

CHAPTER-IV

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CHAPTER- IV

PROPAGATION OF ISLAM IN ASSAM

1. Sufis and Faqirs:

Islam was propagated in India mainly by the sufis who were humble folk, lived and worked among the Indian masses¹. They had no linguistic prejudice and though in certain places they were men of education, and new Arabic and Persian languages, they did not hesitate to take to the languages of masses. They possessed knowledge of Arabic but its use among them was very limited, its knowledge mainly being utilized for the study of the sacred scriptures and certain other works on sufism written in Arabic, for instance *‘Ulūm al – Dīn* by Imam Ghazzali and *‘Awārif al – Ma ‘ārif* by Shihabuddin Shuharwardi. Persian was the language employed by them as means of inter – regional communications. It was also employed by them for giving expression to their own ideas not meant to be communicated to the common masses. We possess an enormous literature of a religious character of Sufi trends, produced in Persian by the Indian Sufis like Akhi Siraj al-Din (d. 1357 A.D.), Shaikh ‘Ala al – Haq Panduwi (d. 1398), Nur Qutb ī Alam Panduwi (d. 1459 A.D.), Muhammad bin Faḍlullah (d. 1620), Shaykh^h Abdul Haq Dehlawi (d. 1642 A.D.), Muhibullah Ilahabadi (d. 1648), Mullah Mahmud Faruqi Jaunpuri (d. 1651), Abdul Hakim Siyalkoti (d. 1656), Mulla Muhammad Amin Kashmiri (d. 1697) and Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddith Dehlawi (d. 1823).

1. The Preaching of Islam, T.W. Arnold, PP 254, Delhi – 1990

In spite of all these, the sufis as pointed out above did not disdain to make use of the native languages. Baba Fariduddin Ganj Shakar, the preceptor of Shaykh Nizamuddin of Delhi, was a scholar of Arabic and Persian but he composed hymns and prayers in Punjabi, the prevailing language of the region where he lived. Amir Khusrau, a famous disciple of Shaykh Nizamuddin of Delhi and a Sufi, although a profound scholar of Arabic and an eminent poet of Persian, composed verses and riddles in Hindi and was, at the same time, conversant with Sanskrit². The Sufis preached to the masses and spoke to them in their native languages, and it was through their agency that Persian absorbed native words, and at the same time lent Arabic and Persian words to the native languages which became in course of time part and parcel of these languages.

It is understandable that the Muslim invaders of India were not fired by the zeal to spread Islam in the conquered territories, which was the characteristic of the early Arab Muslim conquerors. It is difficult to acknowledge that Mahmud Ghaznavi or his successors took any active interest in spreading Islam in the parts of India conquered by them. The Ulama' did, indeed, look upon idolatry, the prevailing religion of this country with horror, but, however, they did not condescend to come down to common level to convey the message of Islam to them; their sole duty was to give legal opinion on certain issues when requested by the rulers, otherwise they were quite content to receive their permissions and to carry on their legal studies on theological disputes. This amply shows that they kept themselves far away from the masses and as such they could hardly expect to

2. Iran and India through the Ages, F.C. Davar, PP. 157, Bombay - 1962.

exert in moral or cultural influence on the Indian masses. Muslim governments of India with rare exception hardly evinced any interest in the conversion of the masses, though they did not actually discourage it. The kings and the members of the ruling classes themselves lived Islamic lives, including themselves in debauchery and giving loose range to their desires of a baser type. It was, therefore, left to the wandering sufis and faqirs to carry the message and solace of Islam solely needed by the conquered and already down trodden masses explicitly by the Brahmins³.

The Hindus, masses and classes alike, are with rare exceptions, a deeply religious people even sometimes to the extent of credulity. The vast majority of them including the lower classes, were greatly, even mercilessly and ruthlessly exploited by the upper classes of the Hindu society and were deprived of all social as well as religious rights⁴. It is, therefore, not at all difficult to understand that the Hindu masses and sometimes the members of the upper as well as intellectual classes were deeply touched by the piety and godly lives of the sufis, over and above the racial equality, which Islam offers to a person however lowly his origin might have been. There were the factors that induced vast masses of humble origin of Bengal and Assam to enter into the folds of Islam and it was the sufis to whom the Hindu masses disgusted with the exploitations and tyranny of their own priestly class, turned for spiritual solace and alleviation of their sufferings. To the sufis, these peoples resorted to get their blessings in their difficulties of life and thus they were susceptible to their preaching. Thus we can easily understand

3. The Preaching of Islam, T.W. Arnold, PP. 269, Delhi – 1990.

4. Ibid, PP. 279 – 80.

that the proselytisation of the Indian natives was mainly achieved by the sufis. On the one hand there were the sufis who were lending words of their cultural languages to the languages of the masses⁵ and on the other hand there was a Muslim soldiery who being attracted by the charms of Indian lives married native women and spoke native languages; and thus the passing of Persian and Arabic words to the native languages began to take place.

In India the conquering Muslims formed an atmosphere of life quite different from those to which they were familiar with and accustomed to in their own land e.g. new food, corns, music and public women – an institution which was not permitted to exist openly and hence there slave girls who could be held in any number on clandestine prostitution which usually developed in case of repression. Young members of the Muslim soldiery generously patronized of such public women, in spite of all disapproval or censure that must had come from the orthodox section of the Muslim society. Young Muslim soldiers were so enamoured of these women that all the declamation or condemnation of such relations went unheeded. Such contact naturally provided an excellent medium of exchange of words between the two peoples. Besides, these public women were welcomed at the royal courts themselves⁶. The public women or along with them certainly those who wanted to win the favour of the court, learnt Persian; and a new avenue for cultural exchange was opened between the two parties, making it possible for words and ideas to flow from one side to another. Now coming to the

5. Indo – Iran Relation, Dr. N.S. Gorekar, PP. XIII, Bobmbay – 1970.

6. Persian Influence on Hindi, Dr. Haridev Bahri, PP. 9, Allahabad – 1960.

areas of Bengal and Assam we will make a study of the cultural exchange between the invading people and the native population. For making a study of the exchange between the foreigners and local people Bengal and Assam may be treated as one cultural unit as these two states have many things in common, e.g. religion, script and although Bengali and Assamese have been recognized as two different languages, there are a lot which is common between the two. Moreover, the communication between the two states are also easy. From the geographical point of view these two states can be considered as a single unit. With the establishment of Muslim power in Delhi, Bengal was almost conquered immediately by an adventurer known as Malik Bakhtyar. He had a very inadequate course at his disposal. After conquering Bengal, as traditional relation he passed on to the conquests of Assam, but it is certain that he and his small force met with a disaster here and were heard of no more henceforth⁷. But the conquests of Bengal opened the way to Assam too and along with Muslim forces, Muslim sufis also began to arrive in Assam by whose piety and earnestness, purity of life, the native population was greatly attracted. Although the complete conquests of Assam was achieved in the 17th century by the Mughal Muslims⁸, cultural and religious relations between the two peoples, the Muslims and the Assamese had been developed much earlier, even before the formal conquest of Assam by the Turkish Muslim in the 13th century as already mentioned above. It has been already shown that the sufis possessed, with their pantheistic doctrines and the ideas of tolerance, to mix with the common people as they did not suffer

7. History of Bengal, J.N.Sarkar, PP. 10 – 11, Patna - 1973.

8. The life of Mir Jumla, Dr. J. N. Sarkar, PP. 332, Delhi – 1979.

from any narrow religious or sactorial prejudices. We find a notable example of cultural exchange in Bengal. The Muslims after conquering this state, settled down there permanently and being intellectually curious they were eager to know more exactly of the cultural treasures of Hindus about which they had come to know something rather vaguely. Therefore, they ordered the translations of the Ramayana and Mahabharata into Bengali, the language which they certainly understood⁹. This step for getting the translations of these great epics of the Hindus laid the foundation of the Bengali literature. Muslim rulers like Ghiasuddin (Guisuddin) and nobles like Chhoty Khan (Chutey Khan) Pragal Khan (Paragal or Parangal Khan) were great patrons of Bengali language and literature¹⁰. The nobility and the upper classes as well as the fresh arrivals from the North were certainly adopt with Persian and the natives through their contact with them borrowed abundant of Persian and Arabic words which became in due course part and parcel of the Bengali language. In spite of the efforts of the purists in the nineteenth century to purge Bengali of foreign vocabulary, these words have managed to form an integral part of the Bengali language.¹¹

Besides, the ruling classes which displayed an intellectual curiosity which only was to appear in the North under Akbar, the Great, several centuries later on, the sufis also played a role in the state of Assam as important as any where else, rather more important if the majority of the Muslims is taken into consideration in this state. It is a fact that the cultural or the religious influence exercised by Islam mainly took place through the agency of the Sufis.

9. Influence of Islam on Indian Culture, Tarachand, pp. 214. Allahabad – 1946.

10. History of Bengal Literature, Dr. Sukumar Sen, PP. 80 – 81, New Delhi – 1960.

11. Ibid. PP. 6 – 7.

To sum up, besides the soldiery, the sufis were the main channel through which Arabic and Persian words found their way into Assamese language. The Sufis who settled down in Assam were not only responsible for lending Arabic and Persian words to Assamese but they developed two new literary genres which have added beauty and richness to Assamese literature and have not ceased to exercise a powerful hold on the minds of the Muslim masses in Assam. These literary genres are known as Zikir (dhikr) and Zari (zari)¹². Zikirs are prayers addressed to Allah containing his praises, while zari which apparently comes from the Persian word 'zari' meaning to weep, to lament, and may be translated in English elegies. (Zikirs and Zaris will be again discussed at some length when I come to speak of the impact of Perso – Arab relations on Assamese language and literature.)

All the sufis who visited India, were men of Persian origin and Persian, therefore, was naturally their mother tongue in which they talked, wrote and to an inner circle of disciple preached in that language. It is fact that Persian was inter-loaded with 70% Arabic words and dressed in Arabic script though it was an indigenous language of the Persians¹³. Sufism itself is an Iranian system of thought and was developed mostly by them, though it not possible to deny that the germs of sufism are found in the Holy Quran and the teaching of the Prophet¹⁴; but these rudiments were developed by the Persians and the non-Arabs and a

12. Assamia Jikir – Zari Sar. S.M. Hussain, PP. 19, Gauhati – 1990.

13. Iran and India through the Ages. F.C. Davar, PP. 147, Bombay – 1962.

14. Arabi Adabiyat Me Pak Wa Hind Ka Hissah. Dr. Zubayr Ahmad, PP. 105 – 8.

(Urdu translation by S.H. Razzaqi, Lahor – 1987.)

number of doctrines of non- Islamic origin were borrowed and added to it¹⁵. But however, most of the sufis adhered to the teaching of Islam, deviating in very rare cases from the orthodox Islam or putting on it their own interpretation. Shaykh Nizamuddin of Delhi and his teachers Shakh Fariduddin, Khwaja Qutbuddin Bhakhtyar were all orthodox Muslims compared to Mas 'ud Bak and some other Sufis who not only believed in Pantheism, a doctrine, unknown to the early Muslims, but also rejected the external practices enjoined by Islam such as prayers, fasting etc¹⁶. But we find such Sufis not taking the responsibilities of the missionary activities, keeping their doctrines to themselves for fear of arousing the wrath of the orthodox sections of the Muslim population.

However, the task of spreading Islam was accomplished in our country only by the sufis. We know that even the British Government, though they stood impartial in the matters of religion, maintained an 'Ecclesiastical Department', which received subsidies from the government. Muslim Governments had so such department. The propagation of Islam was carried on by the private agencies like the sufis.

Now it is worth while to give notice to the Muslim saints (Sufis) who came to Assam and settled down there and made also the tremendous religious influence which they exercised upon the religious, and indirectly, on the cultural life of the state. Their number is numerous, and I shall content myself with mentioning a few of them, just to show how the Assamese religious and cultural life was dominated by them, and it was through them who mixed so freely with the

15. Influence of Islam on Indian Culture. Tarachand, pp. 63-64, Allahabad – 1946.

16. Ibid. PP. 74.

people that the Assamese language owes its borrowed words of Arabic and Persian.

Much of the materials quoted regarding the saints may not be true from the historical point of view, but sometimes as they say that fiction is more true than fact. For these reasons, the sufis truly reflected their character, which powerfully swayed the common minds of Assamese people and paint to us faithfully their missionary activities. As such only the historical figures among these sufis are considered; whose influences continue up to the present day.

2. Muslim Sufis of Assam

Many Muslim saints entered Assam with the invading Muhammedan armies. Some of these saints stayed in this country, while others might have returned after a short stay. We shall presently discuss about the saints whose names are associated with some of the Muslim places in ancient Assam. The name of Kheraj Pir is held in high esteem in western Assam. This saint of Qutb and Abdal order is also known as Khwaja Khizr and the term 'Baliyan' is attributed to him. The city of Siraj in Persia is taken to be his birth place. In early part of his life, he was a merchant as well as chemist. But subsequently he became a traveller having dedicated himself in the service of God. A stream near Kabul in Afghanistan is said to be associated with his name. Curiously enough a rock inscription in Persian saying: 'ab – e – hayat chachm – e – khizr' is found near a stream of the foot of the eastern slope of the Kamakhya Hills, in the north of the steps leading to the temple. Some people wrongly accept this Pir as the messenger

of God. In ancient time the people of this area, were said to have held him in high esteem.

In Koch Bihar the name of Satya Pir (dating 16th century to 18th century) still holds its influence¹⁷. It is believed that he was a Hindu convert from Rajshahi district and 'Satya Pir' was his title only. Many Hindus of North Bengal are said to have adopted Islamic faith from him.

Pir Shah Madar, whose title is said to be 'Badi 'uddin', has been believed to be a resident of Madinah and a disciple of Muhammad Bustani. It is also said that from Shah Madar the community of 'Madari Faqir' developed. He was present in the places of India ravaged by Timur. It was after this event, he seems to have come to Kamrupa. It is said that there are holy places associated with his name in Paharpur, Rajshahi, Begura, Sherpur and Butna near Dacca¹⁸.

The name of Pagal Pir has still its influence on many people in Koch Bihar and Western Assam. It is said that rabid dogs or jackals became subdued as soon as they saw the Pagal Pir. It is for this that the people in later times, place a bamboo stick in the name of the pir when they are to subdue such rabid animals. In this performance a person behaves like a 'Bhauriya' (on whom the pir has his influence) or a mad – man and makes prophecies¹⁹.

The two Pirs whose tombs are in the enclosures of Panjatan or Dakaidal Dargah and Dedhoa Dargah near the modern Goalpara Town, were said

17. The Rise of Islam and Bengal Frontier (1204 – 1760). Richard M. Elton. PP. 279 – 80, Oxford University Press, New Delhi – 2000.

18. Koch Biharer Itihas, Khan Amanatullah Choudhury, PP. 69, Koch Bihar – 1936.

19. Ibid. PP. 68.

to be the contemporaries of the Pagal Pir of Dhupdhara, a place situated about 50 miles east of this town. According to a tradition, they entered Assam together with an army of Muslim invaders. It may, however, be noted here that the reference to the Muslim armies invading Assam, appears to be a common feature of most of such local traditions concerning the advent of the Musalman saints in this country. It is, therefore, not unlikely that in most cases the stories of invading armies were introduced by the people of later periods; and hence there are historical values in them²⁰.

The Pagal Pir of this account appears to be the same person about whom we have discussed earlier. The names of the Pirs of Degdhoa and Panjatan Dargah are not known. It is, however, said that they were the founders of the two Dargahs, and they stayed in their respective Dargahs till their death and they were entombed there. Many people from different parts of the district Goalpara, even today, visit the Panjatan Dargah and make offerings to the Pir in the tomb for fulfilment of their prayers²¹.

Tradition concerning the Pir of Degdhoa Dargah is that he was stabbed to death by a disciple. It is said that he had a pet bird of extraordinary qualities, and a large number of pigeons, which roasted on a rock near the abode of the Pir, on the bank of the river Brahmaputra. His pet bird could recognize each of his disciples. With the assassination of the Pir, the bird is said to have fasted unto death and other pigeons disappeared suddenly. The rock where they roasted, is now known as the

20. Pavitra Asam, Dr. Maheswar Neog, PP. 293, Gauhati – 1969.

21. Ibid. Koch Biharer Itihas, K.A. Choudhury, PP. 66.

‘Kabutarer Sil’ or the rock of the pigeons²².

From a chronicle preserved in the Damdama Sikh Gurudwar in Goalpara district, it is learnt that Raja Ram Singh, the noted Rajput general of Emperor Aurangzeb, when led his punitive expedition against Ahom King Chakradhwaj Singha in 1667 A.D., he brought with him five renowned Pirs – Shah Akbar, Shah Bagmar, Shah Sufi, Shah Sharan and Shah Kamal to overcome the Assamese black art and magic²³. The general concern of opinion is that these five Pirs stayed together till their death in the place where the ‘Panch Pirar Dargah’ of Dhubri is now situated. But some section of people believe that Shah Akbar, the head of these Pirs, alone stayed there till his death and the Dargah contains his tomb only. To the south - west of Garo hills district of Assam (undivided Assam) and near the border of Mymensing district in Bangladesh, a pir popularly known as Shah Kamal is said to have stayed in a Khanqah. According to a tradition this pir was the same person as Shah Kamal who was one of these five pirs of Dhubri²⁴.

In our discussions about the invasion of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah of Gauda in the early 14th century we have referred to a local tradition concerning the advent of the saint Ghiyasuddin Awliya to Assam. The tradition is such that the saint entered Assam with the invading army of Sultan Ghiyasuddin in 721 A.H. He first stayed in Garigaon area to the west of Gauhati, but he later went to Hajo on the north bank of the Brahmaputra in Kamrup district and stayed there on the top of Gurudachal Parbat (hillock)²⁵. Another tradition relates that Hazrat

22. Ibid, PP. 293, 359, 359 (Foot note).

23. Annals of the Delhi Badshahate, S.K. Bhuyan, PP. 101.

24. Pavitra Assam, Dr. M. Neog, PP. 301, Gauhati – 1969.

25. Shah Sultan Ghiyasuddin Awliya. S. Abdul Basit, PP. 4, Shillong – 1963.

Ghiyasuddin Awliya came to India from the Arab land sometimes around 642 A.H., when a famine ravaged the latter country. Having passed several years in different parts of India, he came to the Brahmaputra Valley with three of his Compeers 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 Hajo²⁶.

In the Assam district Gazetteer (Kamrup) B.C. Allen records two different accounts concerning the Dargah on the top of this mountain in Hajo. One of these accounts relates that a mosque was built on the mountain by one Sultan Ghiyasuddin. But he died before it was completed and he was buried there within the enclosure of the mosque. According to the other account Sultan Ghiyasuddin was killed in a war with the Ahoms near Biswanath and his body was brought to Hajo by his vanquished soldiery. In 'Kamrupar Buranji' it is recorded that one Sultan 'Balwanta Ghiyasuddin', the son of Sultan Hussain Shah of Gauda ruled over Kamrup region for sometime. The seat of his government was on the top of the Kuverachal mountain where he died²⁷.

In the land grant issued to Hajo Dargah by Sultan Shuja, the son of Emperor Shahjahan, it is recorded that the mountain of Gurudachal contains the tomb of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balwan²⁸.

Minhajuddin²⁹ recorded that the sign of Islam appeared in the country when Ikhtyaruddin Malik Yuzbak instituted Friday religious services, having erected a mosque there. It is, therefore, not unlikely that Hazrat Ghiyasuddin

26. Poa Macca Dargah, Muhammad Hussain, An Article Published in 'Assam Bani' Feb. 27, 1959.

27. Kamrupar Buranji, S.K. Bhuyan, PP. 4, Gauhati - 1958.

28. Ibid.

29. Tabaqat - I - Nasiri, Minhajuddin Siraj (Eng. Tr., by Raverty), PP. 208, Vol. I. 1881.

Awliya entered Kamrup during that time i.e. 1257 – 58, and being a faqir he was spared by the king of Kamrup who destroyed the entire forces of Malik Yuzbak. The Dargah of Hazrat Ghiyasuddin Awliya being situated on the top of Gurudachal in Hajo, we may presume that Ikhtyarruddin Malik Yuzbak erected the mosque there in 1256 A.D. There is no reference to Hazrat Ghiyasuddin Awliya's stay in Garigaon in any of these accounts. So it may be generally thought that the saint might have come from Hajo to the bank to the Brahmaputra and stayed for sometimes in Garigaon.

Curiously enough, there is a strong belief among the Muslims of Kamrup that Hazrat Jalaluddin Tabrizi, who is said to have passed away in 1244 A.D., stayed in Garigaon, Hajo and Ilechu Parbat in the east of Gauhati. It is also believed that his tomb is in the Garigaon Khanqah in the west of Gauhati. A few years ago the local Muslims unearthed an ancient tomb within the enclosures of this Khanqah³⁰. It is not unlikely that Hazrat Jalaluddin Tabrizi visited Assam sometime in the first quarter of the 13th century, when the Kamrup region of the Brahmaputra Valley was ruled by local tribal chiefs either independently or as vassals of Gauda Sultan Allauddin Mardan Khaliji. It is also probable that he entered the country with the invading armies of Hisamuddin Iwaz, who was killed by Nasiruddin Mahmud, eldest son of Sultan Iltutmish of Delhi in 1227 A.D. We learn from Minhajuddin, author of *Tabaqat – i – Nasiri*, that a tribal chief of this region adopted Islamic faith at the hands of Muhammad bin Bakhtyar, and his followers held the latter in high esteem so much that they came for his rescue

30. Collected from Retd. Prof. Amin Khan, Cotton College, Gauhati.

after his disaster on the bank of Barnadi in 1206 A.D.

From the account of Ibn Batutah we learn that the Mourish traveller visited a renowned saint, who stayed in a cavern of a mountain of Kamrupa (Kamru). This mountain was within or near the territory of 'Hasbank'. A large river flowed through this territory and Ibn Batutah steered down this river, when he returned from Kamrupa³¹.

It is, however, difficult to ascertain from the travel account whether the name of the saint was Jalaluddin Tabrizi or Jalaluddin Shiraji³².

The general consensus of opinion is that Ibn Batuta actually visited saint Shah alal of sylhet, who is also regarded as the traditional conqueror of the latter territory in 703 A.H.³³. This contention seems to have been based on Blochmann's observation that Hazrat Jalaluddin Tabrizi passed away in 1244 A.D.³⁴. H. Beneridge, however, finds sufficient reasons to assert that the year 1244 A.D. cannot be the last year of Hazrat Jalaluddin Tabrizi and that he was not the same person as Faqir Shah Jaial of Sylhet³⁵.

To conclude, we hold that the renowned Saint Ghiyasuddin Awliya of the Hajo Dargah, which is popularly known as 'Poa Macca', entered Assam by the middle of 13th century and lived there till 1346 – 47 A.D., and that it was to visit him that Ibn Batutah came to the 'mountain of Kamrup'. As it is clear from the

31. The Rehla of Ibn Batuta, Agha Mahdi Hussain, PP. 241, Baroda – 1953.

32. Travels of Ibn Batuta, Gibbs, PP. 268, 366, Cambridge – 1958.

33. History of Bengal, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 100, Patna – 1973.

34. J.A.S.B. Vol. XLII, H. Blochmann, PP. 260 – 281.

35. Jalaluddin Tabrezi, H. Beneridge, J.A.S.B. Appendix, B. 1895, PP. 230, Foot-Note-32

travelling description of Ibn Batutah that he himself has mentioned the mountain of Kamrupa (Kamru) and Shaykh Jalaluddin Tabrizi to whom he came to meet. Ibn Batutah in his own language has said:

ولمّاد خلت سدكاوان لم أر سلطانها ولا لقبيتها أنه مخالفة على ملك الهند فخفت عاقبة ذلك، وسافرت من سدكاوان بقصد جبال كامرؤ،³⁶ وبينها وبين سدكاوان مسيرة شهر، وهي جبال متسعة متصلة بالصين، وتتصل أيضاً ببلاد التبت (التيبث) حيث غزلان المسك

وأهل هذا الجبل يشبهون الترك، ولهم قوة على الخدمة، والغلام منهم يساوى أضعاف ما يساويه الغلام من غيرهم، وهم مشهورون بمعاونة السحر والاشتغال به. وكان قصدي بالمشير إلى هذه الجبال لقاء وليي من الأولياء بها، وهو الشيخ جلال الدين التبريزي³⁷

Ibn Batuta went to meet the Shaykh and his meeting with the Shaykh having taken place towards the close of 746 A.H./1345 A.D. The date of the saint's death can be conveniently traced since he died shortly after Ibn Batutah's withdrawal and the latter heard of the news of death in the following in China³⁸. Regarding Shaykh Jalaluddin Tabrizi he has given brief description in the following words:

وهذا الشيخ من كبار الأولياء وأفراد الرجال، له الكرامات الشهيرة والمآثر العظيمة، وهو من المعمرين، أخبرني، رحمه الله، أنه أدرك بالخليفة المستنصر بالله العباسي ببغداد، وكان بها حين قتله، وأخبرني أصحابه بعد هذه المدة أنه مات

36. Kamru is meant here Old Kamrup of Assam which had Bhutan as its northern extremity and the Khasi hills of Meghalaya in the southern border. (The Rehla of Ibn Battuta, A.M. Hussain, PP. 237, Baroda – 1953.)

37. Rihla Ibn Batuta, Dar Sadir, PP. 612, Beirut – 1964 A.D. (1384 A.H.).

38. The Rehla of Ibn Batutah, Agha Mahdi Hussain, PP. 238, Baroda – 1953.

وهو ابن مائة وخمسين، وأنه كان نحو أربعين سنة يسرد الصوم، ولا يفطر إلا بعد مواصلة عشر. وكانت له بقرة يفطر على حليبها، يقوم الليل كله. وكان نحيف الجسم طوالاً، خفف العارفين، وعلى يديه أسلم أهل تلك الجبال، ولذلك اقام بينهم³⁹

In the Laur mountain which is situated about seventy miles away from Shillong town in the Khasi and Jayantiya Hills (Present Meghalaya) districts of Assam there is a very ancient Khanqah. Tradition relates that the Khanqah was founded by Hazrat Shah Sharifin. He is believed still to be living and the strong belief of the local inhabitants in the area is that they even now, at times, hear the 'Adhan' of the saint. They also believed that the saint secretly traveled to Mecca through a tunnel, the remains of which can still be seen in the enclosures of the Khanqah⁴⁰.

Faqir Shah Madar referred to in this inscription, however, appears to be the same pir about whom the discussions have been already made.

Except a few traditions, which are also extremely confusing and desultory, no reliable account of these pirs of ancient Assam, is available at present. It is, however, gathered from such of the traditions that many of the pirs came with Muslim invaders of other parts of the country than north - east region. It seems that the local accounts, if there were any, concerning the life of these Pirs might have been lost during the period of incessant wars between the Muslims and Ahom Kings of Assam.

39. The Rehla of Ibn Batutah, Dar Sadir, PP. 612, Beirut - 1964 A.D.

40. Pavitra Assam, Dr. Maheswar Neog, PP. 304, Gauhati - 1969.

Chand Khan who is more popularly known as Chand Sai among the Assamese people, was one of the renowned religious men of ancient Assam. He was a tailor by profession and became a disciple of Sankardeva (16th century). It was probably for this that he was also called Kabir by his Assamese brethren. A number of zikirs and other religious songs are ascribed to him⁴¹.

Chand Sai was a disciple of Sankardeva, who flourished from 1449 A.D., to 1569 A.D. Many miraculous stories about his divine power have been current among the Assamese people. The account recorded by J.P. Wade relates that Kabir (Chand Sai) being ordered by his mother to repair the tottering roof of his house, he went to gather thatches. But when he saw the thatches waved to and fro in wind, like Brahmins praying to God he desisted from cutting the reeds and returned home. But at the home he found that the house had already been repaired by a miracle while his mother was preparing her victuals and had not perceived. The mother and the son then joined in acknowledging the hand of God in the work⁴².

In the middle of the 17th century Hazrat Shah Miran alias Adhan Faqir, the most renowned Muslim saint poet of Assam, is said to have entered in the Ahom Kingdom with his brother Hazrat Saheh Saheb alias Nabi Pir from some place in the western country⁴³. Adhan Faqir had composed a number of zikirs in Assamese and some of these zikirs were composed during 1045 A.H., to 1057 A.H. (1635 A.D. to 1642 A.D.)⁴⁴. The reference of these dates and the uses of literary

41. Sankardeva and his times. Dr. Maheswar Neog, PP. 369, Gauhati – 1965.
42. Kavir Gosain at Hajo, J.P. Wade, PP. 212 – 13, Assam review, May – 1929
43. Pavitra Assam, Dr. Maheswar Neog, PP. 51, Gauhati – 1969.
44. Zikir Aru Zari, Sayed Abdul Malik, PP. 82, Gauhati – 1985.

expressions from Assamese folk songs and other vaishnavite literary works in some of his zikirs of high literary merit suggested that by that time he had not only established himself in Assam but also acquired perfect knowledge of Assamese folk literature and other religious literature besides a perfect command over the language. We have, therefore, reasons to believe that he had entered Assam with the Mughal forces as early as 1612 – 13 A.D., and stayed with them in Hajo in the Kamrup district till 1626 A.D. It was not unlikely that he actually acquired a proper knowledge of the Assamese language and literary works of Vaishnavite period.

From some zikirs we learn that Adhan Faqir was a grey haired man when he entered the Ahom kingdom. The zikirs which the Faqir's composed, in 1635 A.D., shows that in language and style it confirms distinctly to the folk songs of eastern Assam Valley.

Tradition relating to Hazrat Saleh is that he stayed in Tiru Pather near Charaidew hills in Sibsagar district. His descendants are known as Nabi Ghariya or the descendants of Nabi Pir. The Muslims of Nazira in Sibasagar believe that he was entombed at a place in the vicinity of the Ahom royal palace at Gargaon (Nazira)⁴⁵.

Hazrat Abdul Ghani alias Khondkar Pir, who stayed in Assam during the time of Adhan Faqir, is said to have ended his life by himself with the help of grass blade. No sepulchre was raised around his body. The white ants are said to have raised a mound over his body where it laid in rest. Even today an ant hill is seen on his grave. This grave is said to be situated on the bank of the river Dilih in

45. Pavitra Assam, Dr. Maheswar Neog, PP. 55, Gauhari-1969.

Sibasagar. His descendants still claim themselves as Sayeds and they are known as the Komaldaiya Dewans in Assam⁴⁶.

Sawal Pir was popularly known as Bandar Pir and it is said that he came to Assam during the time of Adhan Faqir. Tradition relates that this Pir had always roamed in jungles in order to avoid the 'mad crowd'. It was for this that he was called Bandar or Monkey Pir. He had no permanent residence. The general consensus of opinion is that he was entombed on the bank of the river Dichang in Sibasagar⁴⁷.

In the copper plate inscription of Ahom king Lakshmi Singha issued in 1780 A.D., we find references to 'Panch Pirs' of Khetri, and Shah Faqir of Barnagar besides Faqir Shah Madar of Bausi Pargana.. All these places are within the Kamrup district (undivided). No account of these Pirs of Kamrup district is now available. But it appears to be quite certain that they all flourished long before 1780 A.D., and their name exercised considerable influences on the native people, at least, till that time. The copper plate grants relate that the king placed Anwar Haji Faqir, a members of a Persian Reader's family of Assam, in the charge of the 'Makams' of these Faqirs and he was granted revenue – free land with a number of servants⁴⁸.

Apart from these Pirs and awliyas, there were some Muslim religious pontiffs who were accepted as priests by some of the Ahom kings. These holy men

46. Assam District Gazetteer, B.C. Allen, Sibasagar, PP. 163 (Shillong – 1905 – 7).

47. Pavitra Assam, Dr. Maheswar Neog, PP. 55, Gauhati – 1969.

48. Annals of Delhi Badshahate, S. K. Bhuyan, PP. 15.

stayed in the vicinity of the Ahom palace. They are said to have been granted privileges similar to those granted to the Hindu priests of the kings. J.P. Wade, who stayed in Assam from 1792 A.D., to 1794 A.D., noticed: "A Musalman of the name of Newas was gooroo general of his persuasion in Assam from about the time of Roodur Singha. He had numerous attendants. He dressed in high Musalman fashion. He resided at or near the capital and frequented to darbar and the Swargadais (kings) used to dispatch him to pray at Hadjoo (Hajo) after the Musalman fashion for their prosperity. He was usually succeeded by his nearest relations. He was indulged with the privilege of riding on horse - back, but not in Palki - dolah. Three or four priests always remain in attendance at the place. The movement of king came forth to take the air, they called down the blessing of God on him with elevated hands. Whenever the Surgee (king) sent this man to perform puja at Makam Hadjoo he always sent considerable presents to the temple."

A number of Musalman Gosains were said to have stayed in Jorhat subdivision in the latter part of Ahom rule in Assam. Their positions and functions were like those of the heads of the Vaishnava monasteries of ancient Assam. "Occasionally they assume the title Dewan while their local names are derived from their residence or from the name of the saint of the live whose successors are distinguished from him by the appellation Deka or youth". The names of these Gariya Gosains or Muslim spiritual guides were (i) Akan Deka son of Karphul Deka of Holonga Puriya live, (ii) Aol Deka of Bakir Puriya Gosain family and (iii) Dewan Deka of Sak Khoa Dewan family. They were, however, not bound to calibacy. It is said that the descendants of one of the three

sons of the great Adhan Pir of Assam, were known as Holonga Puriyas⁴⁹. It seems that Akan deka, mentioned above, belonged to this family and hence he was known as Holonga Puriya.

Pir Muhammad came to Assam with Adhan Faqir and used to stay at Sibsagar. Farzand Gaunburha was his son and Abdul Jalal Zul Qad Ali Sufi, the son of Farzand Gaunburha, was born in 1796 A.D. in Sibsagar. He was given Islamic education in Dacca for five years and then he learnt Islamic theological knowledge in Jauinpur (U.P.) under the renowned Maulana Karamat Ali, where after completion his formal Islamic education, he was honoured with the title 'Sufi' for his sincere devotion for Islam. He wrote a good number of books on religious rites and rituals of Islam. Three important books among those recently have been discovered which were written in Persian language. But the interesting thing is that two of those books were written in the Persian script and their language was Assamese. One of them was 'Tariqul Haq Fi Bayan-e- Nurul Haq,' which had been published by his grandson Maulvi Saleh Qazim in the name of 'Satyar Path' in 1967 A.D. Another book was 'Bibi Rimiyar Jwani' where the life history of a most pious woman of the Arabian Peninsula, was described properly on religious basis. Zul Qad Ali Sufi died in 1891 A.D., at the age of 95 years and, therefore, it may be considered that the books were composed during the time of 1796 – 1891 A.D.⁵⁰. During the 18th century there were Maktab and Madrasah system in most of the Muslim societies in Assam where the younger generations were given religious education properly in Arabic and Urdu. Therefore, the most

49. Hazarat Adhan Pir, Mohibul Hussain, PP. 37, Sibsagar, 1995.

50. Sangmisranat Assamiya Sanskriti, Abdus Sattar, PP. 134, Jorhat – 1991.

of the Muslim men and women were able recite the Holy Quran in Arabic correctly⁵¹. But the mother tongue of such Muslim masses was nothing except pure Assamese and through those Muslims Arabic and Persian words gradually used to penetrate in to the Assamese language.

3. Dhikir and Zari

It has already been indicated that the mid – 16th century is considered to be the period during which Hazrat Shah Miran, popularly known as Adhan Faqir, flourished and created his immortal Dhikirs in Assamese. To him goes the credit of composing fine poetry in a popular and chaste language on topics of religion, metaphysics, and spiritual experiences. That the zari songs had a popular appeal to Muslims with whom the composer came in contact⁵². Not only Adhan Faqir composed Dhikir songs but some other Muslim and Hindu saints also composed them. Moreover some Dhikir songs, which are found among the Assamese people, have no record of their composers. “Shah Miran is credited with the composition of more than eight score Dhikir songs some of which have come down through generations and have retained their appeal to almost all the rural Muslim folk of Upper Assam⁵³. Over and above the compositions of Shah Miran, there are so many Dhikir songs have been found among the Muslim

51. Ibid, PP. 136

52. Muslims and Assamese Literature, S.A. Malik, An article publd. in Sovenier, Haji Musafir Khana, 1973, Gauhati.

53. Ibid.

masses, which were composed by the different saints like Chand Khan (Chand Chai), Shaykh Farid, Muniya Dewan, Bandar Faqir, Majnudid Faqir, Saiyid Martoja, Golam Hussain, Bethai Guwal, Haridas Kumar etc. Dhikr and Zari songs are nothing but devotional songs which embody the teaching of Islam, and these are expressed through the language and pattern of Assamese Vaishnava poetry. "The songs aim at the glorification of Allah or God, and at the inculcation of those human attributes and graces which bring peace to the soul and establish harmony between man and man"⁵⁴.

Language of Dhikr and Zari

The language of Dhikr and Zari songs is very simple and direct though archaic for modern readers but addressed as it was intelligible to them, making a direct appeal to their hearts as do the Dahas of Kabir or Chanpaies of Tulsi Das etc. in Northern India during the middle Ages. As the authors are greatly influenced by Islamic thoughts at which they have deeply drunk, they express the same contents in their native speech and have absorbed quite a large number of Arabic and Persian words, as will be pointed out from time to time, for which they could not find any native words and which most appropriately expressed and conveyed their thoughts. It is to be noted that since these faqirs were simple men and only in rare cases might have been men of formal education; hence simplicity is the very hall-mark of their poetical utterance, for they wrote or better to say sang for the common men, they did not worry to embellish their language, nor they cared to make a show of their learning.

54. Asamia Zikir Aru Zari, Sd. Abdul Malik, Forward, Dr. S.K. Bhuyan, Gauhati – 1985

Sufis by persuasion, they preached the religion of heart, which shovded of literary embellishment stuck in the heart. Such as the deep impression that even the most modern readers are impacted on reading these poems. It will not be in appropriate to compare them with the religious poetries composed by the Arab Sufis like Rābiāh of Baṣrah, Abu al-‘Atāhiyah and the quatrains of Abu Sāīd Abu al-Khayr, Sāī Sarmad etc. with the poetical composition of authors under this discussion. It will be seen that the common feature and characteristics of all of them is simplicity, sincerety and earnestness. Just as the Arab or Persian Poets preferred to above, had nothing to do with the highly artificial poetry or literature written for the aristocratic class, the work of these Assamese Faqirs have nothing to do with the mundane literature of the period.

In some authors we do not come across only Arabic words but also Arabic expression and as we take up the study of these authors, we shall point out such words or expressions as they occur.

4. Religious Institutions:

Ancient Dargah and Khanqahs of Assam

The Degdhowa Dargah, which is situated four miles west of Goalpara Town and on the Degdhowa hills near Brahmaputra, is believed to be as old as the Dakaidal Dargah⁵⁵. The term Degdhowas, infact, reminds us of the story Degdha carried on the head by Hazrat Jalaluddin Tabrizi in order to serve warm

55. Pavitra Assam, Dr. Maheswar Neog, PP. 335 – 36, Gauhati – 1969.

food for his apostal with whom he used to move from place to place⁵⁶. The Pagal Pirar Dargah is situated in Patpara village under Goalpara district⁵⁷. Under the effort of the famous Awliya Jalaluddin Tabrizi some Khanqahs were established on both the south and the north banks of Brahmaputra. The Sijubari Khanqah cum dargah is situated in the Beltola Mauza in the vicinity of Guwahati and Barduar dargah plus Khanqah of Bholagaon is near the foot of Khasi hills on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. The Mazar of Mir Sayyid Ahmad Hussain Arzu is situated in Ambari of proper Gauhati where in the same place the second oldest Masjid of Assam was constructed in 1637 A.D., during the reign of Shah Jahan of Delhi⁵⁸. On the north Bank the Khanqahs were erected by Al-Tabrizi at Kameswar, Hajo, Raja Bazar, Kalita Kuchi, Kulhati of Agiathuri mountain, Sila Sindurighopa, Madhabpur, Majdia and Barbala (Dhuhibala)⁵⁹. It is believed that some disciple of Hazrat Ghiyasuddin Awliya of Hajo were found in these Khanqahs.

Apart from these, the Dargahs of Bhella near Barpeta and Dham-dhama near Nalbari have also appeared to be very old. The former is known as the Dargah of Shahnur Faqir who might have flourished sometime in the later period of Ahom rule in Assam. The Dham-dhama dargah is said to had been established when a Mughal army stayed in the place⁶⁰. Perhaps this dargah was built in 17th century, and possibly before 1682 A.D.

56. Hazrat Shah Sultan Ghiyasuddin Awliya. M.S. Abdul Baset, PP. 7, Shillong – 1963.

57. Pavitra Assam, Dr. Maheswar Neog, PP. 337, Gauhati – 1969.

58. Hazrat Shah Sultan Ghiyasuddin Awliya. M.S. Abdul Baset, PP. 7, Shillong – 1963.

59. Ibid, PP.4

60. Pavitra Assam, Dr. Maheswar Neog, PP. 300, Gauhati – 1969.

In the vicinity of the Pingaleswar Siva Temple of Hastasal within the Pati Darrang Mauza in the Kamrup district, there is a Makam (holy place). The mosque within the Makam is said to be of recent origin, but it possesses a copy of the Holy Quran which is said to have been very old. As tradition goes, it was discovered in place near Pingaleswar Siva Temple where it was earlier kept buried in a wooden box along with some images of ceratin deities and a bull hewn of stone. The images and the bull are said to have been preserved in the temple while the Holy Quran is kept in the mosque by the local Muslims⁶¹.

The solitary hillock to the north of Urdhganga which lay to the west of Urdhagaon in the Nowgaon district, is known as Garukata Parvat or the hillock of cow slaughter. There is no mosque or dargah, but the Muslims of the locality regard it as a holy place, and they go to perform their prayers on the top of the hillock. This might be the same place where Rupai Gariya, the Muslim officer of Ahom king Gadadhar Singha, instituted a shirine function having slaughtered seven cows. As his contemporary Adhan Faqir refused to attend the function, Rupai branded the Pir as the enemy of Islam and its followers in Assam, and having taken orders from the king by blackmailing him, he punished the Pir by extracting the eyes⁶².

The dargah of Hazrat Shah Miran alias Adhan Faqir of Assam is situated in the heaths of Saraguri on the bank of river Dekhau near its confluence with Brahmaputra in the Sibsagar district. The ancient dargah is said to have contained about 100 bighas of land. The ruins of two earthen ramparts around the

61. Ibid.

62. Asamiya Zikir Aru Jari, S. Abdul Malik, Gauhati – 1958.

dargah can still be seen there. It now stands as one of the important religious places for the Muslim masses of Assam. Every day innumerable ^{people} pay visit to this holy place remembering the great Faqir.

On the river Dilih and about five miles away from the Sibsagar town lies the dargah of Hazrat Gani Saheb alias Khonda Kar Pir. This dargah enjoys about 20 bighas of revenue free land. It is said that in this place the pir sat alone and put an end to his life with the help of a grass blade. The white ants built a mound on his remains. It was only sometime posterior to this event but some of his followers found him there and raised his tomb there. There is a pond near this sepulchre. It is reported that some people when in recent times went to the dargah to their homage to the pir, and that they went down to the pond which was then all dry and cleared the bed of it in search for water, they discovered a pair of wooden sandal and some other relics connected with the pir. When the people brought these to their home, something evil happened to them. They, therefore, placed them again in their old place. Hundreds of people still now go there to pay their homage to this great pir in his dargah⁶³.

The dargah of Hazrat Saleh alias Nabi Pir, the brother of Adhan Faqir, is said to have been situated near the Semaluguri railway station in Sibsagar. This place is in the vicinity of the old Ahom Royal place in the area of Nazira. A Khanqah, according to some traditions, was also instituted by this pir at Tiru Pathar near the Ahom necropolis on the Charaideo hills in Sibsagar district.

Chawal Pir is said to be another of three contemporaries of Adhan Faqir.

63. Assam District Gazetteer, Kamrup. B.C. Allen, PP. 103, Shillong – 1905 – 7.

His dargah is believed to be in the village of Ririya on the bank of the river Dichang in the Sibsagar area and it has been recently discovered by the villagers of Ririya village. From the very day of discovering the tomb of the pir, people have been visiting the place to pay their homage to the pir. Panch Pirar Dargah of Dhubri is still gaining the popularity among the common people and is being visited by them to pay their homage to the pirs.

Traditions relate that in addition to above mentioned dargahs there are so many ancient dargahs, Khanqahs and Mazars are there in different places of Assam, which have not been properly preserved by the people due to unknown of its owners. A list of those ancient dargahs, Mazars and Masjids, makams and khanqahs is enclosed to some extent and which are well known to all sections of people of Assam.

Names	Place	District
Poa Macca	Hajo	Kamrup (Undivided)
Dargah of Ghiyasuddin Awliya	- do -	Kamrup (Undivided)
Garigaon Dargah	Gauhati (Ward No. 1)	Kamrup (Undivided)
Sijubari Dargah	Gauhati (Sijubari)	Kamrup (Undivided)
Dargah of Zahir Shah Awliya	Gauhati (Ulubari)	Kamrup (Undivided)
Durgah Dargah	Barpeta	Kamrup (Undivided)
Dargah of Shanur Dewan Faqir	Vella (Barpeta)	Kamrup (Undivided)
Pirpal Masjid	Bathan	Kamrup (Undivided)
Patrapur Masjid	Pati darrang (Karara)	Kamrup (Undivided)

Pirpara Than	Near Mirza Pahar	Kamrup (Undivided)
Hasimabad Dargah	Hasimabad	Kamrup (Undivided)
Minauddin Piror Dargah	Dhamdhama	Kamrup (Undivided)
Dargah of Panjatan or Dakaidal	Dakaidal	Goalpara (Undivided)
Dargah of Degdhoa Pahar	Degdhoa	Goalpara (Undivided)
Dargah of Pagal Pir	Patpara	Goalpara (Undivided)
Khorasani Piror Mazar	Golpara Town (Sarutulia)	Goalpara (Undivided)
Pirbari Dargah of Jaleswar	Pirbari	Goalpara (Undivided)
Panch Piror Dargah	Dhubri Town	Goalpara (Undivided)
Panbari Masjid	Panbari	Goalpara (Undivided)
Mir Jumlar Masjid	Manikachar	Goalpara (Undivided)
Rangamati Masjid	Gauripur Town	Goalpara (Undivided)
Boga Pirar Mazar	Dibrugarh Railway Station	Dibrugarh
Mirza Bag Masjid	Amola Patti	Dibrugarh
Japi Sajia Mazar	Japi Sajia	Lakhimpur
Khondkar Piror Dargah	Khondkar Para	Sibsagar
Adhan Piror Dargah	Saraguri Sapari	Sibsagar
Nabi or Saheh Pirar Dargah	Simaluguri	Sibsagar
Bandar Piror Dargah	Ririya	Sibsagar
Laskar Shahar Dargah	Golaghat Town	Golaghat
Lal Faqir Dargah	Golaghat Town	Golaghat
Kala Faqir Dargah	Kachari Hat (Golaghat)	Golaghat
Garukata Parbat	Near Udhagaon Hat	Nagaon ⁶⁴
Kaliyabar Masjid	Kaliabar	Nagaon

Panch Piror Dargah	Hailakandi	Cachar (Undivided)
Mirar Shringar Dargah	Hailakandi	Cachar (Undivided)
Shah Kamalar Dargah	Garo Pahar	Garo Pahar
Makam of Shah Sarpin (Sharifin)	Gomaghat	Khasiya Jayantia Pahar ⁶⁵

The Khanqah of Pandu has been mentioned in 'Haftad Awlia' as "On its authority it is clear that Shaykh Jalaluddin Tabrizi Shuharawardi had already established Khanqah in Pandu and many people were already converted to Islam due to his preaching when he reached there. The above mentioned Shakh was not Assamese but came here to preach Islam and he died here."

5. Islamic Influence on Assamese Language and Literature

How the religion, literature and culture of a part of the people of the world influence the other religion and literature of the people there is a history. There is a mutual history of the religion, Islam, its culture and literature also, which influenced the other's culture and literature. That is why it is necessary to know the historical cause and coordination through which Islam influenced the other parts of the world.

The light which appeared penetrating the darkness of the Arab deserts,

64. J.A.R.S. Vol. V, Nos. 1 & 2, PP. 40.

65. (a). Pavitra Asom, Dr. M. Neog, Gauhati – 1969.

(b). Asomiya Zikir Aru Zari, S. Abdul Malik, Gauhati – 1958.

(c). The Annals of Delhi Badshahate. S.K. Bhuyan, New Delhi – 1947.

(d). Asamar Pir-Faqir Sakalor Dargah-Khanqah Samuhor Samu Itihas. Faraq Wahid Ahmed, An Article, Publd., in Hidayat, June/July, 1995, Gauhati.

spread far and wide in the East and the West and illumined them fully. Due to this a new life and reformation came into light in the three continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Islam, of course, is a sharp revolution through which the death also gains a new life. From it the people of far Middle East saw the light of new dawn of pleasure, the darkness of Africa became very far forever and there created a new renaissance among the European people who were in utter darkness. Like that the arrival of Islam also had a hit to the great India, giving it fresh life and thinking. Due to the result of such activities the religious, social, literary, and cultural revolutions appeared before us.

In comparison to the other parts of India, Islam and its culture came to Assam very late from the historical point of view. So, except Assam, in the other parts of India we find vast developments of Islamic culture there.

Assam came into contact with the Muslims in the early 13th century. During that time the people of Assam were in utter darkness and superstitions. Priestliness was the main religion and the thinking and the freedom of the mass people were hidden in the spiritual thinking of the so-called saints. In spite of that, there was no need of trade especially for Assamese people due to the abundance of their necessary requirements available in Assam.

We find a number of wars between Assam kingdoms and Dacca as well as Delhi Muslim kingdoms. But we find no chapter of permanent Muslim kingdom in Assam in those days. So Assam never had been influenced culturally by the Muslims through their rule. For the influence which we find to see in the kings' courts of Koch Bihar, such we have no record of influence in the Ahom kingdoms. The crowning system of Mughal style was introduced only from the

reign of Ahom king Rudra Singha. On the other hand, from Shah Sultan Ghiyasuddin to Adhan Faqir, there came a number of Sufis and Faqirs to Assam for the purpose of preaching Islam, established Khanqahs, dargahs and maqams, and prepared a large number of disciples; but they could not remove away the bigotries from the minds of their disciples fully. The Muslims of Mughal kingdom built a fort in Kaliabar on the district of Kaliabar for trade purpose, but they were killed by the Ahoms treating them as spies. So during that time, the influence of Islam was stopped here through trade.

We find many Muslim prisoners in Ahom kingdom. Some of them started to prepare gun, bartop (Cannon) and gun powder for the Ahom kingdom; while others were engaged in the working of brass metals. In spite of that we find some of them doing the work of picture and art. We do not find any severe impact of Islamic culture through these prisoners on the life of the mass people of Assam. But we find them marrying with Assamese woman and following their Assamese culture whole-heartedly leaving only their names as Muslims. As the historian Shihabuddin Talish who came to Assam with Mir Jumla, mentioned – “As for the Musalmans who had been taken prisoner in former times and had chosen to here, their descendents act exactly in the manner of the Assamese, and have nothing of Islam except the name; their hearts are inclined far more towards mingling with the Assamese than towards association with Muslims. The Muhammedans who had came here from Islamic lands engaged in the performance of prayer and fasting, but were forbidden to chant the call to prayer or publicly recite the “word of God”⁶⁶.

66. A History of Assam, Sir Edward Gait, PP. 149, Gauhati – 1984.

The saint Shah Milan (Miran) was entitled as 'Adhan Faqir' due to proclamation of Adhan and performing prayer (namaz) at first in the state of Assam⁶⁷. The Mughals ruled over Kamrupa for a very short period and made their capital in Hajo. In Hajo they established a religious school 'Madrassa'. But due to the attack of the Ahoms it was destroyed. Since then no Islamic religious school is found up to the British rule. Therefore, the Muslims of Assam like other people, were ignorant of Islamic culture and education. Meanwhile the Sufis (Muslim saints) and the Faqirs preached the Quranic teachings among the Muslim masses of Assam. A good number of the Holy Quran written by hand distinctly on the papers, were prepared in those days. Such copies of the holy book are being preserved even today in the ancient mosques and asylums of different places of Assam. Except these hands written copies of the Quran no written material of Islamic faith was found among the Muslims of that time.

Among the Muslims of different places of Assam, some native poets were born, whose songs and poems were retained verbally among common people of Assam in which Islamic influence is obvious. The belief in the unity of Allah, his prophets, his angels, his books, the days of judgment, fate and self - surrender towards Allah is the main fundamental things of Islam. Justice against injustice, truth against false, tolerance in all conditions of life and struggle for right etc. are most essential to lead own life on the right path of Allah. Equality among the human being of all sections, integrity and brotherhood are world wide examples of Islam. Adoption of all such things in the daily life of a Muslim, is considered in

67. Asamiya Jikir – Jari Sar, S.M. Hussain, PP. Gauhati – 1990.

Islam a holy war and this holy war is a longlife friend of the Muslims. Islamic culture includes all these things which influenced the Assamese literature.

The linguistic, ideal and subjective influences are very much obvious in the songs and rhymes. Though the main object of Islam had not been dislocated at all in these songs and rhymes, yet the Assamese poet had clearly described his idea about Allah in his poetry as:

“Mao Nai Bapo Nai Nai beradar
Aowal Saowal Nai, Ase Akal sar |
Ujeer Nazeer Nai, Nai Patantar||”⁶⁸

(He has no mother, no father; no brother. He has no offspring, he is alone. He has no minister, no equal one nor destruction.)

With the thought of human body, the Islamic songs and rhymes are so serious that the unity and the logical thinking are very clear. The composers have presented the idea with the local example tactfully. For example:

Amon Pomanok sambhalirakhiba,
Konobai bhangibo dhorì,
Monor Panch halik thikkai bandhiba,
Kalima lahor jari⁶⁹

(Control your stupid mind, someone will destroy it. Fasten the five elephants of the mind tightly with the string of Kalima i.e. words of faith.)

Apart from such songs some other Assamese popular songs have been

68. Asomiya Zikir Aru Zari, S. Abdul Malik, PP. 5, Gauhati – 1958.

69. Ibid, PP. 52

composed. Zari or Marthiyah songs, Bibi songs and Haider Ghazir songs are very much popular. The subject matter and the conception of these songs are purely Islamic and their language contains numerous Islamic words. These songs, except Zari (Marthiyah) songs, have been influenced sometimes by local culture. No native influence has been found in Zari (Marthiyah). Only the mournful story like the story of Imam Hasan and Imam Husain is described in them. Like Marthiyas of the Shi'ah Muslims, some Sunni Muslims have also composed such songs where the Islamic thought is found.

In the Assamese historical literature, the influence of Islamic culture and language can be seen. During the days of Mughal – Ahom conflict, the Assamese Brahmin and Kayastha envoys came into close touch with the Muslim capitals like Delhi and Dacca, and they wrote the history of the Badshahs and Nawabs in their own hand-writing⁷⁰. Among those histories the Badsha Buranji (accounts of the Delhi Sultan) were most important. In their message letters from the Ahom Kings to Mughal Badshahs and Nawabs, a linguistic mixture of Assamese and Islamic language was obvious. On the other hand, in Assamese language some anti-Islamic literature is found through which some Islamic ideas and linguistic influence are obvious⁷¹. For instance Manasa Puja, description of which has no relation with Islam, has many Islamic ideas and words there in. The Moria Muslims first introduced the Manasa Puja in Kamrup of Assam. The songs of Padma- Puran written by Mankar have described the Maria Muslim men and women as:

70. The Comprehensive History of Assam. H.K. Barpujari, PP. 7, Gauhati – 1992.

71. Manasa-Kavya, Dr. B.K. Barua & Dr. S.N. Sarma, PP. Ta, Gauhati – 1987.

Tusta haiya Brahmani Moriak bole bani

Dhan jan barhibo opar |

Tusta haiya padmavati dekha dila tar

Thapanat bosia Mariak dila bor ||⁷²

(Being satisfied the goddess Bramini said to Moria that your wealth and child would become much more).

(Being satisfied the goddess Padmavati appeared before him and being seated on the place of worship gave the Maria a boon).

Most of the singers and reciters of these songs and rhymes of Manasa Puja were Muslims. The 'Hasan – Husen' part of Padma – Puran composed by Narayan Dev, proves the contributions of the Muslims to Manasa Puja⁷³.

A new renaissance took place among the Muslim masses of Assam during the British rule. A large number of Islamic cultured scholars and preachers of Bengal and Northern India came forward to preach the true Islamic faith among the Asamese Muslims. At that time Islamic religious schools were instituted in Bengal and Northern India and the students of them were given Islamic religious education either through Urdu language or Persian language. The Islamic religious publicity of the scholars and the preachers created a religious movement among the Muslims of Assam. As a result of which a sufficient number of them became ready to give religious education to their children through Urdu or

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

Persian medium in Bengal and Northern India. In 1836 A.D., the Bengali medium was imposed in the schools and offices of Assam by the British government. Both the Hindus and the few number of Muslims being compelled^{began} to learn education through the medium of Bengali. As Bengali was already influenced by both Arabic and Persian languages, so it made the students and Assamese people influenced by many Arabic and Persian words. On the other hand, the Bengali Muslim traders, who came from Dacca, opened their shops for business in different towns of Assam. Due to these causes Islamic life was grown up among the Muslim community of Assam. Though the Bengali medium was replaced by the Assamese medium in the schools as well as in the government offices in 1871 A.D., yet the impact of Bengali language remained in the minds of Assamese masses. At the same time an Islamic literary flame arose in the neighbouring state of undivided Bengal and its effect was widely spread amongst the mass people of Assam. Bengali knowing Assamese Muslims gave the taste of it to the general people. So *Alfo – Laila, Shahnama, Amir Hamzah, Shahid – e – Karbala, Jangnama, Zari Jangnama, Jang – e – Khaibar, Hatim Tai, Laila – Majnu, Sunabhan, Kalu Ghazi, Qasasul Ambiya, Chan – Pawati* etc. which were written in Bengali language, began to be read in each and every house of the Muslims. The reader of such books was entitled as '*Kitabi*'. The system of gathering of poets in particular meeting was prevalent in every part of India. But such system was not introduced in Assam and as an alternative the Muslim people began to arrange a big gathering to where the '*Kitabis*' and the common people were invited and the epics with rhymes were recited loudly. In such meetings of the people feast was supplied to them. These meetings influenced the common

people and attracted them towards Islam as well as its culture. The *Kitabis* aged of 40 – 50 years were regarded very much by the general people as wise personalities.

We find in the writing '*Shahapari*' of Dwijram, the influence of Islamic language and idea as its stories '*Rabab*', '*Razar*', '*Malikzada*', and '*Aram*' etc. bear the feelings of the Muslims. In these stories the poet has used a good number of Arabic and Persian words. Moreover, the poet also took the Islamic idea and presented it with the religious feelings.

During the British rule when the courts were established in the towns of Assam on the pattern of Delhi court, the trade and commerce began to increase and the schools as well as the colleges began to be founded. A good atmosphere was created in all respects of the ancient society of Ahom reign. Among the Muslim community a satisfactory number of youths had come back from outside acquiring knowledge in Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages. Moreover many literate and cultured persons of different places of India made Assam as their traveling place. As all the Indian languages had been influenced more or less deeply by Arabic and Persian Languages⁷⁴, so these travelers of such different Indian languages made a linguistic impact of their own on the Assamese language. Arabic and Persian languages were introduced as core subjects in schools and colleges. On the other hand, a good number of religious institutions was founded by the Islamic cultured individuals in the greater interest of common Muslims. Therefore, an Islamic atmosphere was created in the Muslim societies. The literate Muslims coming from

74. Elements of the Science of language, I.J. Taraporewala, PP. 235, Calcutta – 1962.

outside used to talk with local people either in their mother tongue, Urdu, the language deeply influenced by Arabic and Persian, or in broken Assamese language and when they talked in Assamese, they used maximum Arabic and Persian words. The Assamese people also tried to understand them and started to use these words when they talked in Assamese among themselves. Thus slowly and steadily the Arabic and Persian words began to penetrate into the Assamese language. Today the Assamese people can not avoid them from the use of their day to day life. There are so many specific Arabic and Persian words which have occupied the place of the Assamese words and the Assamese people can understand the actual meaning and object only when such Arabic and Persian words are used in the sentences or for any purpose. For instance, *adalat, hakim, okil, nazir, kazi, peshkar, piyada, chaukidar, mauzadar, muqardama (muqaddam) ain, qanun, zamin, dakhil, mohar, jarip, banduq, barud, kaman, kheraj, nispi-kheraj, ghazal, tapla, fauzdari, dewani, naqal-nabis, jahaz, hawai-jahaz* etc. are the only Arabic and Persian words which are used in Assamese to the particular meaning. There are no particular alternative Assamese words to be used in place of such Arabic and Persian words. Such thousands of words have entered into Assamese language and have made it composite and prosperous. Even today in the modern times, the Assamese writers and poets also have been influenced and attracted by the Islamic language and literature. Many of them even boasted in using the Islamic words (Arabic and Persian words) like *Shahenshah, masnad, darbar, ishq, sha 'iry, gulab, nargis, badshah, gulbadan, keramat* etc. The influence of Islamic language and literature is obvious in all branches of Assamese languages and literature, more or less, like poetry, drama, novel, stories

and articles.

Over and above the Assamese literature is also impacted by the Islamic ideas and subject matters. During the time of renaissance of the Muslims, the Muslim writers, embracing the Islamic ideas and subject matters, had entered into the Assamese literature forcefully as we find the impact of Islamic culture and ideas in their poems, novels, essays, songs and translations etc. During this period neither they misguided the Muslim community nor they accepted the Islamic culture blindly like the modern writer of "*Hasan and Husain's*" epic. but they had made their effort to understand Islam clearly and to lead the Muslims to the right path through Islamic belief and feelings. Such things are found fully in '*Asomiya Maulud Sharif*' of Naziruddin Ahmad and in the short poems of Muhd. Sulaiman Khan etc. We also find the poems of '*Gyan Malini*' (Gauhati – 1987) of Mufizuddin Ahmad Hazarika and '*Karbala*' of Raghunath Chaudhury, as full of Islamic culture and feelings.

On the basis of Islamic ideas, the poet Raghunath Chaudhury has become successful in depicting the characters like *Imam Hasan* and *Imam Husain* how did they sacrifice for the cause of Islam and choose the way of holy war. Actually epic has become as message of Islamic teaching. There are so many Arabic and Persian words like *rasul, imam, islam, badshah, sorahi, shaytan, jallad, katowal, qasid, rauza, sultan, kamin, herem, khalifa, shahid, shadiyana, kafer, khanjar* etc. can be seen to be used in the book.

The famous mystic poet of Assamese literature Jatindra Nath Duwara has lost himself in the poems of Persian poet Umar Khyyam, devoted himself fully to '*Rubayats*' which proved him as the poet of mysticism. Sri Duwara not only

followed Umar Khayyam but also studied the poems of famous poet Rumi, Hafiz and Shakh Sa 'di etc. Another mystic poet Ananda Ram Barua also translated the *Rubayat – e – Hafiz* as well as he composed some such type poems in which he had used a number of Arabic and Persian words.

In addition to the above mentioned poets some others like Sayed Abdul Malik, Ibrahim Ali, Zamiruddin Ahmed and Fatima Khatun, have shown the influence of Islamic culture on Assamese literature. They have properly used both Islamic ideas and language in their compositions. The poems '*Koloi Palabi Toi Here Gariya*' of S. Abdul Malik and '*Palariya*' of Ibrahim Ali penetrate the Islamic spirit into the hearts of Muslims. The '*Agnishikha*' of Zamiruddin Ahmed and the '*Agnikonat*' of Fatima Khatun also have represented the Islamic feelings and revolution.

After poetry, the drama literature also has the deep influence of Islamic ideas and feelings. From '*Gulenur*' of late Zamiruddin Ahmed to '*Rastum – shohrab*', '*Marjiana*', '*Shershah*' and '*Magribar Adhan*' of later dramatists, all of them have beard the Islamic picture as well as culture and its language is full Islamic words. In '*Shershah*' of Atul Chandra Hazarika we may see clearly that the Islamic character, bravery, forgiveness and service etc. are depicted distinctly.

So far as novel is concerned it is also impacted by Islamic thought. Not only the Muslim novelists but also the non Muslims have depicted the Islamic ideas and feelings in their novels. In '*Siraj*' Lakshmidhar Sarma has shown the responsibility for neighbours and sacrifice to others attractively, which are the purely Islamic characteristics. The people's revolutions which he has presented in his novel is Islamic. The '*Bidhva*' and '*Patit aru Patita*' of principal Troilakya

Nath Goswami are also completed on the basis of Islamic culture. '*Miyan Mansur*' a successful novel of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, is based on the deep Islamic feelings and the author has beautifully described how *Miyan Mansur* a purely Muslim character, saved an woman from drowning into water reciting some verses of the holy Quran. Like the famous Bangladeshi novelist Sarat Chandra Chattopaddhaya, Yogesh Das, one of the most famous novelists of Assamese literature also has presented some Islamic characteristics through his novel '*Dawar aru Nai*' (Gauhati – 1988) in which he has established an Islamic character through a bicycle mechanic Nizam. His another best creation '*Ramzan*' is also based on Islamic ideology where the author has obviously has shown the sacrifice for his friends, humanity and forgiveness to the murderer etc. which are no doubt Islamic virtues.

A good number of Muslim writers have contributed to the novel literature. The emperor of Assamese novel literature Sayed Abdul Malik has written a good number of novel of high standard. None of the Assamese community can ignore any one of his novels. Most of his novels are written on the basis of Islamic feelings. '*Suruji Mukhir Swapna*' (Calcutta – 1960), '*Gulas*', '*Chenimai*', '*Tara*', '*Juti*' and '*Molak*' are more Islamic influenced novels. In the novels '*Piriti - Uphar*' and '*Sangram*' of Muhammad Piyar, the Muslim problems and Muslim characters are discussed. '*Karbalar Shahid*' in is another publication where Islamic character of brotherhood is shown clearly. Moreover this book has been influence by the Shi'aites very much, we find a good number of Arabic and Persian words in their novels.

In modern times the young writers are also influenced by Islamic culture

and civilization. Sayedul Islam , Idrish Ali and Shihabuddin are renowned among these writers. "*Hajar Nishar Kahani*" '*Parachya Kahani*' and '*Hatim Tai*' books of fascinating stories, all are written on the basis of Islamic books of culture. Among the Muslim short story writers Imran Shah ,Abdul Lais, Mustafijur Rahman, Anisuz zamam, Sakina Asraf, Eli Ahmed, Sakina Khatun, Akila Khanam, Abdul Majid, Sayeeduddin, Ali Hyder, Fanuwara Begum Hazarika, Munirul Hussain, Alimunnisha Pyar and Sayedul Islam are notable in most of whose stories Islamic cultural as well as linguistic influence are obvious.

A satisfactory number of Islamic magazines have been published up till now, in which both the Islamic culture as well as linguistic influences are distinct. Among these '*Insaf*' edited by Fatima Khatun, '*Adhan*' by Ilimuddin Dewan, '*Hefazat*' by Rafiqul Haque, '*Jumma*' by Jahid Chaudhury, '*Eid Mubarak*' and '*Orani*' by Eli Ahmed, '*Al-Hilal*' by Nawabuddin Ahmed, '*Al- Jamaiyat*' and '*Quran Jyoti*' by Abdul Jalil Raghobi, '*Hedayet*' by Keramat Ali and the latest magazine '*Jnyan Sambhar*' by Maulan Abdul Jalil Raghobi, are most mentionable. In addition to these the '*Kachi Jon*', a literary journal for children, '*Paigam*', '*Zam Zam*', '*Noor – e – Islam*' and the '*Minar*' earned popularity among the common readers. In such magazines most of the articles are on Islamic rites and rituals and innumerable Islamic words have been used in the articles⁷⁵.

On religious aspects a good number of books have been written in Assamese language about Islamic teachings up till now. '*Asamiya Malud*' of Nazir Hussain was another substitute of Urdu eulogistic compositions on Prophet

75. Muslims and Assamese literature. S. Abdul Malik, An Article Published in Souvenir, Haji Musafirkhana, 1973, Gauhati.

Muhammad. '*Misbahul Islam*' of S. Abdul Haque was written on the principles of Islam, which became a useful work of then Muslims. The complete translation of the *Holy Quran* into Assamese was made first by late Md. Sader Ali. He also took a great interest in composing a good number of religious books on Islamic principles and philosophy. In sweet and simple Assamese language an exhaustive biography of Prophet Muhammad was prepared and published by Faizuddin Ahmed, a direct descendants of famous Bagh Hazarika. He also did works on the lives of the Caliphs and the martyres of Karbala. Some non-Muslims writers like late Mahadev Sarma, Gopinath Bordoloi and Atul Barua, wrote biography of Prophet Muhammad where linguistic influence of Arabic and Persian language is obvious.

During the last forty years a great renaissance had taken place among the Assamese Muslims in the field of religion. Three most remarkable organizations- 1. *Tablighi Jama'at*, 2. *Jamiyat – e – Ulama – e – Hind* (Assam branch) and 3. *Jama'at –e- Islami* (North – East branch) had taken the great initiative regarding the propagation and expansion of Islam among the common Muslims. The tablighi Jama'at has created a best movement to awaken the Muslims towards their religion, Islam. The workers of Tablighi Jama'at, coming from different states of India other than Assam, always deliver their lectures for Islamic faith only in Urdu language in which they apply sufficient number of Arabic and Persian words. The Assamese workers of the organization also apply the proper Arabic or Persian words for some particular subject – matters and purposes in their religious orations which are delivered in their mother tongue, Assamese, among the common Muslims. Moreover, they have been so accustomed with such

words that they also use them in their day to day life. Thus slowly and steadily these words have penetrated into Assamese language. For instance *gast, ta 'leem, mushaqqat, muqaddar, mashwara, zehn, khayr, azaim, tarteeb, torkeeb, ilm, tableeg, nusrat, hazrat, ilan, bayan, karguzari, khidmat, usul, rahmat, barkat, maghfirat* etc. are now common among the Assamese Muslims.

Jamiyat – e – Ulama – e – Hind (Assam branch) has taken the keen interest in giving Islamic education to the common Muslims. Under the patronage of the members of this organization various patterns of *Kharijiah Madrasahs, Senior Madrasahs, Middle English Madrasahs, High Madrasahs, Hafiziyah Qariyana Madrasahs, and Maktab*s attached with almost all the mosques of Assam had been set up during the last 50 years in Muslim areas and localities of Assam. It is recorded that about 172 *Kharijiah Madrasahs, and Senior Madrasahs, including a few members of Arabic Colleges and Title Madrasahs, are there in Assam, where Arabic or Urdu language is compulsory as the medium of learning for the students. A large number of Hafijiah and Qariana Madrasahs, are there in Muslim areas of Assam, where the Holy Quaran is being memorized and taught to recite it correctly and Islamic knowledge of compulsory rites and rituals too is being given to the students. The students of various patterns of such Madrasahs, are called 'Talibul 'Ilm', seeker of knowledge. Almost in every Muslim village or Mahalla there is a Maktab where primary Islamic education is given to the Muslim children. With the kind co-operation and patronage of the members of this organization the big publication center 'Markazul Ma-'arif' is also established in Hojai under Nowgaon district and this publication center has taken the responsibilities of publishing the Islamic books. Already it has published a*

good number of important Islamic books like '*Behasti Zeor*' in six volumes (Hojai – 1993), '*Tablighi Nisab*' (Hojai – 1994), '*Adarsha Ramani*' (1997), '*Purba Bharater Oli – e – Kamil*' (1994), '*Zakatar Bistarita Masail*' (1997), '*Mahilar Pak-Pabitrata*' (1995), '*Sapunat allahar Rasoolar Didar*' (2000), '*Taubah*' (1997), '*Namaz Shikhya*' (1985) etc. on Islamic theology and ideas of different experienced writers and translators. The members of the organization are very much accustomed with using the Arabic and Persian words in their day to day life and in their religious orations to the common Muslims as they earn Islamic knowledge through the medium of Arabic or Urdu language.

Another important organization of the Assamese Muslims is Jama'at –e– Islami (North-East branch) which has created a momentous renaissance among the general educated Muslim youths towards the Islamic feelings and spirit. This organization had taken the initiative to publish the weekly newspapers '*Mujahid*' for the first time among the common Muslims. It has also taken great interest in publishing the monthly Islamic magazine '*Hedayet*' where the articles based on Islamic principles are published and a deep linguistic influence of Islamic languages is found on the writings of these articles. The Mujahid Gosthy (Mujahid family) has come forward to take the liabilities of publishing many Islamic books of religious feelings and spirit.

Apart from these three organizations some individual writers like Hafiz Bashir Ahmad Qasimi, Maulana Abdul Jalil Raghbi, Maulana Mansur Ahmad, Maulana Mainul Haque, Mohammad Piyar, Dewan Abdul qadir, Dr. Atowar

Rahman, Md. Keramat Ali, Md. Abdul Majid, Dewan Abdul Kadir, Sheikh Samer Ali, Md. Ismail Hussain, etc. have done some important works in the field of Islamic cult and culture.