

## **ASSAM : ITS HERITAGE AND CULTURE**

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# ASSAM

Its Heritage and Culture

Chandra Bhushan



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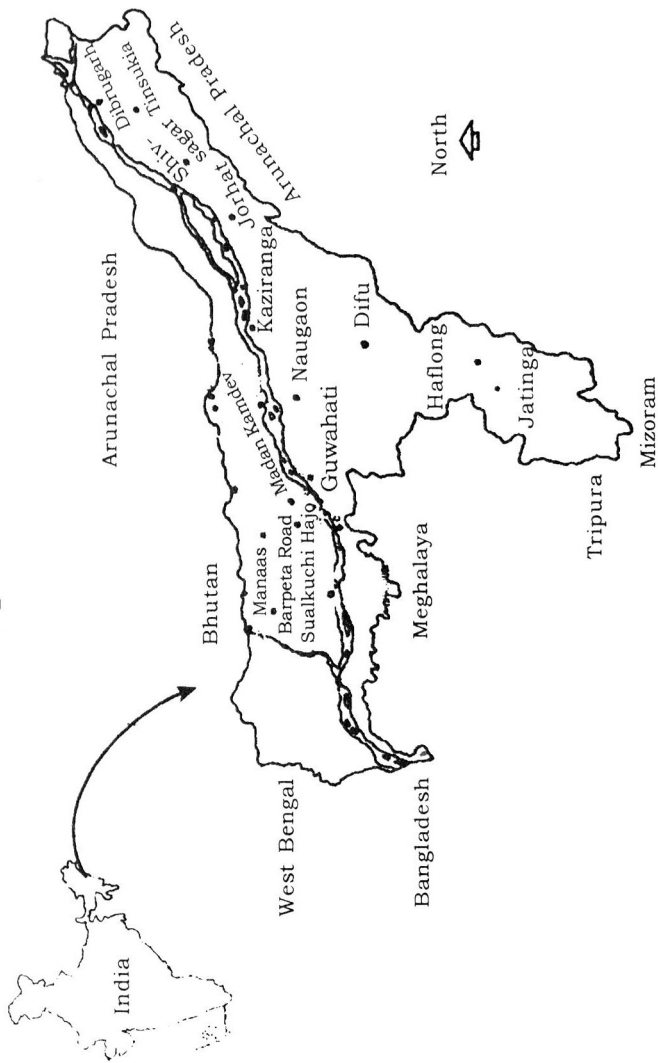
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## Map of Assam



## **Assam : Familiar, Yet So Strange**

ASSAM, famous world over for its tea is a land of jaded mountains, singing waterfalls, merry people and ever-smiling young girls. In the past, Ahom kings infused fresh and varied colours into its art and culture. While in the modern times, Shrimant Shankardev embellished and enriched it with his enchanting poetry and Jyoti Prasad Aggrawal adorned it with artistries of different sorts. Besides the much revered Kamakhya Devi of Guwahati has been a source of attraction to devotees from all over the world.

Assam was also drawn into many clashes while India was a slave country. It was a prey to several diplomatic underhand intrigues and discriminations. Seeds of enmity were sown amongst the tribes of Assam by tempting royal jobs to some, and thus pitting them against each other. Assamese played a significant role in the freedom struggle with supreme fervor and scripted a new chapter of sacrifice and renunciation. However, the state of Assam has perpetually been neglected not only before independence but also, even after it. Successive national government paid little attention to the development and nagging problems of the state; rather, it was largely ignored. Indiscreet religious transformation was the usual practice. Unemployment had upsurged. Spread of literacy among tribes was merely for the namesake. They were not even

associated with the main stream of the Nation. Consequently, dissatisfaction gushed over in Assam, paving way to burgeoning violence and conflict all around.

Young journalist Shri Chandra Bhushan set out to write the book 'Assam-VIBGYOR in the Mist'; it was a difficult resolution of course. It was a risky task at the same time, a rather arduous endeavour, to underline the unfamiliar history of Assam, to comprehend the development of the languages and to research upon the various socio-political issues. The good news is that, after years of hard slog, the book is complete and in its present form, has turned out to be a mini encyclopedia about Assam.

Even today, Assam for many, is an ambiguous state, an unknown region. There are very few books available, which document factual information about it. In these circumstances the importance and utility of this book is indubitable. Several movements initiated by the youth, their triumphs and failures get a very candid mention by the author, thereby making it a must read especially for the younger generation.

A round of applause to Shri Chandra Bhushan for this creation. We firmly believe that this book will be widely read and find a place in most libraries and colleges.

**– Jai Prakash Bharti**

## **Mystifying, Inimitable and Distinctive**

THANKS to communication revolution that people have started getting familiar, to some extent, with the remote 'seven sister' states (Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Tripura and Manipur) in the northeast part of India. People are beginning to take some interest in these states. Unfortunately, the image that has emerged before the rest of India, has been a negative one. The better aspects have taken a back seat. When questioned about the state the common man's unhesitant answer would be that, terrorism, murder & kidnapping are the common phenomenon there. Traders migrated from plain states, face forceful extortion et al.

In fact, elements involved or responsible for creating such an image, or the circumstances involving all these, is a subject of research in itself (See my book- *'Terrorism and Separation in North East India'*).

Here, I aim at bringing forth several untouched issues of Assam. It would not be an overstatement if I were to say that the state is so vibrant in terms of history, culture and religion that no other state in India can match. Epics could be created even from a single aspect of the hills, plateaus, rivers, lakes, various tribes, deep forests, and rare animals that is Assam.

I have a faint memory of why the thought of going to Assam inspired me. Perhaps, It was in the beginning of

80's. Dr. Bhupen Hazarika's film '*Chameli Memsaab*' was being aired on the television. Many aspects of the film, I came to understand much later but what fascinated me the most were the lush green tea gardens, blue Mountains and the natural mystifying beauty of Assam. Since then I had a deep desire to visit Assam- of such a scenic beauty. When I queried my elder sister about the place, I received some really odd remarks like :- "Do you want to go to the state of magic and spells? "Do you know that men are changed into sheeps there".

*Didi's* statement sounded like a fairy tale to me. After much probing she told that she had seen this in a film on Assam. The episode went into oblivion. My profession in Journalism gave me the opportunity in 1989. I came to know that a Hindi daily had begun its publication from Guwahati; I couldn't resist myself when I got the offer. In spite of my first experience of a long train journey, the curiosity to see the land of magic and spells persisted within me.

I had the first views of tea gardens, mountains, plateaus, rivers, lakes during the train ride itself. When the train stopped at Kamakhya (a small station), I was told that the temple on the Neelanchal Mountains in front was the famous Kamakhya temple. As I bowed in reverence many emotions rose within me, corresponding to the pace of the expeditious Brahmaputra that was flowing not far from where I was.

I stayed in Assam for around two years and subsequently kept going back now and then. All the while, various, aspects of Assam I could explore, are presented in the book. I wish to submit again that the book is merely a peep into various dimensions of the state, and should not be considered as any major analysis. In truth, I would be extremely satisfied if I am able to quench an iota of the thirst of the tourists, researchers and inquisitives regarding Assam.

To break the monotony of this book, I have, wherever

possible, taken support of pictures, diagrams etc., that have helped me to slot in most of the living and non living aspects of Assam.

Dr. Bhupen Hazarika has been the source of inspiration for writing this book. What so ever could be written about him would always be less. In the course of writing this book, Chitra Mahant, regional editor of ‘*Poorvanchal Prahri*’ and my friend Satyanand Pathak, journalist Ravi Shankar ‘Ravi’, Samir Tanti, Reema Sharma, Ravi Kant ‘Neeraj’, Omkareshwar Pandey, Dinkar Kumar and all those friends have directly or indirectly obliged, by sharing information on Assam. I am extremely grateful to them. At one point of time we had lost the whole manuscript of this book. It was devastating conclusion to my 10 years of hard work. Nevertheless Kalpana, my life partner motivated and inspirited me into rewriting this book on the bedrock of my memories. In the middle of it, came about a pleasant eventuality for me of having to receive Research Scholarship for journalism by K.K. Birla Foundation in 2001. The advantage of this was that I could not only revisit Assam but also could collect my scattered printed material. I also got some fresh input about Assam. I am especially obliged to the Foundation, for granting me the research scholarship for carrying out research on Northeast India and for honouring my writing as well. Besides, if Jai Prakash Bharti, the chief literature and former editor of ‘Nandan’ had not deeply scrutinised the entire manuscript and also the editing part, the publication of the book would have further delayed. z

At last, thanks to Anamika Singh and Shrawan K. Poddar, who worked hard with me to produce this book.

**- Chandra Bhushan**

# [1]

## **Assam : In the Pages of Ancient History**

IN THE pages of ancient history, the position of Assam has remained shrouded in mystery and uncertainty. The ancient story of Assam is exactly like; a bundle of a manuscript that has been drenched in water. On opening the pages of the manuscript, the used ink having come into contact with water is now not legible.

Not even a single script, inscription, or any authentic matter of antiquity is available, on the basis of which any firm conclusion on the state's history could be drawn and a new chapter could be added-up in the pages of history. Today, whatever we can say about the history of ancient Assam, is based on the prevalent puranic stories, folk-tales, some ancient dynastic lineage, remains of a few monuments and broken stupas, which are unearthed by archeologists over a period of time. Other than these, no other authentic basis is available about the ancient history of Assam.

The earliest mention of Assam in the texts of history dates back to the thirteenth century, when a sub caste of Mongol- the Ahoms entered through the Patkai Pass, conquered the region and established their rule in Assam. How was Assam prior to the Ahom era? To establish it, we have to rely only on numerous puranic tales.

There is no certain historical belief even, about the origin of the term -'Assam'. This word is the English version of the Sanskrit term- 'Asam', which means unique or

incomparable. The Natural prosperity and beauty is rarely found anywhere in the map of the world. That is how the state got its name. However, 'Asam' being the English version, the name does not have any traces of antiquity. Having established the empire, the wanderers of the world — the British might have forenamed it 'Asam' or Assam after perceiving the incomparable beauty and uniqueness of the region.

According to the historian's perspective, another reasoning, on this subject matter, also seems befitting. When the Ahoms had entered Assam, their magnificent power was perceived and eulogised as – 'came, saw and conquered. Or perhaps, due to the coarse or uneven surface of the land, the state got the name – *A-ssam*.

Above mentioned inferences conclude that the first reason of Assam getting the name can be more than seven hundred years old, as the Ahoms had invaded Assam in thirteenth century. The other inferences seem to have emanated from much recent contemplation, apparently hypothesised after the British rule.

Regardless to whatever had been the ancient history of Assam, It was distinguished as 'Pragjyotishpur' or 'Prachya Praksh Nagri' well before the Ahoms invaded the state, reorganized its culture, civilization and the natural surroundings and established their dominion in the region. During medieval period, it was known as 'Kamrup'. In the ancient period, in the far off countries, 'Pragjyotishpur' or 'Prachya Prakash Nagari' was famous as the scriptural bench of astrology or astronomy. The adventurous tales of the 'Tantra' bench are frightening. Astrology came as a blessing in disguise for the bench. This is made evident by the Navgrah temple, which exists till date in Guwahati. For centuries, the Navgrah temple had been playing the role of an academic bench for the study of astronomy and astrology. It is described in 'Kalkipurana' that the creator Brahma had created and fixed the constellations first at this place thereupon, the state was named Pragjyotishpur.



More so the region's splendour and prosperity had been compared with the paradise.

Dr. Vanikant Kakati, the renowned historian expresses an altogether different view on the nomenclature - Pragjyotishpur; he believes it to be group of Austro-Asian words such as *pagarjoh* (jo) *tik* (ka-cha) = (c *pagar-juh*) (jo)-*Tic* (c-ch) which means a state, surrounded by gigantic mountains. According to Dr. Kakati, 'Prag Jyotish' is a Sanskrit word, which has evolved from diverse Non Aryan languages.

### Puranic Stories

The legends have it that the frontiers of Pragjyotishpur included present-day Assam and a major portion of north and east Bengal, which was constituted in the era of Mahabharat during the reins of Narkasur and Bhagdutta. According to Porjitor, student of the 'Puranas', this state expanded up to the Kartova River, which included some portion of the present district of Rangpur of east Bengal. Porjitor's



*The emperor of Pragjyotishpur in the battle of Kurukshetra*

view gets justified from 'Vishnupurana'. On the eastern front of this state, stood a chain of mountains and passes that stretched up to China. The 'Asurs' were the rulers of this great, widely known and highly acclaimed state.

This belief has been repeatedly mentioned in the epics like -'Mahabharata'. It has it that the state was the kingdom of Non-Aryan king. 'Mahabharata' refers Pragjyotishpur as an empire ruled by Bhagdutta. King Bhagdutta was the son of 'Asur' king Narkasur. In the battle of 'Mahabharata' 'in the battlefield (Kurkshetra) he had fought from the 'Kauravas' side. 'Pragjyotishpur' also finds mention in the 'Harivansh Puran', Vishnupuran, Ramayana and other Purans too. The name also finds a place in the inscriptions of Samundragupt (359 BC). In this inscription found from Allahabad, Kamrup Empire has been referred as the border State of Gupta kingdom.

Thus, the study of ancient literature reveals that this land adorned with huge mountain peaks and inimitable natural beauty, prominent worldwide since ancient times was a non-Aryan regime, which existed in the form of myths and fables since the prehistoric era itself. In 'Mahabharat' Bhagdutta has been referred as a great emperor and warrior. Besides being a great warrior, King Bhagdutta was also a great scholar of Vedas and Vedantas, and therefore was a great expert in Vedic rituals, Vedic ceremonies and religious followings. He could also be accorded as a torchbearer of the coordinated practice of Indo-Mongol culture. This Non Aryan Mongol prince demonstrated amazing bravery and unbending valour during the war in Kurukshetra. During the war, the assemblage of elephants, in his supervision, had led to the transformation of the entire picture of the battlefield. Prince Bhagdutta was high revered in the Kaurava military, due to his expertise in both the fields - warfare and artillery organisation. The defence force of Pragjyotish emperor, as referred in Mahabharat, was a well-organized military of the Kirats and the people of Chinese clans. According to Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, most likely

the whole Mongolian tribe, with Tibetans, Burmese, Chinese and the of other such castes would have been included under a common denomination - 'Kirat' or the denomination was used, especially for the people of Chinese or Chinese-Tibetan clans. Or may be the term -Kirat, was used for the Bhutaneese who were picked up from the mountains and included in Bhagdutta's military.

A lengthy episode in Mahabharata describes about the people in Bhagdutta army with yellow complexion or yellow appearance. Mahabharat mentions that in Bhagdutta's army, there were soldiers with yellow complexion or gold like grandeur. The '*mlecha*' emperor Ghatak of Pragjyotishpur, who was defeated by Narkasur, was illustrated as a golden 'stupa'. Thus, an extensive research and study reveal that despite the widespread expansion and practice of Aryan culture, Mongol civilization was predominantly prevalent in Assam. We are but impelled to conclude that Bhagdutta's following and implementation of Vedic culture implies that the Mongol kingdom too had the Aryan culture flourishing in it. The fact in the given context is also verified from the episode in 'Ramayana' concerning Amrutraj, grandson of Ram and son of Kusha. Amrutraj, most likely the Aryan prince of Madhya Pradesh was believed to have unprecedentedly contributed towards establishing Pragjyotishpur. This was only because Aryan civilization and system had started making way into the ancient Pragjyotishpur-the fact is substantiated by the context of Ramayana. The ancient Aryan scholars or the military people apparently lacked the inner motivation concerning history. Maybe that is why they did not leave behind any unfailing record, evidential script or historical document on the prevailing conditions, civilization and strifes etc, which could help in unveiling some reliable historical background of Assam.

Renowned archaeologist Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, while expressing his views regarding Bhagdutta, mentions- Although Bhagdutta has been glorified on the basis of

legends and fables, but the same backdrop implies that Bhagdutta, having associated with the Aryan civilization, had played a key role in linking Assam with other parts of India. Around 1000 B.C. enlightened with the light of Aryan civilization, Bhagdutta was the first Mongol king, who was influenced by the impact of knowledge, science and spiritualism (propagator of Brahmanism) predominant in central India. 'Kalki Purana' and 'Yogini Tantra' find the mention of names of many princes titled as 'Danav' or 'Asur'. These princes possibly came into being only after Narkasur, the original pioneer of ancient Pragjyotishpur. According to the parables, Narkasur had extended his territory from river Kartova up-to Brahmaputra valley. After Shri Krishna killed Narak, his son Bhagdutta, ascended the throne. He took part, from the Kaurva's side, in the great battle of Mahabharata in Kurukshetra and while demonstrating grand valour and remarkable war skills, was killed in the hands of Pandavs.

According to Puranas, a devotee of lord Shiva, Banasur, who was the ruler of ancient Shonitpur (now Tejpur), and who challenged Shri Krishna, during the war was a contemporary of Narak. Puranas have it that there was a feeling of hostility between the Shonitpur and Pragjyotipur kingdom that kept augmenting with time. Banasur was a staunch 'Shaiva' (Lord Shiva devotee). He got a magnificent Shiva temple erected in the name of God Shiva near Shonitpur (Tejpur). This temple is known, till date as 'Maha Bhairav' Temple.

The cause of Bana's popularity was his daughter Usha. It is said that a very handsome and desirous man took away Usha's virginity while in her dream. She was charmed by her dream man and developed a longing for him. Chitrlekha, a very pedantic and wise friend Usha, having discovered about Usha's plight, sketched pictures of princes of several kingdoms. As she finished making the portrait of Anirudha, Shri Krishna's grandson, Usha bowed her head timidly. Chitrlekha reads Usha's mind and with the help

of 'Tantra Shastra', retrieves Anirudha from Dwarika to Shonitpur and hands him to Usha. When Bana discovers about Anirudha's stay in Usha's room, he gets him imprisoned. And from here onwards begins the eulogical saga of Bana.

On the other hand, Anirudha's disappearance created a commotion in Dwarka. Shrikrishna anger knew no bounds when he gets the news from Narad concerning Anirudha's whereabouts in Shonitpur and his being in prison. Therewith started the hostility between Dwarka and Shonitpur that finally eventuates after the defeat of Bana. Shrikrishna with his military comes to Shonitpur. A Great War breaks out between the two sides. Lord Shiva Himself comes to save his devotee Bana and challenges Shri Krishna for fight. In the end, Shri Krishna impresses Shiva. And finally, Krishna brings back Anirudha and Usha to Dwarka after defeating and humiliating Bana. The entire episode, including the battle in Shonitpur between Shrikrishna and Bana, Shiva as Bana's savior, battling with Shri Krishna, other than giving the Usha-Anirudha's love story, a religious significance, also enlightens and fills human mind with light of knowledge and spiritual emotions.

Like Usha-Anirudha's story, another Puranic story impels us to accept the ancient existence of Assam. This story is again associated with Shri Krishna. And ascertains the prehistoric connection between Aryavarta and Assam. The Kundalpur kingdom (presently- Sadiya) located at the eastern border of this state was ruled by Bhishmak. His daughter Rukmini was married to Shri Krishna. The ruins of Kundalpur are still found near Sadia (around 40 Km from Sadia) on the bank of river Kundils. Sadia came under British rule in 1842. The natives of this state are people from a tribe named 'Mimich'. They claim that Rukmini was the tribal princess of that caste. These tribes, in memory of their defeat in the hands of Shri Krishna, wear a kind of silver ornament on their heads, which is known as 'Kapali'. The story goes like this – Bhishmak had settled the

marriage of his daughter with Shishupal, the ruler of Chedi, however Rukmini awed with the stories of Shrikrishna develops a liking for him. She sends a love message to him. Shri Krishna brings in Rukmini to Dwarka on his carriage and tied nuptial knots with her. Eventually Shishupal, with all the hostility in his heart, gets killed in the hands of Shri Krishna.

The mention of these Pauranic stories in the given context is to prove that Aryans were deeply associated with Assam since prehistoric times. However these facts associated with Assam, have been extracted, either from Puranas or mythologies. Following the establishment of Narkasur's regime in Assam, the name Pragjyotishpur was changed to Kamrupa. Before long, Narkasur got the Kamakhya temple constructed followed by the renovation of Kamakhya Shaktipeeth with which, consequently arose the requirement or the motivation of changing the name of the state. On this issue a myth goes like this—Kamdev (Cupid in Greek language) was reduced to ashes, when Lord Shiva opened his third eye. He liberated himself from Shiva's fury and took up his very first physical existence on the soil of Assam. It is the land of Assam, which rendered physical existence to Kamdev, even today the mesmerizing surroundings of which beckons yearnings even in a lifeless body. In the ancient Sanskrit 'Vangmaya', the terms Kamrupa and Pragjyotishpur have been used with equal frequency, especially in the writings of Kalidas. In his scripts, this state has been regarded as the Suzarinty of Suryavanshi emperor Raghv. In *Kalikapurana* and *Yogini tantra*, the name of this state is exclusively cited as Kamarupa. Chinese tourist Huan-Tsang and Muslim historian Al-Barauni have also adopted the use of – 'Kamrupa' or related terms. Dr. Kakati has also concurred the views of these scholars. According to him the state was once, as obvious by the scripts of Chinese traveller and Muslim author, famous as Kamroo or Kamrupa.

**Huan-Tsang's journey of Kamrupa**

The factual and authentic account of Assam's history commences from 643 AD. The erstwhile history might have held some facts or evidences within itself, however we cannot establish the authenticity of any of those historical incidences, nor can we convincingly assert, anything regarding the history of those times. Instead of being based on history the entire recounting is based upon myths and fables. Nevertheless, the detailed informations regarding Assam obtained after 643 A.D. seems authentic. Around this period, the Chinese traveller Huan sang visited Kamrupa. He did not miss to write about the factual details of the places he visited. The description of Kamarupa finds place in those details. While the Chinese traveller journeyed in Kamarupa, Bhaskar Burman was the emperor of the state. He was a staunch devotee of Shiva and was a blind follower of Shaivism. Huan sang, in his account, had introduced Bhaskar Burman in the history as 'The aristocrat of eastern India'. About Kamarupa, Huan sang wrote - "The frontier of Kamarupa kingdom extends till about 10,000 'Li' (approx. 1,700 miles) and that of the capital is around 30 Li. Although, the land has slopes but it is very productive. It is being cultivated on a regular basis. People here are involved in the farming of Jackfruit and coconut. These trees are planted very deftly. Dams are erected on rivers or lakes bringing forth the streams, which keep flowing all the time. As regards the climate, he has written that the climate, of the region is tropical and wet. People belonging to this place are simple, honest and modest by nature. They are fair in complexion with a copper or yellow tinge and have short height and flat nose. The language they speak varies from that of the populace of central region of India. These people are aggressive and wild in nature. More so they have sharp minds and are very intelligent.

The aforesaid description of Assam is very significant and concise. These few sentences uncloud the entire picture

of the then Assam's rise-fall, success-failure, and development-destruction.

The terms related to *Brahma* or *Brahmanya Rajdharma* in those times establish the fact that Brahmanism was getting popular among the natives.

As regards the spread of Brahmanism, Huan Sang reports- 'Natives of this place, worshipped God and use to offer sacrifices to gratify their revered God. The state has numerous temples belonging to various tribes. According to an interesting anecdote -Huan sang had first seen emperor Bhaskar Burman, offering prayers in a Shiva Temple. Other than whatever Huan-Tsang wrote about the then emperor, a lot of information has also been collected from inscriptions on copper plates found from Nidhanpur and Dubi area and from the Sanskrit playwright-' Harshcharitam' authored by Banbhatt, which portrays the life story of Harshvardhan, the king of Kannauj.

Darkness engulfs the history of Assam from 10th century to the middle of 12th century. Like the empire of the great king Alexander had disintegrated after his death, It appears as though- after the death of Bhaskar Burman, his empire too collapsed following its division among the incompetent local chief officers and unskilled rulers. But of late, some copper plates, several coins and historical documents have been found that throw light on the history amid these two centuries, and historians have been successful in deciphering some part of the events of the particular time span. Although these copper inscriptions do not provide account of the historical incidences of an era, yet in the historical evaluation, these inscriptions play an important role.

It is true that one could get some details of Kamrupa or Pragjyotishpur in the *Garuda*, *Matsya*, *Vayu* and other Puranas, yet they fail to throw adequate light on the data and imprints available of those times. Thus, the historical details of the period of about a thousand years remain in oblivion. This duration stretches from the period of Narak's



son, Bhagdutta and his successor, till the period of PushyaBurman. The history of Kamrupa acquires a new form and proceeds towards authenticity during the rein of PushyaBurman. After the death of PushyaBurman, his son Samudra Burman ascended the throne of Kamrupa and ruled till the early part of 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Samudra Burman, during his rein, steered the glory of his dynasty to its unparalleled heights. To be apprised of the comprehensive details of the era, we will have to go through the eulogies of the fifty years of reign of Gupta dynasty's chivalrous ruler Samudra Gupta from 330 – 380 A.D.

Historians are of the opinion that Pralambh Burman was the founder of Burman dynasty. Bal Burman came into being in the sixth generation of Pralabh Burman. In the views of historians, Pralabh Burman fought a war with his predecessor, having defeated him after a ghastly battle and fraudulent designs, slyly married his daughter and became the ruler of Kamrupa.

Princess Amritprabha was the daughter of the emperor of Kamrupa and was born during this period. She was said to be married to Meghvan, the prince of Kashmir. Kalhan, the author of 'Rajtarangini' recounts about the many noteworthy and amazing activities performed in the palace premises of the princess. In his work 'Harshacharitam' Bana



***Bhaskar Burman gifts to Huar-Tsang in Pragjyotishpur***

Bhatt too, like Kalhan has thrown adequate light on the historical account of the administration of Pushyaburman and his successors. In this volume Murti Burman has been mentioned at many instances. Murti Burman belonged to the sixth generation of Bal Burman, who ruled in the latter part of the fourth century. Following the path of Pandavas, Murti Burman too performed *Rajsuya Yagya*. The rulers of Burman dynasty were the devotees of lord Shiva. The name of their capital was 'Har Roopeshwar' they used to call themselves the emperors of Pragjyotishpur.

Bhaskar Burman, during the reign of whom, Chinese traveller visited Kamrupa, belonged to the fourth generation of aforesaid Murti Burman. He was known as *Shiladitya* of Thaneswar dynasty and was the contemporary of the king of Kannauj.

He ruled from 604 -648 A.D. He was also the contemporary of king Shashank of Gaur dynasty of northwestern Bengal.

There was mutual hostility between Bhaskar Burman and king Shashank of Gaur dynasty. Eventually Bhaskar Burman defeated Gaur king in a battle and occupied a major portion of his kingdom. Bhaskar Burman dominated over a vast area of land that extended till southeast Bengal. The sea route to China was also under Bhaskar Burman. It is obvious that the sea portion of the Bay of Bengal was also within his regime.

According to Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, -'The state of Assam dominated over a major portion of east Bengal before the regime of Nar Narayan. By the mid of seventh century, Mongols, follower of Hinduism, had established their powerful empire.

History has it that during springtime, Bhaskar Burman, travelled to Kannauj, the capital of Harshavardhana. History also proves that it was during the journey of Kannauj, when Bhaskar Burman met the Chinese tourist Huan sang and invited him to visit Kamrupa.

This dynasty came to an end after the death of Bhaskar

Burman. Around 655 A.D, Shalstambh subjugated the throne of Kamarupa and thus Kamrupa went under the authority of other dynasty. Shalstambh ruled till 675 A.D. Harshadeva or HarshaBurman belonged to the 5<sup>th</sup> generation of Shalstambh dynasty. Pralambh and his son Harjar of the 5<sup>th</sup> generation of HarshaBurman were known to be powerful rulers of Kamrupa. In 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D, the ruler of Pal dynasty took over Shalstambh dynasty. The successors of Pal dynasty claim themselves to be the successors of king Narkasur (founder of Pragjyotishpur). Brahmpal was the first king of Pal dynasty. Following the path of the kings of Magadha, Gaur and Bengal, he titled his dynasty as Pal dynasty. The third prince of this dynasty was Ratnapal. He was very liberal and kind ruler he had immense faith in Hindu religion. While his time in power he constructed several temples. Kamrupa, during his reign, had attained great heights of prosperity and eminence. Also in that period, copper mine was explored and developed in Bhutan. These were used to construct his victory commemorative inscription pillars. He encouraged religion, trade and commerce, besides expanding the Kamrupa border extensively. According to the Nidhanpur stone inscription of Bhaskar Burman- there was an instant and unanticipated expansion of the border of Kamrup kingdom. The empire extended till the entire present day Assam and part of Bengal. The rulers of Pal dynasty had utmost faith in Hindu religion. They took great interest in the spread of Hindu culture and religion.

Pal dynasty disappeared after merging with 'dev' kings. Prithu Dev, the successor of Vaidya Dev, was the ruler of same dynasty. Gazetteer in his-'Rangpur report' has acknowledged Prithudev as a powerful ruler. King Prithudev had constructed giant forts in the capital Kamrupa. A magnificent Shiva temple, constructed by him, exists in Jalpaigudi According to 'Yogini Tantra' he was declared the owner of the land and was named as 'Jalmeshawar'. During his reign, a Muslim chief named Ibn Bakhtiyar, equipped

with a band army invaded Kamrupa. King Prithudev, with his unrestrained dynamism, completely aborted the mission. In 1212 A.D, with his valiance he again foiled the attack of Sultan Giasuddin.

The western part of Assam and a part of eastern Bengal, under the dominance of Kochs had been declared independent state named 'Kamta'. The capital of this state was established in Kamtapur. The most competent of the emperors, who ruled here, was Durlabh Naryan, who ruled till the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. There is the reference of Durlabh Naryan in 'Pralabh Charit' authored by Hem Saraswati. Sir E.A. Gate's 'History of Assam' also concurs the same fact. The present-day Kamrup, Gopalpara and the Koch Bihar districts came under the regime of Durlabh Naryana, the ruler of Kamta kingdom. Durlabh Naryana came to be known as Kamteshwar and justified his name in having all the royal qualities. Religious leaders, preachers, astrologers, poets and scholars were highly regarded in his kingdom. He patronised and always rewarded renowned Vaishnav poets like Hem Saraswati, Kaviratna Saraswati and Harihar Vipri for their poetic creations.

Following the reign of Indra Naryana of same dynasty, the history of Kamta kingdom became a subject to controversy. There is no suitable and authentic evidence available, to establish the whereabouts of the kingdom. The administration of this place changes again in the later half of 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Last ruler of Shven dynasty, Neel Dhvaj, annexed the throne of Kamta kingdom. Neelambar was the last ruler of Shven dynasty. During the same period in 1498, king of Bengal, Hussain Shah attacked on Shven Empire. Neelambar fled his capital, after getting badly defeated in the hands of Hussain Shah. Kamta kingdom was disintegrated. The rulers of Bhua dynasty captured and ruled over the different parts of disintegrated Shven dynasty. In the year 1515 Vishwa Singh, a powerful king of Koch dynasty, took over again and established his rule.

### **Koch Dynasty**

The people of Assam strongly believe that Vishwa singh had renovated the Kamakhya shaktipeeth and temple, on the Neelanchal Hills. He established his capital in Koch Bihar. History reveals that Vishwa Singh's reigned from the year 1496 to 1533. After Vishwa singh, his son, Naryan ascended the throne. His real name was Mal Dev. Among the rulers of Koch dynasty, Narnaryana acquired great eminence. He ruled from 1533 to 1584 A.D. During his tenure, art and literature received boundless patronage and thus earned high regard and admiration in the history of Assam. During the tenure of Narnarayana, Vaishnav religion, related culture, contemporary art and literature were much patronized and attained the greatest heights of fame and glory.

Narnaryana, during his period extended his kingdom in all directions. He was a skilled politician, great warrior and expert in organizing the powers. Aforesaid abilities lead him to subjugate Gadganv, the Ahom capital located in east Assam. With the help of his military chief, and Prime Minister Shukldhwaj, who also happened to be his brother, embarked a mission against Ahom colonies. He defeated them and having suppressed them completely liberated Assam of their terror. Aided with the skilful insight of his brother and army chief, he attacked with full vigour on Insha Khan, the emperor of east Bengal'. However, they lost the battle. His brother Shukldhwaj was a courageous warrior and skilled in warfare; he demonstrated such a show of gallantry in the battleground that he was adorned with the title of '*Cheel Rai*' or '*Cheela Rai*'. His name became a household proverb in Assam.

Narnaryana was a brave and skilled soldier. Other than defeating Ahoms, he also won over the Kachhari kings. The rulers of Manipur and Jayantiya use to pay taxes to him and accepted his authority. Akbar, the king of Delhi, was his friend. Akbar had mentioned in his biography that Narnaryana had sent several gifts along with an ambassador

to befriend him. Thus, friendship prevailed between the two great rulers who possessed extensive farsightedness and were also the patrons of universal culture. It is clearly mentioned in 'Ain-e-Akbari' that Narnaryana had a huge and powerful army of 1,000 horse riders and 1,00,000 foot soldiers. Except for Brahmpal areas and Ahom ruled eastern Border States, they had unfurled the flag of their victory on an extensive empire including the entire Kamrupa. Their empire extended up-to Kartova River at the western side. And in the southeast side Rangpur and part of Maiman Singh district were also included within their territory. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chaterjee writes – During his period of administration, Narnaryana and his brother Shukldhawaj, who was also his army chief, augmented the prestige of Koch tribe, to its greatest heights. During their rule, the Ahoms were not only defeated but the very options of their re-establishment were terminated. They extended the Koch territory till Arakan, the entire north and east Bengal.

Abul Fajal, in 'Akbarnama' has portrayed the tenure of Narnaryana regime in beautiful words. British traveller, Ralph Fitch has also thrown light especially on how Vaishnav religion, related literature and religious belief flourished and were patronized during his period.. Ralph Fitch has mentioned that majority of Narnaryana subjects were followers of Hindu religion.

During his tenure animal sacrifice and human killing were banned. Having ruled till 50 years Narnarayana died, in 1584. It is already mentioned that Kamakhya temple was constructed during Narnarayana reign. Dr. Suni Kumar Chaterjee says – In comparison to any of the mid era emperors of Assam, Narnaryana contributed immensely towards the study and research of Sanskrit and made extensive efforts to intensify the relationship of Assam with rest of India.

Unfortunately, the kingdom, made out of blood and sweat of Nar naryana and his brother and army chief Shukldhawaj, was divided and destroyed by the successors

of their dynasty. In 1613 A. D Parikshit naryana of Koch dynasty established his capital and ruled in Varnagar, situated in Kamrup. Muslims attacked and subjugated the Koch Kingdom. Balitnaryana, Parikshit's brother, with Ahom king Chichenfa's aid, got back his kingdom but he had to accept the authority of the Ahom ruler. It is a fact that the rein of Koch dynasty is recognized as a radiant section in the history of Assam. During the administration of this dynasty, the expansion and development of education, literature and culture was an important achievement.

The tripartite administration prevailed in Assam after the Koch dynasty diminished. Kochs in the west and Ahoms in the east were always involved in mutual conflicts, and Muslim army from outside frequently attacked and dampened their spirits. Not only this, these armies would hamper the growth and peace of the renowned empire.

### **Ahom Empire**

The period of 13<sup>th</sup> century was quite chaotic in the history of Assam. In this century, history of Assam and the contemporary culture took an unusual turn. People of Tai Ahom tribes of a branch of the 'Shan' tribe staying in the Prangbhan or Paran kingdom located on the banks of river Iravati in eastern Burma entered through the pass of Patkai mountain range. There is a story about Ahoms that the prince of 'Shan' dynasty, Chukafa, having been dethroned, had taken refuge in the forest intending to save his life. The fortunate prince found a way through a pass and reached this state along with his group, through that route. As he reached there, he had to struggle with the Chutia and Kachhari tribes who ruled in the northeastern corner. But he succeeded in defeating these tribe, which gave them an opportunity to establish their dominance over a huge area. The history of Ahom's entrance in Assam began, hereafter.

Chutia was a powerful tribe, which ruled in the eastern

part of the valley where Sadia also exist. In 1523, Ahom king Chuhung-Mung attacked on the kingdom of Chutia and succeeded in subjugating their empire. The Chutia Empire became a part of Ahom Empire. And the responsibility of the empire was handed to an Ahom sardar (chief) named 'Sadia-Khova Gohachi'. Having unfurled their own flag on Chutia kingdom, their attention diverted from the hills of north east towards the east. This area was under the administration of Marad and Barahi tribes. Having defeated the Maran king Badancha and Barahi king Yakumcha, they unfurled their flag in the northeast and far east, as well.

### **The Battle of Kachharis and Ahoms**

Kachharis ruled over the lower part of Bharamputra valley. Kachharis ruled also on the banks of river Dhanshri and the land adjoining it. These two kingdoms were quite powerful and served as great obstacles enroute the victory mission of Chukafa and his people. Finally Chukafa and his friends followed the path of pleasing Marad and Barahi to win a control over them and they succeed in this endeavor. They declared their pledge of equality of rights, before the public. They opted for peace route instead of war and following this policy they indulged themselves in the expansion of the boundaries of their empire and were amazingly successful in fulfilling their objective. On the basis of the equality of rights among the people who won and those who were won over, the social and political meetings began. This resulted in the formation of relation between attackers and those who were attacked. Thus the custom of inter-caste and inter-religion marriages started sprouting in the state. This brought about an amazing social change. With the assimilation of the blood of Marad, Barahi and Ahom tribes, a neo swadeshi Ahom tribe came into being. With time the numbers and the power of the attackers coming through Patkai pass increased immensely.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century Ahoms fought a battle with Kamtapur



Empire. This incident holds an important position in the history. Kamta Empire had to receive severe defeat in the hands of Ahoms coming from Northeast. And they were forced to take oath to follow peace. After some time, there broke a battle between the people Chutia tribes and Ahoms. People of Chutia tribes were also quite brave perseverant and large in number. This battle saw a great loss of men and money from both the sides. Finally, people of Chutia tribe, played foul, and murdered king Chupimafa, who was busy in the celebrations of ceasefire. The murder reignited the war and in 1523 the Chutia tribe was completely destroyed. Chuhungmung who succeeded Chupimafa crushed the remaining power of Chutia tribe and incorporated their empire into Ahom empire.

Chuhungmung, who became the ruler after the murder of Chupimafa in 1479, came to be known as 'Dihidia'. Chuhung was a very dynamic and brave ruler. In his period only, the use of explosive weapons started for the first time. They learnt, from Muslim invaders, the method of utilization and control of these weapons. Gradually, they became expert in using tank and explosives. During his tenure itself, along with the expansion of their rule, their culture and civilization too flourished. Keeping in view the social conditions, and the needs of the society they also propagated the systems of social development. The artists were provided with all the facilities to enhance and improve their art, besides other people of the Chutia tribe, who were skilled or expert in any field, were engaged in the development of the empire and even they were provided with required facilities. This era also saw the enhancement of Vaishnav religion and culture.

In 1490 A.D. Ahoms started a struggle with yet another powerful tribe of Kachharis. They fought on the banks of river Dikhaio. Ahoms were badly defeated in the hands of Kachharis. This defeat came as a great shock to Ahoms. But they did not take long to muse over their wounds; they reverted back and on the banks of river Dhanshiri,

challenged Kachharis for war. Initially, during the battle it seemed that Kachharis would again win over but eventually they were defeated and destroyed completely. Kachhari kings were dethroned and an Ahom king Detsang was made to sit on the throne. But peace did not prevail here for long. In 1536, Kachharis again started a war with Ahoms. As a result of the battle Kachharis imprisoned Detsang and hanged him. Ahoms, agitated by this incident, attacked on Kachharis with full vigour and defeated them. Their capital Dimapur, situated in central Assam was severely plundered.

### **The fall of Kachhari Empire**

Dimapur was established as the capital of Kachharis in 13<sup>th</sup> century. It had extended till north Kachhar. According to a pauranic story, Kachhar Empire was famous by the name of 'Hidimba' a she-devil mentioned in Mahabharata. According to some historians, the term Dimapur is the slang version of Hidimbapur or Hidimbanagar. Thus by the end of thirteenth century, Ahoms had captured over the entire Kachhari kingdom. In 1531-36, Chumung Hang or Dihingya had extended the Ahom empire till Dimapur. During the Kachhari period, the empire was the hub of education, art and culture. As regards impact, in 'Kachhari Buranji' edited by Dr. Surya Kumar Bhuyan, it is said – "Kachhari emperor Tamradhawaj Naryana's wife and Surdarp Naryana's mother, queen Chandra Prabha had awarded the royal poet -Bhuvaneshwar Vachaspati, who had translated '*Vrihad Nardiya Kathamrut*' into Assamese language.

Great warrior king Chang mung hang (Dhingya) succeeded in establishing a powerful Ahom empire after defeating Kachharis. He too died in the hands of an assassin in 1539. With his boundless courage he foiled two Muslim invasions after having defeated the Kachharis. After his death, Chuklen mung was anointed the king of the Ahom kingdom. He had ruled from 1539 to 1552 A.D. Chuklemung was the first Ahom emperor, who started the use of coins in Assam.

### Mughal Invasion

Assam had always been facing and bravely counteracting Muslim attacks. Several times Muslim invaders, even managed to reach till *Gadganv*-the Ahom capital; nevertheless, they were badly defeated and chased away. Ahoms even, aborted the attack of Muslim chief Turbak, who was eventually killed in the hands of Ahom prince, on the banks of river *Bharlu*. The earliest Muslim attack on Ahom came upon during 13<sup>th</sup> century. They proceeded to assault on Assam, after having annexed Bengal, in 1205.

In 1627, Muslims carried out a major attack. They did so, in reprisal, after having suffered defeat in the hands of Balit Narayan of Koch dynasty. It was a brutal assault. Besides, it aimed against Kochraj and Ahoms too. This was the 9th Muslim attack on Ahoms. However, even this was foiled. After the failure of this attack a major portion of Koch Empire was included into the Ahom dominion. Ahoms were, thus getting more & more powerful and prevailing.

In 1658, the existing Koch king Pran Narayan attacked and defeated the Muslim chief of Gopal para and seized it. However, he was defeated by Jayadhwaj, ruler of the Ahom empire, and had to retreat from the riverside sonkosha. Eventually, the whole of Brahmaputra valley region came under Ahoms.

Ahoms had taken control of Gopalpara. Though it had several times, faced the rage of clashes between Kochs and mughals before, but this time Ahoms had acquired absolute control over it. However, even they could not protract their supremacy. And in 1661, mughals subjugated it once again. With that, Ahoms' dominance on *Gopalpara* came to an end. Finally, in 1765 A.D. it came under the British authority.

In 1661, under the commandership of Meer Jumla, this region witnessed the 11<sup>th</sup> Mughal attack. Mir Jumla was the *Nawab* of Dhaka. Having defeated Koch king Pran Narayan, he proceeded further, against Ahoms. He had a huge army that included 12,000 horse riders and 30,000

foot soldiers. Besides, he was also equipped with a powerful Navy. Supplemented with such vast band of soldiers, Meer Jumla lead a major attack and gaining an unforeseen success, seized Gadganv- the Ahom capital. But excited, with the roar of victory drum, immersed in the joy of triumph, the mughal army was severely attacked and battered by Ahoms.

In Assam, Ahoms, in their victory maneuvers, received unexpected support from the nature there; the severe monsoon in Assam presented obstruction for Meer Jumla, precisely, in the similar manner as the snowfall of Russia, played a hindrance for Napoleon, while on his attack on Russia. During the reign of Aurangzeb, the Mughal army led by their chief Ramsingh, attacked for the 12<sup>th</sup> time on Assam. It was a formidably powerful attack. However, Ahom army, led by its chief and a great warrior, Lachit BarPhukan, opposed Mughals with great fervor and dynamism. This battle took place in 1670, at Sharaighat, in which Mughals were severely crushed by Ahoms and their army, too was wholly destroyed. This victory earned, Ahom army Commander, such distinction, that today, his name has become a proverb that lies on the tongue tip of the common folks of Assam. The patriotism, courage and the undaunted vigour of Lachit BarPhukan tinted the history of Assam, with red colour.

Ahoms, not only opposed the invasions of Mughals, but also sat a guard on the plausible incursions from Burma and the allied, far eastern countries. In a nutshell, it would be appropriate to say that Ahoms had structured a strong fortification against the expansion of Mughal empire. The last Muslim attack, on this region, came upon towards the beginning of 1682 under the commandership of Nawab Mansoor Khan. During that period Gadadhar Singh was the existent ruler. He fought a battle with Mughals at Itakhuli. However, it is essential to get acquainted with Gadadhar Singh, who is an integral part of the history of Assam.

### **The period of Gadadhar Singh**

In 1679, under the guidance of one of the chiefs of Guwahati, Bengal Nawab's son, subjugated Guwahati and the city went under Mughal dominance. However, when *BarPhukan* came to know that the people are furious with Buddha Gohain, he took advantage of this situation and unified rest of the officers. He took over the capital and murdered the king. In latter half of 1679, a 14-year-old boy, Chulikafa was made to sit on the throne. The boy belonged to Chamuguria clan. He had become a king at a very early age; therefore he is famous in the history as "*Lara Raja*" (Child King). Subsequently, the king changed over to a Hindu name Ratnadhvaj Singh. In order to be in command of the empire, Laluk Sola BarPhukan married his five-year-old daughter to Ratnadhvaj. Then he conspired with the Queen and got, Buddha Gohain and other officers of the state, murdered. During those times, it was customary among Ahoms, that no handicap prince could become a King. Laluksola Barphukan conspired with the king and began cutting off the organs of the other Princes. However, Gadapani, son of Gobarraja, who was prudent and daring, escaped this conspiracy. Jayamati was Gadapani's wife. To save his life, she sent him towards *Naga Hills*. Jayamati was detained and tortured brutally, whilst questioning with regards to the whereabouts of *Gadapani*. But the devoted wife did not budge a word and succumbed to the torture on 27 March 1680. From then onwards, natives of Assam had been paying their tributes to that amazon, by regarding her as *Sati Jayamati*. After that Laluk Sola Barphukan also died. He was murdered by the royal employees. On the other hand Gadapani was busy expanding his powers amid the *Naga Hills*. He came to his brother-in-law Bunder Burfukan place. With his aid, Gadapani dethroned *Lara Raja* at Gadganv itself; and took over the throne. The same Gadapani, after becoming the king, came to be known as Gadadhar, who battled with Mughals at Itakhuli. Mughal army was defeated in the clash of Itakhuli.

In 1683, Gadadhar suppressed Miris. He ruled till 15 years. He died in 1696. He believed in power worship. He got 'Umanand Devalaya' constructed in 1694. He focused mainly towards rural development and transportation. He had constructed several bridges, roads and lakes.

In every victory mission of Assam, else in the defeat of Mughals or any other assailant, the nature of Assam played a significant role. Assam's Great forests, numerous diseases and epidemics emanating from Assam and the monsoon assisted greatly to stop or chase away the enemy. The ten thousand military sent by Muhammad Shah, lost its way and ended up in those jungles. Thus, the Natural surroundings of Assam offered a unprecedented help in the victory mission of Assam

### **The Period of Rudra Singh**

After Gaddhar, his son Rudra Singh took over as the emperor of Assam. He ruled from 1696 to 1714. Rudra Singh was the elder son of Jayamati. His childhood name was Lai. After his father's death, he changed over his name to Rudra Singh (a Hindu name) and Chukhumfa (an Ahom name) and ascended the throne. Soon, he reverently reinstalled, the Vaishnavs at Manjuli, debased by his father. Since then Manjuli has become the main hub of Vaishnavs. In 1702, he subjugated *Nagas*. In 1707 he sent Sanat Barua and Pani Phukan to attack on Kachhari kingdom and conquered them. The Kachhari king took refuge at Jayantia king Ram Singh and sought his help. Instead of helping, he took Tamradhwaj and his family, into custody. Helplessly they turned towards Ahoms for help from. Rudra Singh sent Bar Baruah and Bar Phukan to attack on Jayantia kingdom. Bar Baruah attacked on Jayantia and liberated Tamradhwaj. He arrested Ram Singh and produced both the kings, in front of Rudra Singh. In 1708, in *Vishwanath Durbaar* he declared Jayantia and Kachhari Kingdom as that of Ahom kingdoms and validated their rulers as his subordinate kings.

Plying to his desire for the expansion of the kingdom, Rudra Singh wanted to attack on Bengal therefore he started to amass military and resources. But suddenly he fell ill in 1714, and died. Amongst the Ahom kings, Rudra Singh proved to be of highest category and the best. He was a great warrior and was highly intellectual. He had made great efforts in the field of social welfare and constructed many ponds and lakes. In memory of his mother Jayamati, he constructed Jai Sagar and Jaidaul. He focused special attention towards education. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee rightly describes him as 'Shivaji of East India'. He further says-“ By God's will, had Shivaji of South and Rudra Singh of Bengal formed a relationship of association; the history of India, today would have been outrightly different. The influence of Rudra Singh's personality was farfetched. Not only Assam but the entire nation should feel proud of Ahom King- Chukhumfa Rudra Singh.

Following the death of Rudra Singh, his son Shiv Singh ascended the throne. 'Chutmafa' was his Ahom name. He was in awe with the Brahmins. After astrologers prophesied his empire's destruction, he entitled his Queen Phuleshwari as 'Bade Raja' and started looking after the royal administration. She was a fine-looking 'Nat' girl. Besotted of her beauty, he had made her his queen. She was not only good-looking but possessed brains too. She had immense faith in power worship. She was enraged when the Vaishnavs opposed *Devi* worship. She persuaded their *mahant* to bow his head in front of the idol of *Devi*.

### **Fall of Ahom Empire**

Ahoms ruled over Assam from thirteenth century till the middle of nineteenth century. Almost, whole of Brahmaputra valley came under their dominance. The final epoch of Ahom Empire served a battleground of controversy between Shakti and Vaishnav sects. A situation of mutual struggle and subjection arose, involving the two communities. Dark clouds of the downfall began hovering.

More so, the humiliation of Vaishnavs by Queen Phuleshwari, served as fuel to fire. Violent activities commenced there and took a toll. The enduring insurgence encompassed whole of 18<sup>th</sup> century and ceased finally, after the dominance of Burmese. The autonomy of Assam formerly went in the hands of Burmese and later, to that of British.

Rajeshwar Singh was the successor of Shiv Singh. He was a king without courage. Lakhi Singh was his successor and his tenure of rule was same as that of his father's. He too, was a coward king. His tenure laid a strong foundation of the disintegration of Ahom Empire. The powerful center of the empire collapsed due to the rise of Mobamari branch of Vaishnav band. It left a very bad effect on king's psyche. The king humiliated the Mahant of Mobamaris. At that instance, he left without a word however, the initial revolt of Mobamaris set off, during the month of November in 1769 A.D. On the grounds, when on 15th September 1769, Marana Chief Nahar Khora, Shaikia, and Raghav came to offer elephants to king in the form of revenue, Kirti Chandra Berma accused that 'Elephants are not up to the mark' and got their heads tonsured. Disgraced, both returned to the mahant of Mobamari and there they devised the plan of the revolt. Mahant handed over the responsibility of the rebellion, to his son Bangan. The ambitious brother of king Lakhi (Lakshmi) Singh, who aspired to become a king, was also involved in this revolt. The mutiny broke out in 1769. The king issued orders to arrest Bangan. The rebels executed the security men, who went in pursuit. The king sent his military. The military and the insurgents battled on the banks of Dibru River wherein the Ahom army lost. The king fled to Guwahati. Several officers were arrested and many amongst them were executed.

Subsequently, the revolt was somehow suppressed by killing Naher, Maran, Mahant, Ramakant and other rebels by hook or crook and Lakhi Singh was enthroned again. After the Mobamaria revolt, Deo Dhai Pandit convinced him



that he went through so much of trouble after quitting to follow Ahom's principles. The king accepted the pundit's stance yet the influence of Hindu religion kept on increasing on him. Lakhi Singh had conceived several development plans. Some he could accomplish, and some were left half way through, when he died in 1780.

After he died, some leaders of the empire crowned his son Gauri Singh the king. As soon as he ascended the throne the king started getting the organs pierced, of all those who were suitable to be the Kings. Mobamari revolt resurfaced due to his tortures. Suddenly one night, the insurgents entered the city of Gadganv and slaughtered countless people. They set Shinghri house on fire. Somehow the king managed to flee. However, the rebels were once again chased away with the help of Ghanshyam Buddhagohain's military. King returned back to his capital and on Barbarua's recommendation, executed thousands of Mobamaris. On the other hand, Mobamaris declared the onset of mutiny, at the northern side of Brahmaputra. The king's brutality only made the matters worse; the insurgence fully engrossed itself in destroying the royal administration. Mobamaris plundered men and material, they burnt and destroyed many villages. The king Gaurinath failed to curb this revolt. He appealed to the British Government, for help. In 1792, East India Company sent Capt. Wales as his aid. This mission concluded with a treaty between Gaurinath and Captain Wales. According to Sir E.A. Gait. "Gaurinath Singh was the most incompetent, bloodthirsty, denigrated, coward of all Ahom Kings". In 1795 Gaurinath died. After him, Kamleshwar Singh became the king, who ruled till the year 1811. He was a descendant of Gadadhar and his original name was Kinaram. Having ascended the throne, he rechristened himself a Hindu name Kamleshwar Singh and an Ahom name Chuklifan. He ruled for about fifteen years. He succeeded in sustaining his reputation, by running a regimented empire. Following the death of the king, Budhagohai, the whole soul of the empire,

made Chandra Kant, the king's brother, sit on the throne. Administration of the empire had weakened and disintegrated because of religious and political uprisings.

### **Attack of Burmese**

It was during the reign of Chandra Kant that, on the invitation of Badan Phukan, who had been banished by Buddhagohai, a band of 8000 Burmese soldiers were sent to Assam for his help to fight against the emperor. Purnanand Gohain sent the military against them and a great battle broke out between the two. Ahoms lost the battle. At the same time Purnanand Buddha Gohain died. His son Ruchinatha took over as the Buddha Gohain. He again sent military against Burmese but they too were defeated. Burmese enthroned Badan Bar Phukan on the post of Buddhagohai; they took away a lot of riches, gold, pearls and stones and also took along Hemo Kumari for Burmese king. King Chandrakant was now a king just for the name's sake. He became a puppet in the hands of Badan Bar Phukan. Due to this, Royal mother was also unhappy with Budan Burphukan. Everyone began to despise Badan Burphukan. In 1818, a soldier named Roop Singh murdered him. Chandrakant was restrained from becoming the king. Instead, with Budhagohains' or Ahom prime minister's wise efforts, Purander Singh was made the king.

But once again Budhagohai had to face trouble. Dethroned King Chandrakant sent a message to Burmese King for clandestine murder of Badan Burphukan. The Burmese king at once sent a band of military. Purander Singh fled and Chandrakant again became the king. But he too, was a king for the name's sake. The power was virtually in the Burmese hands. From the period 1819 to 1824, Burmese ruled predominantly. Following the treaty of 1826, between Burmese and British, the Royal administration went in the hands of the British.

In the history, the period of the fall of Ahom Empire is considered as dark era. This was a time when, the entire

state, from one end to another was bleeding of civil wars and lawlessness. Terror engulfed the entire valley. Frequent Burmese attacks and brutal massacres had created heaps of skeletons. Burmese military commander, Mingi Maha Bandula's barbaric killings had reddened even the already blood soaked saga of Assam. In front of his genocide, even Ghenghis Khan's barbarity seemed diminutive.

Burmese attacks, natural and spiritual calamities, epidemics and civil wars had left a poor impact on the population and inhabitants of this place. All said and done, despite foreign invasions, the way, Ahoms preserved Indian Culture, empowered and developed Viashnav religion, protected Hindu customs and tied them with the cord of unity, the way they looked after, took care and conserved it; one wouldn't feel hesitant to acknowledge it as an admirable step in the Indian history. It is natural to feel indebted towards the accomplishments of the Ahoms.

### **Ahom Administration**

Ahom administration was neither complicated nor was it tied down with any constitutional chord, which would make it, incomprehensible. Rather, the royal system was very simple. On the top level, the head of the empire used to be the king. He would be the official of the grand, extensive and universal empire. He was not supposed to go wrong or be unjust. To be counselled on every issue of the state, the king had three persons famous as Gohains (ministers). They were known as 'Mantri Parishad' (council of Ministers). These Gohains or ministers had extensive rights and were considered three pillars of the state -Be it, external, internal, war or peace related etc; on any of such issues king would seek their advice. Generally State's policy related plans were formulated by the 'Gohains' or ministers and the king would then implement these, through his universal rights. On the issue of hereditary rights, it was a rule that after the father the son could only inherit his throne. This ruling though, was followed strictly in the initial

stage of Ahom rule. However, later on, mutual rivalries led to its violation.

The king was highly revered and regarded as an individual; and in every stately issue he used to be addressed with such remarkable names as '*Swarag dev*' (God of Paradise) or '*Swarg Prabhu*'. There was a condition that a prince could only become a king if he had no signs of some physical injury. According to Dr. Suryakumar Bhuya- " Ahom regime was a kind of aristocratic administrative system. There was a law to select the king from amongst *Dihingia*, *Charingia*, *Tunkhungia*, *Namrupriya*, *Chamuguria* and *Parvatia* families. The coronation ceremony of the king was celebrated with great fanfare. It was merely a demonstration of affluence and poise of the rank. Ministers or *gohains* belonged to superior families. Bargohain, Buddhagohain and *varpatr gohains*-these *gohains* or ministers enjoyed the right to have a set number of servants for their personal use. Bar Baruah and Barphukan were also amongst the elite families of the state. Royal representatives for district administrations were often selected from these families. The other ranks of the state were determined on the basis of their efficiency and standing. And the importance and social level of that position was also defined.

Ahoms constituted a navy also. The officer who supervised this armed organization was known as *Pani Phukan* or *Nau Chalia Phukan* meaning- royal chief of navy. A Judge was known either as '*Nyaya Sodha Phukan*' or an official of justice. Explosives factory, security of the state fort, and Queen's jobs had various offices. Other than the defence or military ranks, there existed some civil ranks as well. They too enjoyed many rights and precincts.

People of '*Katkikul*' were appointed for diplomatic purposes. During the time of war or peace, people from these families were appointed to reinforce the diplomatic relations with foreign nations or regional conventions. For instance, Ratnakandli and Arjundas who belonged to these

families; King Rudra Singh sent them with a confidential letter to king Ratna Manikya of Tripura.

Like the ancient Roman or Greek Courts, the judges or elite people had name-bearing writers as their subordinates. The Dallai people of Assam were usually astrologers. They used to foretell happenings. '*Paiks*' would serve their lords. In those times, purohitism, which enjoyed the reverence and recognition of the masses, was also a part and parcel of elitist government system. They did not indulge in any manual task related to state affairs. They were also allocated with land or *Jamindaris*. They were highly esteemed. In the event of necessity, anyone from the age group of 15 to 50 years had to go for state service. The Elite were often guided by purohits. They were of high social standing and enjoyed many amenities. Besides, a large segment of the general public of the state was known as *Kari*, *Teerandaj*, *Paiya* or foot soldier.

A security officer was appointed with *Paiyas* or foot soldiers, who was assigned with a special troop under him. A *Bara* had 20 *Paiks* under him. A *shaikia* one hundred, Hazarika had one thousand, Rajleva had three thousand and a Phukan had six thousand soldiers under his control. The whole of this security system united within strict administration. *Paiks* received three acres of land, in lieu of their services. This land was exempted from revenue. In addition, they were given land for house or garden, in lieu of that, they were supposed to pay just one rupee to the royal treasury, as individual tax or house tax. Elites or officials possessed their own *Jamindaris*.

The judicial system of Ahom government was based on a strong foundation. The three *Gohains* or ministers were chief judicial officers. They not only held the responsibility of state administration but also looked after law and commerce. The penal code of conduct was complete in itself. Various excruciating sentences or death sentence were the forte of general law and order. The shape of their administration was like a imaginary pyramid. On the top

was a king, then the ministry and then Paik and Karis. Chain of command and expertise were the watchwords. The security of this system was done with utmost will and efficiency that was mandatory for the whole system. Sword was the chain of this system and death sentence was the justice. According to Dr Suniti kumar Chatterjee "Prior to it, such a practical, extensive and efficient system had not been witnessed neither in Asam nor in the whole of India. The army unit and administrative system of Assam is the gift of Ahoms. Not only in Assam, rather in the entire India. Ahom's were so powerful that the name of the empire, which they established became associated with them in the form of a nation.