assam. The Muslims of those days were not only craft men but also missionaries of Islam. Wherever they went they preached Islam in their words and deeds. They were enthusiastic with

¹ De Amalendu, -Islam in Modern India, Calcutta, 1982, P-197
² Dr. Ahmed S.U. -Muslim in Assam (1200-2000) 1999, Nagaon, P-12
the revolutionary and aesthetic spirit of Islam and were responsible for different musical architectural achievements.

In this noble process of interaction, the literature of Assam was also influenced by the Muslims. The Muslims influence is clearly visible in Assamese songs and music and the singing of Qawali, Ghazal and Jari became familiar in Assam.

The exigency of situations arising from the intermittent wars and conflicts with the Mughals required the Ahom kings to utilize the talents of some Muslim war captives and imported artisans. In order to secure sincere services from these Muslim captives and imported personal in such work. The Ahom might have tried to convey them with their hearts by extending to them amenities and treatment as offered to the indigenous people. As a result of this, a respect class of Muhammadans soon sprang up in the country.

The Muslim nobles were appointed as Baruah in the Branch at different time by different Ahom kings. The office uzirs seems to have been open to Hindus and Muslims alike and they enjoyed revenue free land from the kings. Apart from the uzirs these were twelve Musalman dewans. They were also granted vast tracts of revenue free land. They all seem to have been heads of the institutions of Islamic culture and religion in the state. Besides these, in different civil and military departments of the government there were many Muslim officials holding post not only

1. Rafiabadi H.N. -Assam from Agitation to Accord, Delhi, 1988, P-20
2. Dr. Saikia M.K., -Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, Guwahati, 1985, P-144
of Boras, Saikias or Hajorikas but also of Baruahs, the highest post open to non Ahoms in the earlier period of the Ahom rule. The highest number of Assamese Muslims was probably employed in various capacities in the guilds of masons and artisans (Khani kar khel). This guild of masons and artisans was placed in charge of a Phukan called Changrung Phukan. The chief functions of this department were the construction and repairs of state buildings. As a result of the employment of musalmans in various capacities in the department, the number of Muslims in Assam increased.¹

According to Dr. Lila Gogoi the Muslims of Assam may be classified into the following categories: 1. Muslim war prisoners i.e. Goria & Mariya 2. Sufi saints, who came to Assam at different ages for propagating Islam and Sufism 3. Local converted Muslims 4. Some Muslims from outside of Assam were employed by the Ahom Kings indifferent departments and 5. The Emigrant Muslims ² i.e. Miya Musalman and Sylhetia Musalman.

Muslim inhabitants flourished in Assam through as conquest, trade and preaching of Islam. It is clear from historical narration that Assam was attacked by Muslim conquerors seventeenth times from 1198 -1682 A.D. During this period, many Muslim soldiers including Turks, Pathans and Mughals under normal circumstances or being captured and taken to custody stayed here and established matrimonial alliances with the

¹ Dr. Saikia M.K., -Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, Guwahati, 1985, PP- 145-150
² Dr. Leela Gogoi, -Asomor Sanskriti, Guwahati, 1990, P-127
women of the local Muslim converts.¹ These war prisoner Muslims are Goria and Mariya Muslim.

**Goria Muslim:** The word ‘Goria’ has been derived from the word ‘Gour’ the capital of Bengal sultans, the Muslim who came from ancient ‘Gour’ to Assam popularly known as Gouria or Goria. These Muslims were taken as prisoners and they settled down as inhabitant of this region permanently.²

According to Hemkosh, the Assamese Dictionary, by Hem Chandra Barua the word ‘Goria’ is defines as a ‘jawan’ or a ‘Musalman’ having the nature of ‘unsuccessful’ or ‘unskillful’ or ‘lazy’ or ‘worthless’ etc.

Sankardev the renowned writer and the founder of Vaishnaism in Assam viewed that Goria means a Musalman foreigner.

**Mariya Muslim:** ‘Mariyas’ a section of Muslims of Gour origin. They are called as Mariya because they specialize in making brass and articles of brass. According to the Assamese Dictionary ‘Hemkosh’, Mariya means a class of Muhammadans who worked in brass. The word ‘Mariya’ has been derived from an Assamese word ‘Mar’ or ‘Mariua’ means ‘to beat’ or ‘to strike with stick’. They were firstly settled at Kaliabar in Nagaon district, Assam. At present they have 55 villages and

². Dutta Promath Nath, -Glimpse into the History of Assam, Shillong, P-66
they are economically very poor so the govt. of Assam categorized them as More Other Backward Caste (MOBC). 1

**Sufi- Saints:** Sufis, Saints, Pirs, Awliyas, Darbesh, Faqirs and Gazis who came to Assam for propagating Islam and Sufism among the people of Assam. Sometimes they entered Assam with the Muslim armies who invaded Assam and stayed in this region among them. Ghiyasuddin Awliya and Azan Faqir are famous and notable saints who were settled in Assam permanently. Moreover huge number of pirs and saints are settled in Assam which is quite impossible to discuss here.

**Local Converted Muslims:** During the period of invading and preaching of Islam the local lower caste Hindu people inspired with the Islamic doctrine for which they converted to Islam and get rid of social inequality of caste system. The king of Mech, Ali Mech, embraced Islam along with some other tribes. During the Mughal attacks on Assam the number of Muslims increased especially at the time of Mir Jumla in 1661 A.D. 2

**Outsider Muslim:** Muslims of outside who came to Assam as employees of Ahom rulers in different department such as weavers, sculptors, craft men and civil and military as well as guilds of masons and artisans (khanikar khel), their main duty was to construct the buildings and repairs of the state buildings for which the Musalman employment in

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1. Gait Sir Edward, -A History of Assam, P-96
2. Wasey Akhtarul, Islam and the Modern Age, New Delhi, 2007, P-67
various department and as a result the number of Muslim in Assam is increased.¹

The Emigrant Muslims: The British government was more interested to increase government income through enhanced revenues and taxes. On the other hand they wanted to produce more row materials for the industries of England. As a result the British government brought the Muslim labourers from the other states; such as East Bengal (presently Bangladesh) and West Bengal for cultivation of jute, tea, rubber and rabicrops especially for growing more food and the local Assamese people also welcomed them and called them 'Miya'.

Miya Muslim: The word ‘Miya’ means ‘gentle man’ and Mr. or sahib. But nowadays it used as an insulting word as lower class citizens; although they contributed to the Assamese language to make it as state language and the medium of instruction. In order to reconstitute Assamese as Assam’s state language on the basis of majority’s language they accept it as their mother tongue and they also had already integrated with Assamese language for which the Miya Muslims are called Na-Assamese or new Assamese. In the field of agriculture they have the highest contributions in any field of cultivation.²

¹. Dr. Saikia M.K., -Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, Guwahati, 1985, P-149
². Bhattacharya Dr. Kumar, -Some Thoughts on the Assam Satyagraha, Saptahik Mujahid, Guwahati, 17th February 1984, PP-3-4
Sylhetiya Muslim: The ancient Assam included the north and eastern Bengal and it was the northern portion of Sylhet district which is in Bangladesh at present and up to the British rule Sylhet district belonged to Assam but after partition it was gone to East Pakistan (presently Bangladesh). The people of Sylhet called Sylhetiya and after independence some of them came to Assam and settled down permanently. The Sylhetiya people generally settled in the district of Cachar, Karimganj, Hailakandi, as well as in the southern part of Nagaon district which especially in Hojai Subdivision.

Education and Learning in Ancient Assam:

It is clear that education in the sense of book learning was not as widely diffused as it is today. The learned class of the day was of course, the Brahmins but the common people were also not wholly illiterate. It is obvious that the vyavaharis (lawyers) Lekhras (scribes) and other officials who occupied books made up accounts and drew up deeds were all educated. Even the Copper Smiths and masons, who engraved the epigraphs, must have been able to read and write.

Education was centred round the ‘guru-griha’ school maintained by private individuals or at village school provided by the Brahmins of Agrahara village. The Brahmin donees, the recipients of royal grants are described as being zealous in discharging their six fold traditional duties of which adhyapana (teaching) was the most important. From references inscriptions, it is clear that the Brahmin villages were responsible for the teaching of Sanskrit; here, the Vedas, the systems of philosophy and
various other branches of learning were taught to those in the schools. The great Vaisnavit apostle Sankardeva received his education at a ‘Tol’ or ‘Chatrasala’ maintained by the Brahmin Guru Mahendra Kandali. This shows that even non Brahmins were admitted into these schools along with the Brahmin students.

The village school sometimes used to be held in the porch of a temple. But, whether used as school or not, the village shrine was a centre of popular education through the constant recitation and exposition of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas. Occasionally the priests or the leaders of the religious sects used to expound the principles and philosophy of their own sects in the temple precincts. The temples were also the scene of festive gatherings and communal rejoicings. These festivals took various forms but they always included music, dancing, recitation, play and pantomime. In this way the temples played a remarkable part in the field of education and cultural life of the ancient people.¹

It is obvious that the kings were keenly interested in the spread of learning and education and made large grants for that purpose. Writing of Bhasjara Varman the Chinese pilgrim remarks that the king was fond of learning and the people imitated him ‘Men of high Talents’, he wrote, visited the kingdom. The pilgrim specially mentions the visit of a learned Brahmin who informed Bhaskar Varman as to the high qualities of the master of the law ‘Hiuen tsiang’. This Brahmin was formally a heretic of

the Lokaliya sect, who came to Nalanda Monastery to dispute with the monks. But being defeated in discussion, he was converted by the Chinese pilgrim to Buddhism. The very fact that Bhaskar Varman showed a commendable anxiety to profit by the learned company of the Chinese monks itself a testimony to standing of learning in the province. As a result learning flourished well in Assam and made it attractive to scholars of other countries. Hiuen Tsiang rightly remarked that 'men of abilities came from far to study here'. This is even dent from the visits of such scholars as Sankaracharya (788-820 A.D.), Manak (1649-1658 A.D.) and Guru Teg Bahadur (17th Century A.D.).

Curriculum for Study: a little information exists as to curriculum; the epigraphs mention both the cultivation of vidya and kala. The distinction between the two as explained by the texts is that the former is literary study and the later is professional activity. Under vidya is included the four Vedas, the four Upavedas, described as Ayurveda, Dhnurveda, Gandharvaveda and the Tantra. The six vedangas, Itihas, Puranas, smritis Arthasastra, Kamasatra, Silpasastra, Kavyasastra, etc. katha- Guru Charitra, an early biography of Sankardeva, mentions that Sakardeva studied four Vedas fourteen sastras, eighteen puranas, eighteen Bharatas, fourteen vyakaranas, eighteen kavyas, eighteen losas, samhitas, amara, chanakya and yoga sastra.¹

This list however, represents the entire traditional curriculum rather than specific studies pursued by the young Sankara.

¹ Katha Guru Charitra, PP- 28-29
Ancient Mosques and Madrasahs and other Islamic Institutions of Assam:

Sultan Ikhtiyaruddin Malik Yuzbek erected a mosque in Kamrupa as early as 1256-57 A.D. as we have so far no information of any other mosques established in the country anterior to this date, we may accept this as the first mosque to have been erected in Assam. B.C. Allens account in the district Gazette Kamrup, makes out that there was a very ancient mosque in Puwa Makka dargah of Hajo and that this mosque was rebuilt by Mir Lutfulla Shirazi, the Mughal faujdar, who governed the Kamrup region from 1653-1658 A.D. This ancient mosque at Hajo may be considered as the second mosque of Assam. Tradition relates that Ghiyasuddin Awliya constructed a mosque at Hajo during his stay there. This was probably the same mosque rebuild by Mir Lutfulla Shirazi. In Rangamati, which lay to the north of gauripur in the Dhubri district, there is an ancient mosque which believed to have been constructed by sultan Hussain Shah Gauda, who held his sway over this part of Assam from 1502-1519 A.D. In Mankachar 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 years 1661-1663 A.D. This mosque can still be seen in Mankachar.¹ And the mosque was the first Islamic institution where the Islamic as well as Arabic education were given to the Muslim children which is traditionally run till today all over the country and the Imam and Muazzin are the teacher of that institutions. The word

¹ Dr. Saikia M.K., -Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, Guwahati, 1985, PP-216-217
is the first word of Holy Quran through this word the 'Religion of Islam' as well as learning of Arabic was stared.

The grave of Mir Sayyid Ahmed Hussain Arzu is situated in Ambari of proper Guwahati; where in the second oldest masjid of Assam was constructed in 1637 A.D. during the reign of Shah Jahan of Delhi, which is called Budha Masjid.¹

During the 18th Century, there were Maktab and Madrasah system of education in most of Muslim societies in Assam where young generations were given religious education properly in Arabic, Urdu and Persian. Therefore, the most of Muslim men and women were able to recite the Holy Quran in Arabic correctly.

The Ahom king, the Kamata king, himself permitted Islamic rules and tradition in his kingdom. He also provided some special grants for the expansion of Islamic educational institutions.²

There are also a few Muslim religious institutions, which were different from dargah and khanqahs. They were known as the sattras, which had their prototype in the Hindu Vishnava sattra institution of Assam as it has been mentioned earlier in our account of the pirs and Awliyas of Assam in this chapter.³

¹ Wasey Akhtarul, Islam and the Modern Age, New Delhi, 2007, P-65
² Baruah Rafiquel Hussain, -Islamiya Aytijya aru Asom, Jorhat, 1984, P-12
³ Dr. Saikia M.K., -Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, Guwahati, 1985, PP—18
All these Musalman’s 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...... these Musalman Gosains have their own sattras or establishments and resident disciples (bhakats)”, they collect their tribunes from nonresident disciples by means of village officers of their own called ‘Gaon Burah’ each of whom is assisted by a ‘barik’ or peon. The Gaon Burah is appointed by investiture with a turban at the hands of the gosains. He receives no direct emoluments but is entitled to the highest place at village entertainments on the occasion of religious festivals, weddings, funerals etc.¹

Migration into Assam during the British Period:

It is well known that the present north eastern states have been the destination of various streams of migrations originating from different parts of the subcontinent even during the post independence period. To start the story from the British period, the extension of the British rule to the region necessitated an influx of population for running the administration. Assam in the region lost her independence already pointed out in 1826 to the British. During the early period of the British rule, Assam was administered under the government of Bengal by chief Commissioner till 1947. The British government was much more interested to increase government income through enhanced revenues and

¹ Gait E. A. –From the Census Report of 1891
taxes. On the other hand, they wanted to produce more raw materials for the industries of England. Moreover, British commercial interest in the region started with tea cultivation, exploitation of mineral and forest resources. The expansion of tea cultivation which was started by the British in 1836 necessitated importation of a number of persons from other parts of India to work as tea garden labourers a class of landless cultivators being absent within the region started in 1853, immigration of tea garden labourers on a large scale took place since 1860. In continued till 1937, the number falling low after 1931 by which time the tea garden labourers numbered just under 10 lakh in Assam. Imported tea garden labourers along with their descendants were from Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. The number touches around 15 lakh, in 1997. They were Muslims.

The demographic structure of Assam took gradual change since the mid 19th Century. The British efforts for the cultivation of tea in Assam necessitated the immigration of the tea garden labourers. “The English merchants introduced tea cultivation in the province after the British occupation. This immediately necessitated the recruitment of labours from outside, as labours were not locally available. The tea industry was responsible for bringing these labours in a planned manner”.

But the British brought expert Muslim cultivators from East Bengal (presently Bangladesh) districts of Mymensingh, Pabna, Bagura and

1. Muhammad Abul Khayar as Quoted in Asom Bani, August 19, 1988, PP-3-4
2. census of India, Assam, general report, P-134
3. Kar M. –Muslim in Assam Politics, 1990, P-7
Rangpur under the scheme of 'Grow More Food'. They were invited by the British government to come to Assam and to settle here permanently. The local Assamese welcomed and embraced them, calling them ‘Miya’. The word ‘Miya’ means ‘gentle man’ when they entered Assam it was meaningful but nowadays it used as an insulting word as lower class citizens; though they made greater contribution to the recognition of Assamese as the state language and the medium of instruction. They have been yet treated as ‘a step mother’s son’ in every respect.¹ A eminent writer while making comment on this aspect said, “The Bengali Muslims did not come to Assam on their own”.²

The Miya Musalman or Migrated Muslims started to enter Assam from the beginning of the 20th Century, their first target being the then district of Goalpara, where their number increased from 49.1 thousands in 1901 to 118.2 thousands in 1911. Enumerated first in 1911 on the char lands of Goalpara, these migrants in the words of 1961 census superintendent, Pakyntein, were merely the advance guards or rather scouts of a huge army following closely on their heels. In the subsequent two decades the migrant advanced towards the district of Nagaon, Kamrup (then Barpeta subdivision) and Darrang. Sir Sa’adulla the premier of Assam once remarked, “Assam is suffering from want of population to cultivate the vast quality of arable land which is waiting for plough”. Again moved in 1925 Assam Legislative Assembly as an

¹ Dutta Deben as quoted in Agradoot, 12th June, 1983, PP- 5-8
² Rafiabadi H.N. - Assam from Agitation to Accord, Delhi, 1988, P-22
Assamese Member and adopted a resolution shortage of man power for the settlement in the waste land.¹

By 1931 most of the waste lands of the Brahmaputra valley was already been occupied by them. After Sa’adullah became the premier of Assam for the second time in August 1942, it is alleged that the attempted a systematic settlement of East Bengal Muslim peasant in Assam under the pretext of raising the state’s agricultural production (grow more food campaign). In fact, this is believed to be a part of the design of some Muslim leaders to convert Assam into a Muslim dominated area. No wonder, when the demand for partition was raised, it was visualized by the Muslim League leaders that Pakistan would comprise Muslim majority provinces in the west and Bagh-e- Islam comprising Bengal and Assam in the east.²

The Miya Musalman or the migrated Muslims were politically harassed in 1950 and 1965 respectively. In the name of foreigners more than six lakh Indian Muslims were forcibly and illegally deported from 1963- 1966. The so called foreigner movement of Assam launched by Assamese chauvinists from 1979 onwards was directly or indirectly against these Miya Musalmans. More than ten thousand Muslims were brutally killed in 1983. Two third of the total Muslim population of Assam are Bengali origin and they used their own language ‘Bengali’ at home and Assamese in public place though Bengali Muslims living in the

¹. Assam Gazette, Page vib- P- 117  
towns and cities, due to their assimilation with the Assamese, are so mixed together, that it is now difficult to differentiate between Bengali and Assamese. Their mother tongue is also becoming Assamese and they are commonly treated as Gorias. Thus the number of Gorias is increasing day by day so on the basis of language spoken at home the total Muslims of Assam can be divided into two groups (a) Assamese Muslims and (b) Bengali Muslims and the number of Bengali Muslims is much more than Assamese Muslims.¹

On the other hand the stream of migrants consisted of Bengali Hindu refugees mostly from the then Sylhet district to the adjoining areas of present Assam and Tripura as a result of partition. Persons born in Pakistan and enumerated in Assam reached the enormous total of 8,00,000. Of course the huge number included a large number of refugees (262 thousand) born in Pakistan migrating to Assam during the partition.²

The settling of the two dominions of India and Pakistan did not prove deterrent to the Muslim settlers who continued to pour even after partition. Bengali Hindus from the East Pakistan continued to pour into Assam and Tripura due to recurring communal troubles there. In Assam the number of Bengali Hindu refugees went up from 2.62 lakh in 1951 to 6.0 in 1961. This decade also witnessed a large in flow of migrants from

¹ Dr. Ahmed S.U. —Muslim in Assam (1200-2000) Nagaon, 1999, P-13
² Census of India, Assam, general report
other parts of India seeking economic opportunities in trades, construction works and white collar jobs.\(^1\)

Another stream of migrants into the north east in general and Assam in particular, which went more or less unnoticed, consisted of Nepali grazers, who, from the beginning of the 20\(^{th}\) Century, started settling in the uncultivated and un-owned hill slopes. The number of Nepalese in Assam alone went up from 1.01 lakh in 1951 to 3.54 lakh in 1971.

In 1971 during Bangladesh Liberation war a large number of persons from East Pakistan fled to Assam and other units of the north east, some of whom might not have returned to the place of origin even after the formation of Bangladesh as a separate country.

It is obvious from the above that the various census reports provide a rough estimate of migrants coming to Assam in particular from 1951 to 1971. In 1981 census operation could not be undertaken in the state of Assam. The 1981 census report of the other states of the north eastern region, however, indicates that the migration from Bangladesh and Nepal continued unabated. In Assam the fear of illegal migrant (resulting from unchecked flow even during the post 1971 period) out numbering the indigenous population led to a six year prolonged movement starting from 1979. This fear is still haunting the Assamese psyche.\(^2\)

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\(^1\). Census of India, Assam, general report
The present movement, centering on the issue of immigration, is also an expression of a fear psychosis of the Assamese caste Hindus, i.e. if the Bengali Muslims unite with the Bengali Hindus, it could jeopardize their political and administrative dominance. They feel that their culture identity is not enough to protect their cultural identity. But the apprehensions of the Assamese people are not justified as the immigrant Muslims have never tried to harm the Assamese personality, even in 1960 and 1972, the immigrant Muslims solidly supported the cause of the Assamese against the stand of the Bengali Hindus. Assimilation has made some progress. Most of the immigrants have accepted Assamese as the medium of educational instruction and some of them are coming forward as writers and journalist in that language.

It was the policy of colonial government which was materials shed. Again it was the hard toil of the farmers from Bengal that dense jungles grownand to reclaim the wasteland of Assam transformed into green cultivable fields, much to the satisfaction of the British administration. The dense jungle of Assam full of mosquitoes and other insects, which spread dreadful diseases like Kalaazar (black fever) malaria, small pox etc. appeared in the form of epidemic and took hundreds of lives every year. Besides the terror created by the wild animals namely tiger, beer, poisonous insects and soon and there were no any medical facilities for farmers in jungle areas. But day by day it was also gradually disappeared and made the land suitable for human living and settlement.¹

¹ Rahman Abdur, Migration of Muslim from Eastern Bengal, 2004, P-7
The British colonial administration the exodus of farmers from Bengal in Assam served twin purpose. Firstly it supplemented the man power in Assam and secondly it contributed a lot of economy of the state large areas of whole land make for agricultural fields for revenue collection. Moreover, the colonial rulers at first encouraged the immigration of East Bengal (presently Bangladesh) to Assam for economic reason putting under the plough vast stretches of wasteland raising food for plantation labour and promoting commercial crops like jute for the mills. In the thirties of the colonial rulers gave the problems its familiar commercial twist. The other side of the problem is that sir Sa’adullah played the most prominent role when he had ability to unite the Muslims of the two valleys for demonstrating the strength of this community.¹

**Reaction of Bengal Partition:**

In 1905, Lord Curzon divided Bengal into two as East Bengal and West Bengal. East Bengal was made as Muslim majority province while West Bengal as Hindu majority. Assam was kept with East Bengal and administered from Dhaka, under a chief commissioner. As a result Bengali Muslims of East Bengal and Hindu Assamese of the Brahmaputra Valley became closer contact.²

Nationalism is already grown in India. The first reaction of Indian Nationalist was the ‘Sepoy Mutiny, of 1857 against the British. In this

¹. Rafiabadi H.N. –Assam from Agitation to Accord, Delhi, 1988, PP-29-30
². Kar M. –Muslim in Assam Politics, 1990, P-31
revolt hundreds of Indian sacrificed their lives. Bengal was always in forefront in this respect. In order to curve the Bengali strength, Lord Curzon, a cleaver British divided it on the basis of religion. East Bengal including Assam was made a new province of Muslim majority. This division was deadly opposed by the Nationalists and therefore, anti partition movement was launched by them.  

In surma valley anti partition movement was very strong. Both Hindus and Muslims were fought unitedly for re unification of Bengal. In the Brahmaputra valley the reactions were of three folds firstly the sarvajanik sabha of Jorhat which presented upper Assam supported partition provided Assam’s interests were safe guarded. Secondly, Assam association war in favour of formation of new province annexing Assam to Bengal. Thirdly, the third group advocated for the immediate restoration of the status quo. They thought that the Assamese, being a minority, would be casedoul of all spheres of life by the people of Bengal. On the other hand, Muslim both from Bengal and Assam were in the support of formation of new province, were they would majority and therefore their interest would be better safe guarded. But Bengali Hindus pleaded strongly for the re-unification of Bengal.  

1. Bhuyan S.K. Political History of Assam, P-32
2. Kar M. -Muslim in Assam Politics, 1990, P-32
As a result of first partition of Bengal in 1905 caused a lot of political unrest and ultimately the new arrangement were broken up and Assam was made a separate province in 1912 with shillong as the capital.¹

After annexation of Assam with Bengal, the British government was very much interested to collect more revenues and taxes from the Assam valley. Therefore, they invited labours and cultivators from the densely populated East Bengal to sparsely populated Assam. As a result along with tea garden labourers and Hindu cultivators, Muslim cultivators also had started to come in Assam. For administrative purpose many educated Hindu Bengalis were also brought to Assam by the British government. During the first quarter of 20th Century the British government encouraged migration as matter of policy and practical politics. The vast expense of cultivable waste lands in Assam attracted a large number of Muslim cultivators and farm labourers from Mymensingh and Sylhet of East Bengal, where population was too dense. In this way the number of Muslims in Assam was increased gradually more than 150 percent from 1901 to 1931 including indigenous Muslims. The obvious fact was that the overwhelming majority of Assamese Muslims were the Bengali farmer migrants and their descendants.²

¹. Gait Sir Edward, -A History of Assam, P-389
The Statement of Problems:

India, though in general the population of Muslims in urban population is highest (16.28%) than in rural population (9.82%). yet it is highest in rural population in the state of Assam, Chandigarh, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Tripura and West Bengal. The states and union territories of India with the largest proportion of their population constituting of Muslims are Makshadeep and Jammu & Kashmir. But these need not necessary account for the largest number of Muslims in the country. It is estimated that nearly 50 percent of the Muslim population in India live in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar.1

Status of Indian Muslims as per census 1921-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Muslim population</th>
<th>% of Muslim population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>22,02,460</td>
<td>28.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>2,52,10,802</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>38,20,153</td>
<td>19.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar % Orissa</td>
<td>3,69,182</td>
<td>10.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central province</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And Berar</td>
<td>05,63,574</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assam after Independent (since 1947):

India gained freedom in 1947 and as a result of partition between India and Pakistan, the district of Sylhet excluding the Karimganj subdivision went to East Pakistan (presently Bangladesh which created in 1971) Assam in now a north eastern state of the Indian Union. At present the state of Assam stretches west word from Bangladesh, Tripura, Meghalaya and West Bengal to Arunachal, Nagaland and Manipur in the east and from Bhutan and Arunachal on the north to Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya in the south.¹

There are two main natural division of Assam (1) The hill ranges of the north, the east and the south and (2) The valleys of Barak and the Brahmaputra. The Brahmaputra valley does not have any obstacle in the west where it is connected with India by the plains of North Bengal, the Barak valley which includes Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi district

¹ Assam Book Dept. –Natun Asomiya Bhuchitrabali, Guwahati, 1990, P- 5
and the Manipur valley are separated by a series of hills from the Brahmaputra valley.¹

At present Assam consist of twenty seven districts namely, Baksha, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Cachar, Darrang, Dibrugarh, Dhemaji, Dhubri, Goalpara, Golaghat, Hailakandi, Jorhat, Kamrup (Rural), Kamrup (Urban), Karimganj, Karbi-Anglong, Kokrajhar, Lakhimpur, Morigaon, Nagaon, Nalbari, North Cachar Hill,Sirang, Sonitpur, Sibsagar, Tinsukia, and Udalguri.

The population of Assam consists of a unique variety of people of different races and tribes. According to the scholars of history, the Khasias and Jaintias are the earliest inhabitant of Assam. The people of the Mongolian stock, probably, followed them next. The various tribes of modern Assam comprising Bodo-Kachari, Garo, Chutia, Mech, Rabha, Lalong, Mikir, Aka-Dafla, Miri, Abor, Mishimi, Naga and Kuki belonged to different branches of the Mongolian race. And the people to infiltrate into Assam were the Muslims in the form of conquerors, traders and missionaries. At present the total number of population of Assam 2,66,55,528 among them the male is 1,37,77,037 and female is 12,87,849 which is also settled in rural 2,32,16,288 and in urban 34,39,240 as per census report 2001.

Among the total population 2,66,55,528 the total population of Hindus is 17,96,455, the total Muslim population is 82,40,611, the Christian population is 9,86,589, and others are 1,31,873. The percent of

¹ Dutta Promath Nath, -Glimpse into the History of Assam, Shillong, P-4
Hindus is 64.89, the Muslim is 30.92, Christian is 3.70 and others are .49 as per religion population in Assam.

The literacy rate in Assam in total is 64.28 out of this the percentage of male is 71.28 and female is 54.61 and the percentage of rural is 59.73 and urban is 85.35 and the percentage of Muslim literacy is 49.86 (male) and 42.64 (female).  

**During the War Period:**

During the course of wars between the Ahoms and Mughals, there were exchanges of diplomatic letters, missions and envoy between the Ahoms and Koches on the one hand and Delhi as well as Dhaka on the other hand. This necessitated the culture of Arabic and Persian in the courts of the Ahom and Koch kings. As a result of this, innumerable Arabic and Persian words found their way into the Assamese language mainly through diplomatic correspondences. This process of the uses of Arabic words by the Ahom and Koch kings and their subjects had been an important basis for the cultivation of Arabic language and literature in Assam. Even in the modern age, in the courts of Assam various judicial correspondences are helping in growth of Arabic language and literature among the Assamese people.

The employment of Muslim settlers in various departments of the government services increased the scope for the development of Arabic

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1. As Per Census 2001 and the Statistical Hand Book, Govt. of Assam, 2005, P- 25
2. Dr. Saikia M.K., -Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, Guwahati, 1978, P- 281
literature in Assam. Besides the government services a large number of Muslims were employed in the guilds of weavers, tailors and drapers, masons. Consequently the Arabic name of those dresses became the important factors of the development of Arabic language in Assam. Some of the Ahom kings patronized Islamic Institutions or religious centres to impart religious education through Arabic and Persian language to their Muslim subjects.¹

**Islamic and Arabic Education:**

From the historical point of view, we may assert that from 1228 A.D. to 1257 A.D. the king of Kamrupa was under the reign of the Bengal Sultans and from then Islam and the Islamic cultures were spread among the people of western Assam without any hindrance from the local authority.

As regard the study of Arabic language and literature during this long thirty years in the Maktab, Madrasahs and other educational institution, we must mention the activities of Ghiyasuddin Iwaz who was a great patron of learning. Many schools, Madrasahs and Mosques with maktabs were built not only in the capital cities but also in almost all important places in the kingdom.²

The Sufi saints not only set up khanqahs in Assam with a view to eradicate Islamic education but also the shelters of the poor and the

¹. Dr. Saikia M.K., -Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, Guwahati, 1978, P- 307
². Roy A.C. -History of Bengal, New Delhi, 1986, P- 58
travelers who were provided free food like the disciples, out of the income sources from cultivation of reserves lands and hadia (donation) from various persons. The Sufis and saints dedicated their whole life in the spread of Islamic knowledge as well as Arabic education of the Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, Sufism etc.¹

**The Cultivation of Arabic Language and Literature in Assam:**
The main factors which appear to have played an important role in the cultivation of Arabic language and literature in Kamrup and Bengal may chiefly discussed basing on 1. Arabic settlement in the eastern regions in India (2) Sufi-saints from Arabia and other Muslim countries (3) Diplomatic relations between the Assamese kings and the Muslim rulers (4) Historical sources and (5) Religious as well as literary sources. Sufi literature is a great contribution to the cultivation of Arabic language and literature in Bengal and Assam. It was highly enriched with the valuable literary contribution of innumerable Sufi-saints, Ulamas and Awliyas who came to Bengal and Kamrup (Assam) from some Arabic and Persian countries with the mission of propagating Islam. Many of them settled down in Bengal, Bihar and Assam permanently and constructed Madrasahs, Khanqahs and Dargahs and converted quite a number of Hindus and Buddhists to Islam.²

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¹ Dr. Ali C.M. – Unpublished Ph.d Thesis, GU, 1994, P- 240
² Roy A.C. – History of Bengal, New Delhi, 1986, PP- 371-372
**Arabic Educational Institutions:**

**Madrasah Aliya:** Madrasah as well as Arabic education in India got reformed by the British government which ruled here till 1947 A.D. On reforming the education system, Warren Hasting (the then governor general of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa) founded Calcutta Madrasah in 1780 A.D. with a view to creating some government employees as well as imparting Islamic along with general education to the Muslim society. Firstly the Calcutta Madrasah or Madrasah Alia was started in a rented house a Baithak Khana, near Sealdah in 1780 A.D. in the month of Shaban 1194 A.H. and Maulana Majuddin became its first principal. But soon the house proved too small to accommodate the growing numbers of young enthusiasts. Al Paddo Pujhar, a plot of land was purchased of at a cost of Rs. 5,641, which the governor paid from his own pocket (as before for hiring a house) and the Madrasah shifted to its new premiers in 1781. The governor sanctioned the following expenditures for various heads:-

1. Salary of professors Rs. 300.00 Per month
2. 40 scholarships of Rs. 222.00 
3. Sweeper Rs. 2.00 
4. House rent Rs. 100.00 

Total Rs. 624.00 Per month

The governor sent his report to the Board of Directors in 1782 at London where the Madrasah scheme was fully endorsed. Until the proposal was accepted, Warren Hasting had already spent a sum of Rs. 20890.00 from his own pocket to meet the expenses of Madrasah Alia. He
further wrote to the authorities at London that a few villages in 24 Pargana, fetching Rs. 1200.00 per month, should be allocated for the Madrasah.¹

Calcutta Madrasah came into being by a freak of fortune and it is chequered carrier has all along received impetus from men of eminence and high rank. Hazrat Maulana Majduddin an erudite scholar of Arabic and Persian and a disciple of Shah Waliullah Dehluvi was staying in Calcutta since 1762A.D. appointed as the first principal of this college.

The Calcutta Madrasah from 1780 to 21st February 2006 runs as Madrasah-e-Aliya, from 22nd February 2006 to 4th April 2008 as Calcutta Madrasah College and from 5th April 2008 it is continuing as Aliya University which is declared by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) govt. on 5th April 2008.²

**Dars-i- Nizami:**

The Madrasah Aliya or Calcutta Madrasah had been always regarded the parent on in the history of Madrasah education in India and all other Madrasahs perhaps followed this Madrasah in respect of syllabus and course of studies.

Calcutta Aliya Madrasah absolutely followed the dars-i- Nizami (درس نظامی) system of Islamic education and brought almost all the Madrasahs from Assam to Peswar under its jurisdiction.

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¹ History of Madrasah Education (with Special Reference to Calcutta Madrasah and West Bengal Madrasah education Board) PP-75-77
² The information collected from Aliya University Library.
Dars-i-Nizami system of education formed and introduced by Mullah Nizamuddin (1089-1161 A.D., the son of Mullah Qutbuddin Shaheed of Qasba Suhali (Lucknow) proved so effective and comprehensive that this system operated successfully till 1790 A.D. in the Madrasahs all over India. Mullah's name and fame has been immortalized by this pattern of syllabi and curriculum being followed in all Arabic Madrasahs with necessary modification from Peshwar to Assam. The peculiarity of dars-i-Nizami has in its turn out which makes the scholars or pupils capable of following any book in Arabic in course of 16 or 17 years of study. It comprises:

1. One or two books on each subject.
2. The book which is difficult is included into the course.
3. Mantiq and philosophy have more emphasis books on these subjects are included in the course more in number.
4. On Hadith, only Miskat is included.
5. Less emphasis on books of literature.

Madrasah of India under the Dars-i-Nizami system played an important role in the spreading of Arabic language and literature. Under this system of Madrasah education, Arabic was made indispensible medium of Islamic learning and culture. It is to be noted here that the

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study of Persian even at the higher level was not considered as an integral part of this standard curriculum.¹

Under the British the condition of Arabic language in India became deplorable; English has made the medium of higher education and particularly of secular arts and sciences. Arabic and Persian were now treated more classical language to be studied in separate department and were no longer regarded as the pivot of Islamic studies and vitalizing force in the general cultural and education of an average Muslim.²

**Examination System:** Mr. Aryan the first secretary of Calcutta Madrasah sent his first report of the Madrasah committee to the governor general in 1820. All resolutions adopted by the committee were implemented peacefully except that dealt with holding of annual examination and scholarship. Various minds viewed the proposition from various angles but the fact was; the ethical and long established tradition came in the way of accepting the principle of public examination, people were not acquainted with the system of annual or terminal examination all in India. Heads of the institutions were considered the only persons competent enough to assess the merit or demerit of their students and as such they used to declare the students to be promoted to next higher classes or fit for obtaining final degree called ‘sanad’ with the

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¹ Nadvi A.H.A. –Hindustan ki Qadim Islami Dars qahhh, Azamgarh, 1936, P-118
introduction of this new system they regarded it as a sort of encroachment over their authority and erosion of personal prestige.¹

Madrasah Muhsinia: In Hooqly the second Madrasah after Calcutta Aliya Madrasah was set in motion under the title ‘Muhsinia’ Madrasah in 1817 A.D. the expenditure of which was absolutely borne by ‘Haji Muhsin Fund’.² This Madrasah, controlled by Calcutta Aliya Madrasah, could rightly boast of producing a renowned Islamic scholar like Syed Amir Ali Bahadur who is the author of “The spirit of Islam” and “History of the Saracens”.

The holding of Madrasah examination was such a historic event that not only the high government employees but also the eminent scholars of the city came to witness the function. Thus 1821 A.D. was the starting point of Madrasah examination in the eastern region of Indian Territory.

It appears from the records that there had been only two Madrasahs namely Calcutta Madrasah and Muhsinia Madrasah and we do not have records suggesting the foundation of any Madrasah promoting Arabic education in Bengal, Assam till 1860A.D. In 1837A.D. when Persian was removed from the court, the Madrasahs were covered to mere religious institution. The first managing committee for the smooth running of these two Madrasahs was constructed under the chairmanship of Justice Mr. Norman on 24ᵗʰ march 1871 A.D.

¹. History of Madrasah Education (with Special Reference to Calcutta Madrasah and West Bengal Madrasah education Board) PP-89-90
The British government also patronized to set up some Anglo-Arabic Madrasahs in 1875 A.D. As a result Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh and Lahore Islamic College (presently at Pakistan) which a new form took place in Madrasah education in India. In Calcutta Aliya Madrasah Anglo Persian department was also introduced in the same year.¹

It appears from the records that the first partition of Bengal took place in 1905 for which it was declared separate provinces like Bihar, Orissa and Assam which owned their respective Madrasah Board for conducting and controlling Madrasah examination under their jurisdiction and Dhaka became the capital of Assam with East Bengal in 1905 under the royal orders of Lord Curzon, the British governor general.²

**Lord Curzon's Education Policy:**

The course of this duration, the Madrasahs lying under the jurisdiction of the newly created province of East Bengal and Assam remained aloof but they followed the syllabi and curriculum of Calcutta Madrasah and the students appeared in the central Madrasah examination board. Dhaka, on account of its being the capital of Assam, displayed an important role in the spread of Arabic language and literature in addition to other subjects of Islamic education among the students of Assam and East Bengal till 1912 A.D.³

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¹. Sankipta Islamic Biswakosh, vol.II, Bangladesh, 1982, P- 212
². Tamizi Yahya, -Sufi Movement in Eastern India, Delhi, 1983, P-84
Advisory committee for Madrasah education was held on 31st July 1914 for reforming Madrasah scheme and English education was incepted in the reformed Madrasahs and Islamic knowledge including Arabic language and literature was important through the medium of modern text books. The reformation was implemented in the government Madrasahs but the Arabic department of Calcutta Aliya Madrasah was kept intact. In this department some modernized old Islamic education was still in force. Consequently two types of non-government Madrasahs namely (1) Madrasahs under new scheme and (2) Madrasahs under old scheme, led by Calcutta Madrasah began to continue.\(^1\) In course of time the reformed Madrasah disappeared and some appropriate reform took place in the old Madrasahs of different provinces of India including Assam.

Assam was naturally divided into Surma valley (which included Sylhet) and Brahmaputra valley for the conveniences of administration. Sylhet had been incorporated in the province of Assam in the year 1874A.D. by the British government. Though Shillong was the capital of Assam, Sylhet displayed a significant role in the learners of Assam.\(^2\) The Madrasahs of Assam followed the syllabi and curricula of Sylhet Madrasah in full. With the spaces of time Badarpur (in undivided Cachar), Jaleswar (in Goalpara district), Hojai (in Nagaon district), Dhubri, Bans-Kandi and Sibsaga etc. became distinguished seats of Arabic learning and Islamic education.

\(^1\) Sankipta Islamic Biswakosh, vol.II, Bangladesh, 1982, PP- 212-213
\(^2\) Dutta Pronath Nath, -Glimpse into the History of Assam, Shillong, 1986, P-254