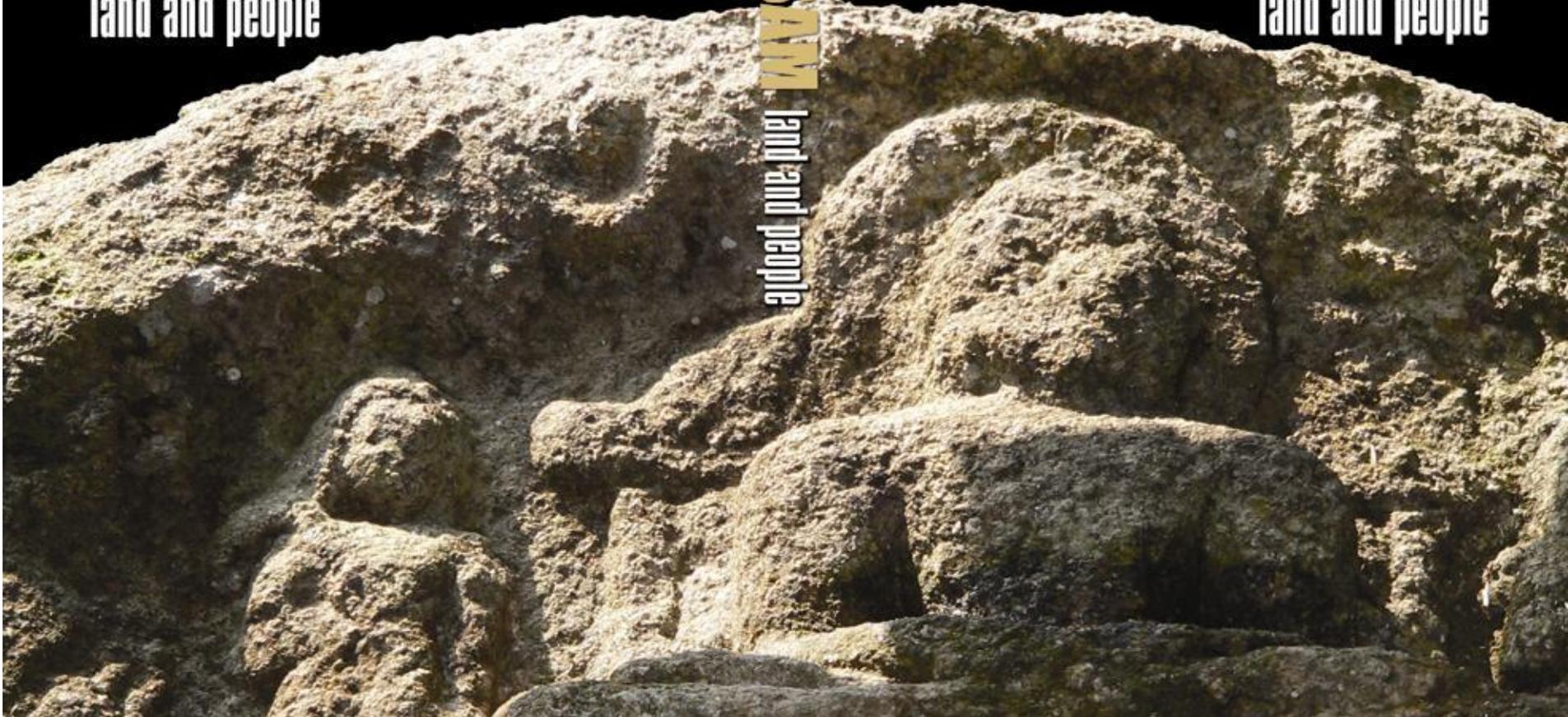


**ASSAM**  
land and people

**ASSAM**  
land and people

**ASSAM**  
land and people





the sun rises, awakening Assam and her people





Background on October morning



**ASSAM**  
land and people

## অসম আমাৰ ৰূপহী

অসম আমাৰ ৰূপহী, শুপৰো নহি শেষ  
তাৰতৰে পূৰ্ব দিশৰ সূৰ্য উঠা দেখে।

গোটেই জীৱন বিয়ৰিকল  
অলোৰ দিৱস ৰাতি  
অসম দেশৰ দৰে লেপাট  
ইমান ৰূপাল মাটি।

দিৰ বিনন্দীয়া গোমাৰ সেউজ পৰিৱেশ  
তাৰতৰে পূৰ্ব দিশৰ সূৰ্য উঠা দেখে।

ৰ'হাঘাট আমাৰে অহি  
যুৱা টা ঘূৰে  
মাঘত সোমৰ হাতেৰে  
লক্ষিত্ৰী আশ্বৰে।

শৰৎ নিশাহি তৰাৰে সজায় অহিৰে দেশ  
তাৰতৰে পূৰ্ব দিশৰ সূৰ্য উঠা দেখে।

পাহাৰ তৈয়ায় একে কৰা ৰামধনুৱেই মতে  
গোমাৰ অগাৰ যৰাঘোৰে মিলন সেতু ৰাজ  
গৌমিত্যৰে বহল পাৰক স্থানিপাত কৰোঁ  
জন্ম ন'লো ইয়াতেই, ইয়াতে যেন মৰোঁ।

পাঁচ ক'ত এনে মথুৰ ৰূপৰ সমাৰোশ  
তাৰতৰে পূৰ্ব দিশৰ সূৰ্য উঠা দেখে।

ভূপেন হাজৰিকা

a poetical description of Assam

by Bhupen Hazarika, the matchless lyricist, composer and singer



## lovely is our land Assam

Assam, our Assam, is lovely so  
Her gifts, too, make her glow  
The Land where the sun rises,  
of Bharat's eastern margins

Even if I search throughout my life  
spending countless days and nights  
never, never would I find  
a Land as rich as mine

Blessed is your lush green pastures  
of the Land where the sun rises  
of Bharat's eastern margins

In bhog our mother tows as a bobbin  
While in magh she gathers the harvest  
and brings the bounty home  
with her golden hands

Autumn nights adorn her hair with stars  
the Land where the sun rises  
of Bharat's eastern margins

Like the rainbow she links  
the plains and the hills  
her loving tongues build bridges  
I bow to the Lohit's wide reaches  
born here and here alone  
let me cease to be

Wherever would I find  
such beauty in symmetry  
but in the Land where the sun rises  
of Bharat's eastern margins

Bhupen Hazarika

translated by Pradip Acharya, retired professor of  
English of Cotton College

pages  
about  
the beautiful  
land  
and  
people  
of

Assam



On 7 November 1983, K C Das Commerce College was established with 107 students on the rolls. Since then, the college has stood the test of time, and today more than 2,500 students are availing themselves of the benefit of commerce education. The growth of the college has given us the courage to undertake major projects.

Assam is often described as a land of unity amidst diversity. The land is dotted with different colourful peoples. Each ethnic community has its own language and culture. This diversity has, in fact, promoted social bondage. This idea struck a group of like-minded individuals including myself, and it led to the preparation of the book. The book was planned to bring out the collective identity of the land. The contents of the book are rich enough to encourage the readers to know more about the land and her people. However, the book is not claimed to be a comprehensive account of Assam.

The Governing Body of the college has played an extremely supportive role. We are grateful to the contributors who appreciated our idea and responded to our request. The teaching and the non-teaching staff, and the student community have made laudable efforts behind the scene. Efforts of Editor Basanta Deka, Literary Editors Bibash Chandra Choudhury and Nirendra Nath Thakuria, and Assistant Editor Ms Archana Bora shall be remembered by the entire college community. I also appreciate Ms Kiran Deka, who painstakingly proof-read the texts and offered valuable suggestions.

The members of Trinayan, the designing team, deserve our appreciation for reducing our burden. I also thank Thomson Printing Press for printing the book within a short time.

Hitesh Deka  
Principal  
K C Das Commerce College



The manuscript of the book "Assam: Land and People" was prepared on the stipulated time to mark the completion of the silver jubilee celebration of the college. The untiring efforts of the Editors have made it possible. The Principal of the college Hitesh Deka has played a commendable role in the whole endeavour. I sincerely believe that the book will be well received by the readers.

Ramesh Chandra Chaudhury  
President, Governing Body  
K C Das Commerce College

Assam is magnificent and is unique. This conviction has driven me throughout my editing responsibility. Assam has witnessed the historic intermixing of the three racial elements, namely, the Australoids, the Mongoloids and the Caucasoids. The process has made Assam the most diversified State in the country, both ethnically and linguistically, and one of the very few in the world. The Brahmaputra is considered to be the only male river in the world. The mighty Brahmaputra, fondly called the Lohit by the Assamese, has moulded human civilization on both its banks. The history of Assam is appropriately termed as the Brahmaputra civilization, with past linkages with the rest of the country. The climatic characteristics are supporting a wide spectrum of plants and animals, giving Assam and the rest of the North-East the status of one of the twelve biodiversity mega hotspots. The forests and the sanctuaries are endowed with all the four varieties of primates, and one type, the hooleck gibbon has found Assam as its only place to live. The Pobitara sanctuary has earned the distinction of sheltering the highest density of one-horned rhinoceros. The not-too-hot and not- too-cold climate is conducive for the all four varieties of silk to be spun in Assam, the only landmass on the planet to sustain the *muga* variety. The flowers, the butterflies, the birds show large variations in genre and colour. The sun rises to awaken the land and her people and sets beautifully in the evening, allowing the moon to shower beauty once a month by reflecting the sun rays.

Assam was gifted with the birth of saint Sankardev in 1449, one of the greatest reformers of mankind. Sankardev's legacy lives with the tragedy that he remains unknown beyond our State. Sankardev wrote drama when Shakespeare was not born. Inner beauty of mind gave him strength to elevate the people of the lower caste to a status. Sankardev was a philosopher who asserted that man had only a common identity and a common social standing. That all distinctions disappear in chanting the name of the Supreme Being, was Sankardev's approach to reach the hearts of the common man on the premises of *naamghars* to spread his real doctrine about social equality. Sankardev was a rare of the rarest souls who could decline a powerful king to admit him as his disciple on the subtle argument that the king should have no religion to enable him to treat his subjects of diverse beliefs equally. Sankardev with his all-pervading influence shaped the future of the composite Assamese society and its culture. The most fruitful chapter of Assamese literature began with the literary works of Sankardev. The expressive and sweet Assamese language is easy to learn. Among the Indo-Aryan languages, only in Assamese the negative particle *na* is assimilated into the root-vowels. In Assam, festivals are observed for the well-being of animals, speaking volumes about common man's concern for conservation of eco-systems. Such practices, over the centuries, perhaps, helped the Manas National Park to be the richest in the country.

We believe the book will inspire the people of Assam to re-discover their own place in its full majesty, and will encourage the readers across the globe to come and see and feel the land and the people of Assam. Uniqueness of Assam has to be preserved as it belongs to the planet as a whole. Finally, I remain responsible for any shortcoming, even for a comma.

Basanta Deka  
Editor  
31 October 2008





The editing of *Assam: Land and People* has proved a real challenge because of its enormous diversity in contents and styles. We have followed British English and consulted Oxford Style Manual, edited by R M Bitter (OUP, 2003). Yet we have to deviate from certain established conventions and set a few for the sake of clarity. The deviations which need explanation are as follows:

Italics without the initial capital are used in titles of books, plays and films, collections of songs, TV and radio series produced in the native languages of Assam as well as the titles of indigenous paintings, sculptures and wood carving.

This is done to distinguish the native titles from the pan-Indian titles: the *Ramayana* (in Sanskrit) vs. *ramayan* (in Assamese)

Italics without the initial capital are used in the names of native festivals, dresses, dances, musical instruments, etc.

Italics without the initial capital are also used in the native names of plants, flowers, vegetables, fishes, animals, etc.

The indigenous names of snacks, foodstuffs and utensils are printed in the same way.

The names of local gods and goddesses are given in italics with the initial capital letter.

Small capital italics are used in the names of local newspapers, magazines and journals.

Regarding transliteration and spelling, we have taken some liberty. Some of the firmly established conventions have been retained, and some changes have been made mainly because of phonetical consideration. That is why the names of some epic characters have been changed. For example, Arjuna of the *Mahabharata* has become Arjun in *mahabharat* (the translated version).

We have tried to be consistent throughout the book. We will duly acknowledge if any reader kindly points out any mistakes.

Narendra Nath Thakuria  
Literary Editor

**Assam: Land and People**

A book on different socio-cultural aspects of the composite life of Assam

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Cover: Sculpture at Surjyapahar

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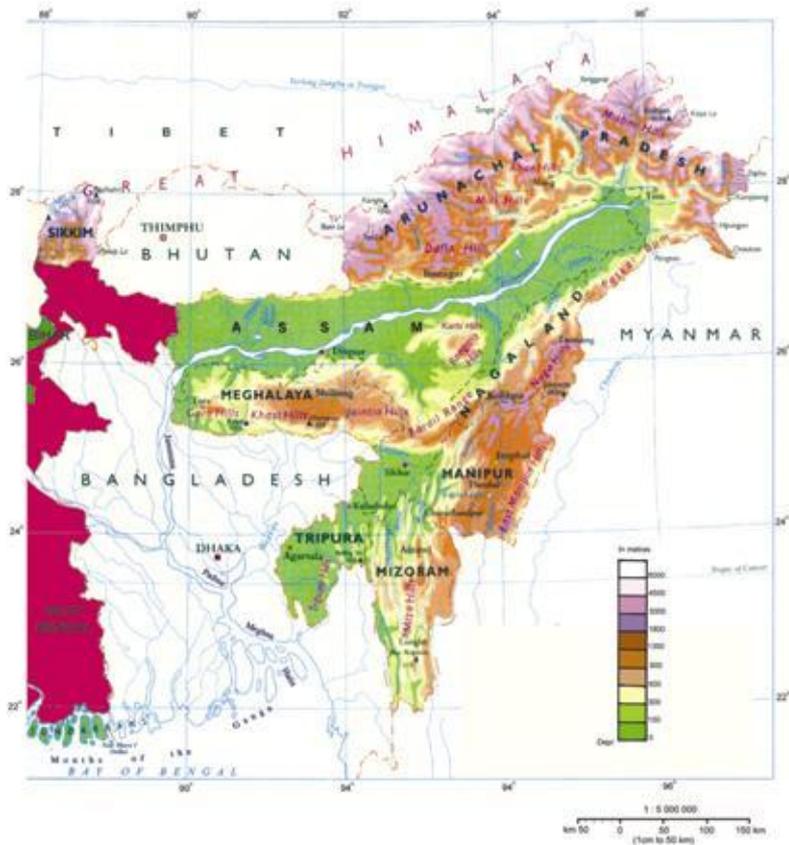
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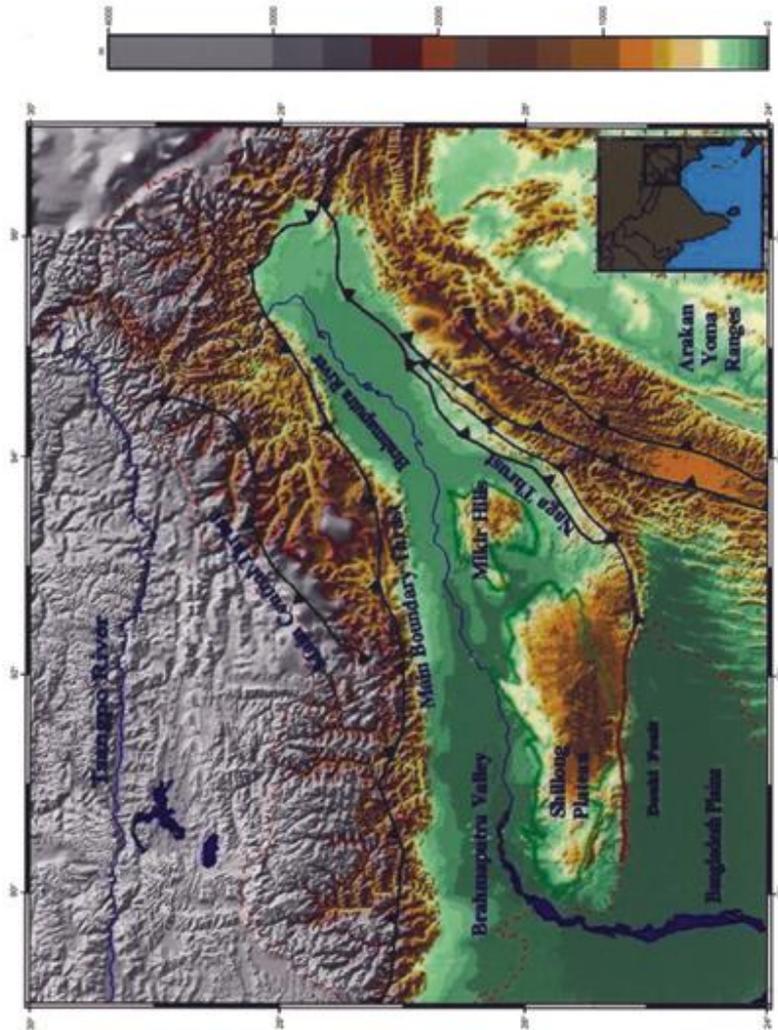
Assam and rest of north-east India (physical)



## GEOGRAPHY

*Md Taher*

Geographically, Assam is an important State of north-east India. The State is located between lat. 24°3' N and 27°58' N and long. 89°5' E and 96°1' E. The State is surrounded on the three sides of the north, the east and the south by hills and mountains. To the west, it merges with the West Bengal and Bangladesh plains. The State has the Brahmaputra valley in the northern part bordering Arunachal and the Barak valley in the southern part. In between these two valley-plains, there is an area called the Karbi plateau succeeded to the south by the North Cachar Hills. Although the State is surrounded by hills and mountains in three sides, it is not entirely cut-off from Tibet of China and south-east Asia lying beyond them. There has been movement of men, materials, plants and animals directly and indirectly between Assam and the above trans-border areas. Assam, along with rest of the north-east India, is a transitional zone between south Asia and south-east Asia, which is evidenced by the varieties of human, plant and animal types. Locationally, Assam is bordered by two foreign countries, namely, Bhutan and Bangladesh and seven Indian States, namely West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya. It has an area of 78,433 sq km, representing 2.39 per cent of the total area, and a population of 26,655,528 in 2001, accounting for 2.59 per cent of the total population of the country.



origin of the Brahmaputra

# THE BRAHMAPUTRA

*Dulal Chandra Goswami*

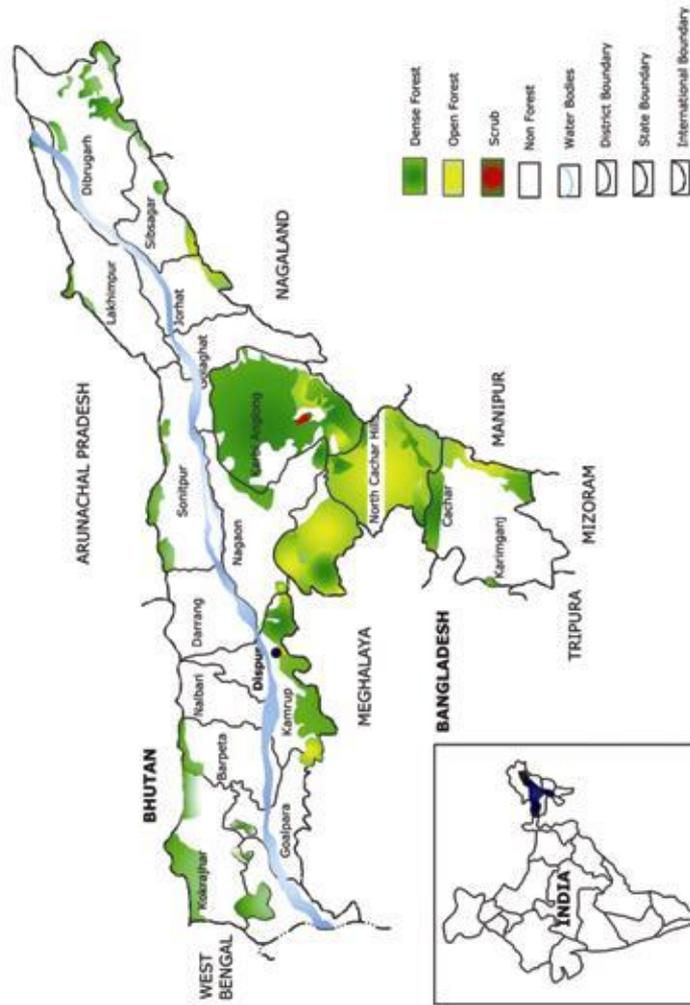
The Brahmaputra is one of the world's largest rivers covering a drainage area of 580,000 sq km. In India its basin is shared by Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Sikkim and West Bengal. As a unique river, it drains such diverse environments as the cold dry plateau of Tibet, the rain-drenched Himalayan slopes, the landlocked alluvial plains of Assam and the vast deltaic lowlands of Bangladesh. The Brahmaputra is ranked among the largest rivers of the world in terms of discharge of water as well as sediments.

Originating from the great glacier mass of Chema-Yung-Dung, the south-east of Manas Soroovar, a lake, in the Kailash range of southern Tibet, it traverses through China, India and Bangladesh before emptying into the Bay of Bengal through a joint channel with the Ganga. Flowing eastwards over the Tibetan plateau, the Brahmaputra, known there as the Tsangpo, enters a deep narrow gorge at Pe and continues southwards across the east-west trending ranges of the Himalayas before debouching onto the Assam plain near Pasighat.

These different geo-ecological zones have distinctive assemblages of topographical, geological, climatological, floral-faunal and ethnological characteristics. The gradient of the Brahmaputra is steep in the gorge section, upstream of Pasighat, but it is flat near Gersahati. The dramatic reduction in slope explains the sudden dissipation of immense energy locked in it and the resulting

# NATIONAL PARKS AND SANCTUARIES

*Hiranya Kumar Choudhury*



Assam serves as the gateway through which the Oriental as well as Palearctic fauna spread across the country. It is the westernmost boundary of many Indo-Chinese mammals like primates and the easternmost limits of many peninsular mammalian species. The distribution of many Indian species such as great Indian rhinoceros, stone marten, clawless otter, hispid hare, swamp deer, spotted deer and pigmy hog, etc. has terminated in Assam plains. Similarly, Assam offers living space to Malayan/Chinese species such as clouded leopard, marbled cat, golden cat, spotted linsang, large Indian civet, binturong, crab-eating mongoose, ferret badge, hog

# PLANT RESOURCES

*Alak Kumar Buragohain*

Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura and Sikkim collectively constitute the North-East of the country. The invaluable richness of nature's bounty makes Assam a unique land not only in the country but also in the entire world. Assam has distinct and varied features relating to its location, climate, geology, soil and topography. The multiple effects of these rather unique regimes of physical geography exert an enriching influence on its vegetation and other life forms that are the quintessential components of the complex ecosystems of the State.

Located between lat. 24°3' N and 27°58' N and between long. 89°5' E and 96°1' E, at the foothills of the Himalayas and with two mighty rivers, the Brahmaputra and the Barak along with their tributaries flowing through it, Assam enjoys great strategic significance. Ecologically, the State is well known for its rich and unique biodiversity. Assam, along with the other states of the North-East, belongs to one of the 12 mega biodiversity hotspots identified worldwide in recent times. Rugged hills, expansive valleys and large rivers constitute the varied spectrum of surface features of Assam. Heavily influenced by the north-west monsoon, Assam's climate is of tropical nature with high summer rainfall of an average of 350 cm during the monsoon months, high humidity of 80-90 per cent and moderate temperature with a maximum average of 36°C in summer and a minimum of 5°C in winter. The particular geographic location, the varied physiography with the implicit elements of soil types, geology and topography and the climate play together in the formation of the unique and rich plant resources of Assam. A very early exploration

2009



## HISTORY OF ASSAM TEA

*Arup Kumar Dutta*

Botanists call it *Camellia sinensis*, the layman calls it tea, the plant from which the most popular beverage in the world is brewed. Among the three principal non-intoxicating hot beverages—coffee, cocoa and tea—the last is probably the most ancient. According to Chinese legend, tea was accidentally discovered by Emperor Shen Nung in 2737 BC. The popular version states that Shen Nung, who was aware that water should be boiled to make it fit for drinking, was doing so when a few leaves from the branches being used as firewood fell into the kettle and added a unique flavour to the water. However, it is not the Chinese but aboriginal tribes in the mountainous regions beyond the south western border of China who are considered by botanists to have harvested the leaves of wild tea trees and brewed them to obtain a medicinal beverage. The Chinese neighbours who learnt of tea early were Mongolians and Tibetans. By the 15th century AD, almost entire Asia had become familiar with tea-drinking, though the West was yet to learn of the brew. The credit for popularising tea in Europe goes to the Dutch East India Company, which wrested the far east trade from the Portuguese in the early 17th century. Once tea caught the fancy of the Europeans, there was a remarkable growth in its demand. By the end of the 18th century, there were 30,000 wholesalers and retailers of Chinese tea in England. By the early years of the 19th century, Britain was fully transformed into a tea-drinking nation comparable to China and Japan as far as



## FLOWERS

*Sachin Kumar Borthakur*

**T**he North-East of India, which includes the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura, is one of the richest regions of biodiversity in India as well as in the world. About 73 per cent of the region is covered with forests as against national average of 19.5 per cent. With floral and faunal elements of different bio-geographical zones this region is particularly rich in biological species and genetic diversity with high endemism. This region is also one of the 12 mega hotspots identified in the world with reference to threats to biodiversity.

The region represents the transitional zone between Indian, Indo-Malayan and Indo-Chinese bio-geographic region as well as the meeting place of the Himalayan mountains with that of Peninsular India, and thus act as a bio-geographic gateway. About 8,000 species of flowering plants grow here. This region is considered to be a sanctuary of a number of primitive flowering plants. Several groups of plants – such as orchids, rhododendrons, ferns, bamboos, zingibers and lichens demonstrate the diversity in this region. Of the 7,000 endemic species found in India, 3,000 alone are available here. North-east India is considered to be one of the centres of origin of rice and citrus and secondary origin of maize. About 17 species and 52 varieties with seven natural hybrids of citrus are available, and over



## OIL, GAS AND COAL

*Bhupati Kumar Das*

Assam is a land of rich cultural heritage, blessed with abundant natural resources and ravishing natural beauty. Assam is also a land of plenty—plenty of oil, gas and coal. The only need is to explore and exploit. On 26 March 1867, Goodenough of Mechillop, the Stewart & Company bored Asia's first successful mechanically drilled oil well in the dense jungles of Makum in upper Assam. This was barely eight years after Colonel Edwin L. Drake drilled the world's first oil well at Titusville, Pennsylvania, in the USA. Assam was only a few years behind the best of the world at that time.

The search for oil in the dense jungles of Assam, full of streams, was driven by sweat of labour, indomitable human spirit and eternal optimism. The hard-earned success was the fruit of inexhaustible patience and perseverance. The experience of the Slack brothers in 1892 would remain unforgettable. While Slack, the senior engineer of the Assam

beginning of drilling



kandul



karof

## FISHES

*Subash Chandra Dey*

**T**he State of Assam is gifted with many water bodies of different categories to maintain her ichthyic treasure. People of Assam are fond of rice and fish as their staple food.

The water bodies of Assam contain both lentic and lotic forms. Closed oxbow and tectonic lakes, meander scroll, floodplains, reservoirs, swamps and marshes constitute the lentic water bodies. The water bodies, barring reservoirs, are locally called *beels*. Concomitant to lentic system, the lotic aqua regime of Assam is primarily formed of the twin river systems, the Brahmaputra and the Barak drainages. Besides, the rheophilic habitat also includes myriads of curls and eddies to turbulent gills. These aqua bodies of Assam are unique both in magnitude and in meristic dimension, which support the ichthyic biodiversity of the State.

# ANTHROPOLOGICAL IDENTITY

*Bhuban Mohan Das*



Assam is the homeland of a large number of populations of various ethnic affiliations having disparate socio-cultural heritages and speaking different languages. They entered Assam through different routes from

## THE SCHEDULED TRIBES

*Tabu Ram Taid*

The Mongoloid race is said to have had an original hearth in eastern Eurasia from where they kept migrating to different parts of Asia, some branches moving southward to the Tibetan plateau and onward to the Himalayan regions, other branches taking an eastern route. Migration-wise, the Scheduled Tribes of Assam may be divided into two broad groups: the tribes of the north, who entered Assam from Tibet and other places to the north of Assam, following the courses of the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries, and the tribes of the east, who entered the north-east of India, including Assam, from Myanmar.

As many as twenty-five ethnic groups of the Mongoloid stock have been given the status of Scheduled Tribes in Assam. The Schedule Tribes (Plains), inhabiting both the Brahmaputra valley and the Barak valley, are the Barmans, Bodos or Bodo Kacharis, Deoris, Hojais, Sonowal Kacharis, Tiwas or Lalungs, Meches, Misings or Miris, Rabhas, Dimasas or Dimaas Kacharis, Hajongs, Singphos, Khamptis and Garos or Achiks. The Schedule Tribes (Hills), inhabiting Karbi Anglong and the North Cachar Hills, are the Chakmas, Dimaas, Garos, Hajongs, Hmars, Khasis, Jalantias, Shantings, Pnars, Wars, Bhois, Lynggams, Kukis with 37 sub-groups, Karbis, Nagas (any sub-group), Pawis, Lakbers, Maans (Tai speaking), Mizos (any sub-group), Synthengs and Tiwas. The Misings, Bodos, Garos, Dimaas, Rabhas, Sonowals, Deoris, Meches, Tiwas, Barmans, Hojais and Hajongs entered Assam from

# ASSAM THROUGH THE AGES

*Priyam Goswami*

**S**ituated in the north-eastern corner of India, Assam is the melting pot of diverse races that migrated into the region over the centuries and made it their home. The synthesis of different cultures and ideas has shaped her polity, economy and society over the years and it is this distinctive feature that has contributed to the rich heritage of the region.

The earliest references to the area roughly corresponding to modern State of Assam are in the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas* and *Tantric* literature, where it is referred to as Pragyoisha and Kamarupa. Pragyoishha literally means "the land of the eastern astrology" while legends in the *Puranas* associate Kamarupa with the place of rebirth of Kamdeva, the Indian Cupid, after he had been burnt to ashes by enraged Siva. The early rulers of Assam named their capital Pragyoishpur.

Prior to the 4th century AD, accounts of the rulers of Kamarup are legendary in nature. According to the local legends, the earliest ruler is Mahiranga Danav who ruled from his capital at Mairang Parbat, which has been identified as the area in the neighbourhood of Beltola in modern Garwahati. It is said that he was succeeded by Hatakasur, Sambarasur, Ratnasur and

Kanoojhar



# DEMOGRAPHY

*Sandhya Goswami*

**D**emography is quantitative study of human populations and changes in them that result from births, deaths and migrations. Human population holds the pivotal position in the socio-economic and political structure of a society. The significance of demographic changes lies in its impact on the administrative and political structure of the system.

By virtue of its geographical location in the north-east corner, Assam occupies a strategic position in the political map of India. To the north of it lie Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh, and to the south Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Meghalaya. Arunachal Pradesh lies to its east, and it is surrounded by West Bengal, Tripura and Bangladesh in the west. With an area of 78,523 sq km, Assam contains 2.39 per cent of the total area of the country. Assam has two distinct natural regions: the Brahmaputra valley and a part of the Surama valley; and the hilly regions of the north, east, south and the centre. Having undergone several changes since Independence, today's Assam consists of the Brahmaputra valley, the Barak valley and the hill districts of Karbi Anglong and the North Cachar Hills.



*surya bigrah of suryapahar temple*

## SCIENTIFIC HERITAGE

*Sivanath Barman*

**T**he history of science in Assam may be divided into three broad periods: the medieval or pre-British Period, the British Period and the post-Independence Period. Compared to the first two periods, the third period is a short one, rather too short to call the science of that period a heritage.

The economic condition in medieval society was considerably underdeveloped. The village communities were more or less static with little social intercourse with one another. Where necessities are few, the development of science is bound to be slow. Naturally, ancient Assam made little headway in science. Superstitious beliefs were rife in medieval Assam. However, the pre-British Assam was not totally devoid of any scientific activity. It is true that science as

# ARCHITECTURE OF HISTORICAL ASSAM

*Pradip Sarma*

The history of architecture begins from natural caves. When man gave up his nomadic habit and started settling in places of convenience, they started artificial dwellings using impermanent materials found easily in Nature. This applies to Assam as well. Assam is a rugged country criss-crossed by hills and littered with natural caves. The rock shelters of Hatisila, located in Guwahati, Suryapahar in Goolpara, Bhagavapahar at Donkamokam in Karbi Anglong, Lohaghat in Kamrup, Chapanala in Nagaon, Madhavapahar in Kamrup, Tukreswari in Goolpara, etc. seem to be the shelters of man from primitive times, and some of them are still used to enshrine different deities.

The earliest mention of the existence of caves in Assam is found in the *Ramayana*, the great epic, where the city of Pragyoish is said to have had large and beautiful caves. The eastern slope of Nilachal alias Kamakhya hill in the heart of Guwahati contains an early evidence of a cave from historical period of Assam. An undated epigraph, written on a natural rock using the Brahmi script and the Sanskrit language, mentions establishment of a cave (known as Umachal cave) temple by a king named maharajadhraya Surendra Barman for a deity, Balabhadraswami. It was determined paleographically to be of the 5th century AD. The site at present contains two parallel rocks, with vertical inner faces, standing over a monolithic floor apparently of another rock with its body buried under the earth. A cave of the same period in a living rock is found in Mahamayapahar in the Jamuna basin of the district of Karbi Anglong in Assam. The cave is of low depth and is carved with a doorframe at its entrance. Small caves excavated in the vertical surfaces of precipitous rocks facing the Brahmaputra are seen at Pancharatna and Joghghopa in the district of Goolpara. A few of them are seen with *stairagas* hewn out inside the cave. A series of big



## SCULPTURE

*Monoranjan Dutta*

Assam occupies an important place in the history of art in India. There is no expression of ancient art in stone or terracotta in Assam prior to the 6th century AD. There might have been sculptures in Assam in perishable materials like wood prior to its vibrant expression in stone. This tradition is continuing in the *satra* institutions and among the tribal communities.

The Indus valley expression of art in limestone, terracotta and bronze remained an isolated fact till the beginning of the 20th century. The Indus valley discoveries proved the common inheritance of the ancient East. The early Vedic Aryans, the ancestors of the Indus people, lived a pastoral life with conceptual gods imagined in hymns, and they left no images. The cult of phallus and mother goddess, which appears to be of Dravidian in origin, gave a stupendous impetus to the growth of Indian art. The knowledge of metal in the later Vedic age and the establishment of guilds led to the formation of organized societies and development of craftsmanship and art. The emergence of powerful kingship and surplus economic production, invigorated by the rise of monotheistic movements under Saivism, Vishnavism, Buddhism and Jainism, is attributed to the important feature of image worship and creation of art pieces from flora to religious beliefs connected with the myths of various communities. The history of Indian art is a part of the history of Indian religions with traditional continuity and creative transformation.



chitra bhagavat

# ART OF PAINTING

Naren Kalita

In Assam the art of painting developed around the culture of manuscript illumination in line and colour. The Bhakti movement, started in medieval Assam by mahapurush (saints) Srimanta Sankardev (AD 1449-1568), ushered in a distinct phase of art and literature. The culture of copying manuscripts flourished in response to the necessity of the movement. The movement significantly recognized worshipping of sacred scriptures instead of any formal idol. Another important aspect of the movement is the organization of religious prayer in the community prayer-hall called the *naamghar*. The devotees offer their prayers to the sacred scriptures enshrined at the altar of the *naamghar*. The practice of worshipping formal idols is also followed by people. Almost every household in Assam maintains a family *mandir* (a Hindu chapel), in which either the holy book is enshrined or idols are placed for daily worship. Prior to the advent of the print media, the holy book was in the form of manuscript written on barks of sand tree or *tatapal*, which is pressed cotton, prepared by the *khanikars* (traditional craftsmen) or by the person himself who owned it. A large number of old manuscripts are available with many families for recovery and research in spite of the



mohar singar papa

## MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

*Dilip Ranjan Barthakur*

**M**usic, an inseparable part of any culture, has always played a key role in human society. Different cultural traits, characteristics of different ethnic groups, are inextricably linked with the composite culture of Assam. Different religious communities have also immensely contributed to the cultural heritage of the Assamese society.

Music, as a whole, is a combination of vocal, instrumental music and dance. Musical instruments are integrated in vocal and dance performances. Musical instruments used in Assam vary from place to place and from tribe to tribe. However, the spread of population has inevitably led to mingling of music and musical instruments. The structure of the musical instruments is determined by the environment and ecology of the region. The influence of Mongoloid traits is very prominent in the cultural development of Assam. The Mongoloid civilization is marked by extensive use of bamboo, which is the raw material for making of a number of musical instruments like *gogana*, *taka* and *dhrupchunga*, etc. Similarly, many other



#Kungl/Mharabirapaha



## TRADITION OF UTENSILS

*Birinchi Kumar Medhi*

Utensils and receptacles are indispensable parts of any culture, through which it is possible to trace the evolution of a particular culture. Receptacles are generally made from bamboo culm, bottle gourd shell, burnt clay, etc. Utensils are usually prepared from different metals like roop (silver), patal (brass, an alloy of copper and zinc), kazu (bell metal, an alloy of tin and copper), etc. However, utensils made of brass and bell metal are traditionally very common throughout the world. The classification of receptacles and utensils is related to cultural cognition, specific to place and time. Under the impact of cultural and economic transformation, traditional utensils are being gradually replaced by modern culinary sets, more noticeably in the urban families. Even then a juxtaposition of the past and the present exists in Assam at the wider cultural level, which includes both material and non-material aspects. The utensils of a geographical location constitute an important material expression of a culture. Utensils, when personalized, assume an animate dimension.

Before the introduction of the brass or bell metal in Assam, the mostly used culinary appliances were pottery either hand-made or wheel-made. Materials like gourd rind and

## PERSONAL ORNAMENTS

*Pranav Jyoti Deka*

The personal ornaments which belong to historical period from the 5th-6th century AD to about 1950 are included here. No proven stone statue depicting personal ornaments earlier than the 5th-6th century AD is found in Assam. Again, after 1950 ready-made jewellery and ornaments began to pour into Assam from different parts of India, mainly from Bengal and Rajasthan. A large number of goldsmiths began to migrate to Assam in the late 18th century towards the fall of Ahom rule. Migration increased with the advent of British rule and continued unabated after division of India in 1947. There are only a few centres where indigenous Assamese jewellers and the authentic designs of Assamese jewellery are thriving now.

The purposes behind putting on personal ornaments are adornment, insignia, magic value, astrological, therapeutic and financial security. However, the enhancement of wearers' personal beauty played a small part in evolution of Assamese personal ornaments. The ornaments have had multiple purposes and utilities in Assamese culture.

Before the advent of mirror, primitive people must have looked at their images reflected in still water and were not happy with what they saw. At first they plastered their bodies with multi-coloured mud, ochre, chalk and charcoal dust. Animal fat was the medium of mixing. At the next stage, flower vines and colourful leaves were worn. At the stage that followed, mollusc shells, animal teeth, nails and bones were strung into garland and worn on the neck and head. The next stage saw puncturing of human body to facilitate suspension of ornaments. Ornaments were first suspended from the nose and ears; the lips were also not spared by some tribes. Finally, human civilization learned to make holes in the beads to string them into garlands or to manufacture metallic holder for gemstones and affix them to metallic strings. Gold, which was discovered earlier than iron, fascinated people because of its bright un fading colour, malleability, ductility and rarity. It was valued above silver even in pre-historical period. Pure metallic adornments made of platinum, gold, silver, copper and brass are valued in descending order. People living in the Brahmaputra valley were no exception. There were often cases when earlobes got torn because of weight and oversize of the ear ornaments.

Insignia are objects for outward demonstration of hierarchical position of the bearer in the society. Before AD 1826 no ordinary citizen, male or female, was allowed to put on gold or silver



## ASSAM SILK

*Rajen Chakravarty*

Silk is one of the classes of natural fibres discovered by ancient man. Silk is an exceptional fibre due to its natural sheen, colour-absorbing properties, light weight and strength. A variety of products—from the Assamese traditional dresses like the *mekhela*, *sadar* and *riha* for women and the *seleng* and *eri sadar* for men to modern fashion apparel, furnishings, upholstery, carpets, rugs, etc.—are made from this magnificent fibre. Silk has emerged as a sophisticated, luxurious and sensual fabric in the contemporary realm of fashion designing. This fabulous fibre is derived from a number of insect species known as the silkworms. Assam has the unique distinction of producing all four commercial varieties of silk. These are muga silk, eri silk, mulberry silk and tasar silk, which are produced by the insects known by their botanical names *Antheraea assamensis*, *Samia ricini*, *Bombyx mori* and *Antheraea mylitta* respectively. The muga silk, which is unique to Assam, is of exquisite beauty because of its golden hue, and it is justifiably described as the 'golden silk.' The geographic location and the climate of Assam resulted in the creation of the unique ecological niches for these rare and interesting species of silk-producing insects. Crucial to the survival and flourishing of these insects are the specific plants that naturally grow in abundance in the State providing food and shelter to these sensitive silkworms.



## FOOD HABITS

*Sunil Kumar Saikia*

Every state of India has different food habits and style of cooking. Indian traditional cuisine is a blend of vegetarian and non-vegetarian food items. Assam, popularly known as the land of red river and blue hills, is the gateway to the north-eastern part of India. Assam attracts tourists to its exceptional lofty green hills, lush green forests, boundless rolling plains and a wide variety of wildlife including the one-horned rhinos, tea gardens, unique cultural matrix of colourful people and customs. Assam has been the meeting ground of diverse ethnic groups and cultural streams since ancient times. Throughout history, people of different stocks have migrated into this land and merged into a common harmonious whole in a process of assimilation and fraternization, not to be seen much elsewhere in India.

Assamese food habits imply the food items consumed by the majority people of Assam. Because of the geographical characteristics of the area in the broader sense, both the tribal and the non-tribal people use particular food items as their principal food for lunch and dinner. Rice is staple food of all the communities. They generally prefer indigenous or local varieties of rice like *lahi*, *sali*, *sruvagmoni*, *ajong*, *joha*, *ba*, all being Assamese names, and other varieties. *Joha*, a pricey scented rice, is used in religious and social functions. *Joha* has varieties like *keteki joha*, *kola joha*, *kankani joha*, *mamiki-madhuri joha*, etc. A half-boiled variety of rice, known as *aha* or *ukhrua*, is also popular. It is further boiled at the time of preparation of meals. Rice is taken with vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes made from different items.





# FOLKLORE

*Birendranath Datta*

The diversity of groups and subgroups of various extractions and affiliations inhabiting the different areas in the hills and plains of Assam constitutes an almost inexhaustible source of material for the folklorists. The bulk of the indigenous population of Assam is made up of Assamese Hindus among whom the Indo-Mongoloid or Kirat elements are decidedly strong, in terms of both racial and cultural traits. Various tribal communities, mostly of Indo-Mongoloid Tibeto-Burman affiliation, in different stages of acculturation, integration and assimilation with the Assamese Hindu fold live in the hills and plains of the State. The more prominent communities are the Bodos, Rabhas, Misings, Twas, Sonowals and Deuris in the plains, and Karbis and Dimasas in the hills. While Saivism and Saktism, including Tantrism had strong roots in the past, the influence of neo-



chomangkan

## FESTIVALS

*Nabin Chandra Sarma*

Festivals are the external expressions of social behaviour and the symbolic representations of situations. Modern festivals emanated from the beliefs and magical rituals of the ancient community. Magical rituals were performed to make the days grow longer, to expel severe cold, to appease deities of the fields, sky and water, to satisfy the rain-god or to appease the deadly deities of diseases, to please the malevolent dead and to appease the village ghosts as well. Rituals were solemnized even to promote fertility. Many primitive rites were associated with mourning and penance, performed generally 'often when the moon was full'. Dancing was an essential component of a ritual, believed to be an enactment of a myth.

Festivals form an essential aspect of a culture. The rituals or festivals initially were exclusively religious. The scope of festival has been extended in modern times, to a number of secular commemorations, including celebration of Independence Day and specific forms of entertainment such as drama, dancing and music. In general the festivals can be classified as seasonal or agricultural, calendar-oriented, sacramental and of limited participatory type. The seasonal festivals are the products of man's desire to escape from monotonous work occasionally and to live in a joyous environment temporarily. The festivals of both the tribal and the non-tribal communities are traditional, characterized by popularity and universality. Acculturation and assimilation of the tribals and the non-tribals over the ages are the hallmark of the unique composite culture of Assam. The Assamese society emerged as a result of the fusion of the Aryans and the non-Aryans.

The *Bihu* festivals, celebrated in Assam by both tribal and non-tribal communities, are basically seasonal and agricultural. *Bihu* is a unique example of a festival of acculturation. It signifies the beautiful synthesis



barat festival, Tezpur

# SRIMANTA SANKARDEV

*Pradip Jyoti Mahanta*

The bhakti movement swept medieval India, from the south to the north, from the west to the farthest east. Sankardev (1449-1568) was the morning star heralding a new dawn in Assam during the 15th and 16th century with the message of bhakti, the unalloyed and unmotivated love and devotion to the lord. The seers, preachers, philosophers and reformers of the pan-Indian bhakti movement brought about a surge of a liberal humanistic doctrine giving right and liberty to all individuals. From the farthest north-eastern corner of this subcontinent, Sankardev emerged as a versatile guru and took the message of bhakti as the abiding ideal of love and as an instrument of social change. He had the rare distinction of bringing about a great social and cultural resurgence unprecedented in the history of Assam. The poet and composer par excellence, Sankardev integrated both plastic and performing arts in pursuit of bhakti or religion and the bhakti movement found expression with diverse artistic forms like poetry, drama, music, dance, painting, sculpture, architecture and even village crafts.

The bhakti movement gathered momentum in Assam and culminated in her cultural resurgence. It was the life and personality of Sankardev that shaped the bhakti movement, changed the course of history in Assam and left an all-pervasive influence in the emergent nation. The eventful life of Sankardev remains an inspirational force for the Assamese nationality for centuries.

The proper date of birth of Sankardev is not recorded. The tenth day of the waxing moon in the lunar month of *Asvina* (September-October) is generally held in esteem. Sankardev was born to the family of the Barbhuyans, the feudal lords, and the family was known as the *stronant*, meaning the chieftain. He was born to mother Satyasandha and father Kusumbar Bhuyan in Alipukhuri near Bordowa, also called Batadrava. As generally believed, Sankardev became an orphan at a very early age, and he was left to the loving care of his grandmother Khersuti, the wife of Suryabar. The playful boy with an excellent physique was admitted to a *tal* (traditional school) by his grandmother under the tutelage of scholar Mahendra Kandali at the age of twelve. The frolicsome boy showed his academic acumen and imaginative ingenuity when he composed a poem after learning just the consonants. The poem was an adoration of Hari, the supreme deity.



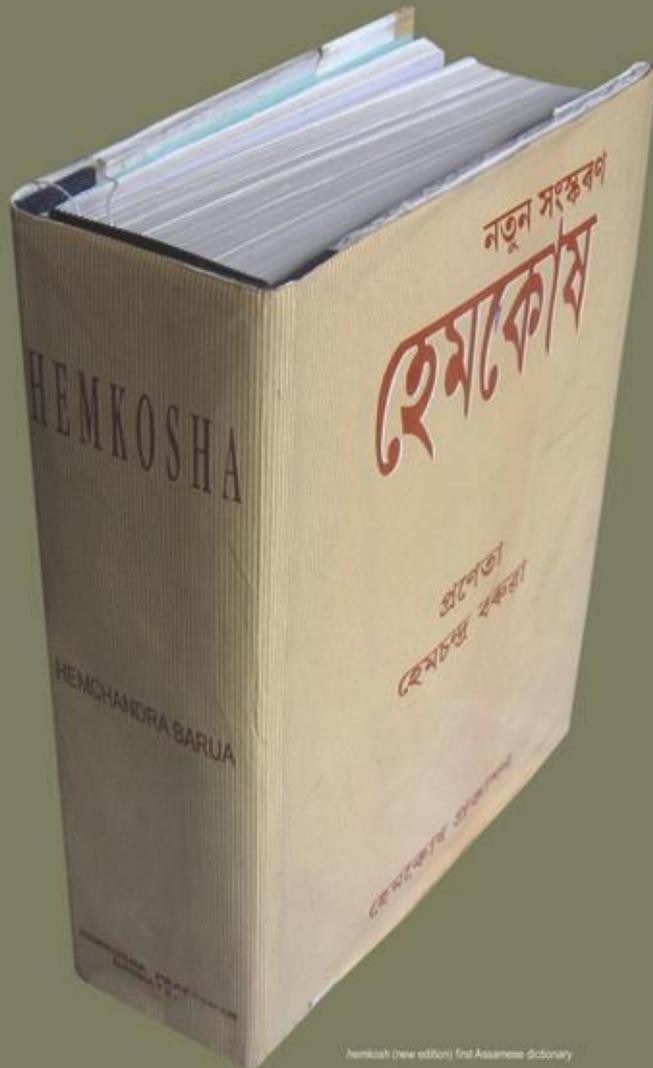


entrance of Mul Kamalabari satra

# SATRA INSTITUTIONS

*Dambarudhar Nath*

**T**he *satra* is a unique socio-religious and cultural institution of Assam. Originated in the medieval times, during the neo-Vaishnava movement of the 16th century, the *satra* is a continuum of what may be called a heritage institution of the State. There are around eight hundred *satras* in Assam. They are scattered all over the plain districts of Assam. The idea of a *satra* as a kind of religious asylum and a centre of religious activities was first conceived by Sankardev (1449–1568), the great socio-religious reformer of the 15th–16th century Assam. Sankardev developed the idea of having an institutional structure for the



hemkosh (new edition) 1st Assamese dictionary

## ASSAMESE LITERATURE

*Upendra Nath Sarma*

Assamese literature in its written form can be traced to the beginning of the 13th century AD. It can boast of a rich body of oral and folk literature. Assam is rich in ballads also. Assamese literature contains *mantras*, incantations and also a large body of proverbial lore. The sayings of *dak* enshrine traditional lore about the agricultural processes, seasons, household activities and so on. The *charyapadas* containing the esoteric wisdom of the Buddhist siddhas are often cited as examples of proto-Assamese literature.

Durlavnarayan, King of Kamata, then comprising of the districts of Kamrup, Goalpara, Rangpur and Coochbehar, was a patron of the poets and scholars. Haribar Bipra, a court-poet, wrote *asamedh parba* and two reputed epics *babrubahanar juddha* and *lava-kushar juddha*. *Babrubahanar juddha* is about the war between Babrubahan, King of Manipur and his father Arjun over a sacrificial horse. The father and the son could not recognize each other and Babrubahan killed Arjun. Krishna appeared on the scene and restored him to life. Haribar Bipra enlivened the work with dramatic situations and fine descriptive touches. However, *Lava-kushar juddha*, also on a similar theme, is devoid of poetic embellishments. The main source of Bipra's work is the *Jaiminiya Mahabharata*. Hem Saraswati, a contemporary of Haribar Bipra wrote *prahlad sarit* taking the plot from the *Bamana Purana*. Saraswati's *hara-gauri sambad* is a bigger work of 900 verses, the stories being culled from the *Puranas* and folklore. *Kaviratna* Saraswati and Rudra Kandali composed respectively the *jayadrath badh* and *satyaki prवेश*, with plots from the *Mahabharata*, under the patronage of the kings of Kamata.

There was an enormous growth of literature in the Nagaon district during the reign of King Mahamanikya. Madhab Kandali, the court-poet of Mahamanikya, the greatest poet of the pre-Vaishnava period, translated in a masterly poetic way the *Ramayana* of Valmiki. Kandali's *ramayan* is the oldest vernacular recension in northern India. Hindi, Bengali and Oriya versions came a century and a half later. Sankardev, the great Vaishnava poet, valued the work of Madhab Kandali for his

# BODO LITERATURE

*Bhupen Narzaree*



The Bodos belong to the Mongoloid fold anthropologically and to the Sino-Tibetan language family linguistically. According to Edward Gait, "their physical characteristics are a short head, a broad nose, a flat and comparatively hairless face, a short but muscular figure and a yellow skin. They have black but plentiful hair on the head. However, they have very little hair on other parts of their bodies."

The original homeland of this tribe is the north-western China between the Huang Ho and the Yang-tze-Kiang rivers. The Bodos migrated to north-east India around 2000 BC. They are now scattered throughout the north-east region. They have their own language, culture and tradition. Oral Bodo literature is rich, though in the early period they had no written literature.

After the Yandabo Treaty in 1826, the Baptist missionaries came to the north-east India to propagate Christianity. They learnt the Bodo language to facilitate their working in the areas with substantial Bodo population. Reverend Sidney Endle wrote *Outline grammar of Kachari (Bara) language*, the first book on Bodo grammar in 1884 and *The Kacharis*, in 1911. J D Anderson, in the year 1895, compiled and published *A collection of Kachari folk tales and rhymes*. *PHUNGI HATHORKHI* (Morning Star) was the first monthly Bodo magazine brought out by the Gaurang Mission in 1909 with the objective of propagating Christianity. The other story books and booklets on Christianity published in the Bodo language are *jishmai maonai dangnai* (Jesus's Works, 1938), *girjani huda* (Role of Church, 1939), *gujan radaini bathra* (The tales of old Testament, 1939), *ibelni solo* (Tales of Bible, 1982), *jishukristani mauchini solo* (Tales of Jesus's Tears, 1944), *undui rajabgra bejab* (Prayers of Children, 1953), *nakkrangni lama* (Path of Heaven, 1954), *bornoi rajabgra bejab* (Prayers of Bodos, 1954) and *gudvan radai* (New Testament, 1978).

These publications inspired the aspiring Bodo authors to

create literature in their own language. In the second decade of the 20th century, the Bodos of Dudhnai formed an association, the Habraghat Bodo Sammilani, to dedicate themselves to work for development Bodo literature. In 1915 Ganga Charan Kachari, a member of the association, wrote *borani phisa o agen* (Bodo people and law). The first part of the book deals with the historical development of the Bodos, and the second part describes their social customs. In 1918 the renowned social worker Prosonna Kumar Boro Khakhlary wrote *bathou nam buikhagnai gidu*, the first book of poems in the Bodo language. The book consisted of prayer songs of *Bathou*, Supreme God of the Bodos, and the songs sung at the time of *baisaga* festival. Though this book may be considered as a collection of oral literature, these two books marked the important beginning of Bodo literature.

In 1919 the Bodo students studying at Cotton College formed the Boro Chara Sammilani for the unity and development of the Bodo students with Sobha Ram Brahma as president and Satish Chandra Basumatary as secretary of the association. Rupnath Brahma, Jay Chandra Brahma, Mangal Chandra Brahma and Khogendra Nath Brahma were other leading members of the association. It brought out the tri-lingual magazine *BIBAR* in 1920 in hand-written form in pursuance of a resolution adopted in the first conference of the association held at Kokrajhar in the year of its formation. The four issues of 1924 and the same number of issues of 1925 were published in printed form.

This magazine encouraged a number of new authors, and the period from 1920 to 1952 was characterized as the *BIBAR* Age. Rupnath Brahma and Madaram Brahma edited and published the only issue of another magazine, *JENTHOKA* in 1925.

In 1923 Rupnath Brahma and Madaram Brahma edited and published a book titled *khonthai-methai*. Most of the poems of the book were composed by Rupnath Brahma and Madaram Brahma. Kshitish Bhusan Brahma, Rati Kanta

## DANCES OF ASSAM

### *Mallika Kandali*

Assam, the land of multi-ethnicity and scenic beauty, has a very vibrant dance tradition both in the classical and in the folk genre. There are evidences of Assam's tradition in various literature, architecture, sculptures, paintings and other historical references. Bharata's *Natya Shastra* of the second century BC mentions four-fold classification of *pravrittis* or local divisions on the basis of language, behaviour, costumes, way of life, professions, etc. The divisions are *dakshinatya*, *avanti*, *panchalmadhyama* and *odramagadhi*. The last represents the eastern region comprising of Anga, Banga, Kalinga, Odra, Magadha, Nepal, Pragjyotish, Videla, etc. Assam was known as Pragjyotish in the ancient times. The last *pravritti* is suggestive of a rich cultural tradition of ancient Assam.

# ASSAMESE DRAMA AND THEATRE

## *Pona Mahanta*

The history of regular Assamese drama and theatre began with Srimanta Sankardev (1449-1568), who wrote and produced plays nearly five centuries ago when classical Sanskrit drama was at a low ebb and when the great Shakespeare was not even born. Sankardev, the founder of Vaishnavism in Assam, laid emphasis on *shraavan* and *kirtan*, that is listening to the name and praising the one and only one Supreme Lord by chanting His name again and again, two activities which could be performed even without the slightest acquaintance with the alphabet of the language in which the songs and psalms were composed. As a visual art, drama had an added advantage as what was said and done could be heard and seen. Sankardev gave importance to writing plays on popular subjects and producing them in a way which he knew even the unlettered laity would understand and appreciate. In writing and performing his plays, Sankardev banked heavily on various existing forms of folk dramatic activities along with some elements of classical Sanskrit drama.

The six plays written by Sankardev are *patni prasad*, *rukmini haran*, *kaliya daman*, *keliyopal*, *parijat haran* and *ram-rijay*. These full-fledged plays of Sankardev, father of the Assamese theatre, were preceded by a dramatic performance called *chhrajatra* of which no manuscript exists. *Chhrajatra* was a theatrical presentation in signs or painting of the seven *baikunthas*, abode of Lord Vishnu, with accompaniment of songs, music and dance. Sankardev himself painted the scenes using colours prepared from indigenous materials, played the *khol* (the local drum), acted out the role of the *sutradhar* who is the interlocutor in the prelude to the drama and to each scene of the drama. The precedence given to songs, music and dance made the first dramatic presentation of Sankardev closer in many respects to folk dramatic institutions than to a classical Sanskrit

## CINEMA

*Altaf Mazid*

*Joymoti*, the first Assamese film, was made in 1935 by Jyotiprasad Agarwala. Assam has so far produced 325-odd films. Most of the films are in Assamese, the State language, and 13 films are in the three other indigenous languages of the State, namely, Bodo, Karbi and Mising. Starting with a couple of films a year, Assam made 20 films in 2003, which is the all-time record in the last seven decades.

From the early years of the 19th century the itinerant showmen from Kolkata organized film shows in Assam. Initially, the shows were mostly organized in the tea gardens of the British companies for the entertainment of the labourers. The owners' policy was to woo the labourers with Hindi films in a confined atmosphere. The practice can be thought to have a connection with emergence of the earliest Assamese film producers having the background of tea plantation. The showmen rooted the seed of the medium through repeated film screenings.

Cinema is an industrial activity invented in the West. Assam lacked the indigenous class to initiate the process of film making. Assam was purely an agricultural province in the 1930s. Life was austere—little surplus and no famine. The industrial class was yet to appear on the scene.

The cinemas of Assam are the offshoots of development in other parts of the country. In general, they have adopted the characteristics of Bengali cinema for the first few decades and then a mixture of Bengali, Tamil and Hindi cinema. The trend has continued till now with a few exceptions. Several works of endeavour indeed have added a different flavour and status to the cinema of Assam. The first Assamese film was based on nationalistic intellectual fervour drawing on elements of Assamese society.

Jyotiprasad Agarwala dreamt of making a film in Assamese when he was only 18 years old. It occurred to him after seeing *andhare aalo* (Light in the Dark), a Bengali film, in Kolkata. After 14 years, Jyotiprasad Agarwala made the talkie *joymoti* in 1935 heralding the beginning of film making in Assam. Assam did not have any history of silent film. At the time of making of *joymoti*, there were only two cinema halls in Assam, one in Guwahati, and the other one at Shillong. Only the silent films could be



# অকনোদই সম্বাদ পত্ৰ।

প্ৰথম চোখা। মো' শিবসাগৰ, জানোআৰি ১৮৪৬ খ্ৰিষ্ট আ' সঁক। ১ নম্বৰ।

VOL. I. SIBSAGOR, ASAM, JANUARY, 1846. NO. 1.

## জোআ বচৰব কথা।

Summary of Events in 1845.

১৮৪৪ ইং সঁকৰ ১ জানোআৰিৰ পৰা এ-  
ব্ৰ-বৰ ভিতৰত ইংলণ্ড দেশত চায়ে চায়ে ২৪-  
২০ ০০ ০০০ টি টাকত পঠোআ হ'ল।

১৮৪৫ ২ ৭ জানোআৰিত এক বেঞ্চাল তৰা  
কলিকতাত দেখা হৈছিল।

২ জানোআৰিত মান দেশৰ পূব কালে মল-  
মাইন নামেৰে কল্যানিব এক বৰ নগৰত জুই লা-  
গি ৮০০ ঘৰ পুৰিলে।

মেক্‌চিকো দেশৰ ডাণ্ডিয়ানা নামেৰে এক সে-  
নাপতি সেই দেশৰ ৰাজ মেলৰ বিৰোধে ১০ ০০০  
সেনাই লৈতে বন পতাৰ নিমিত্তে ১৫ জানোআ-  
ৰিত ভাক খৰি বেসাঙৰ কৰিলে।

৪ ফ্ৰেন্সোআৰিত লণ্ডন ৰাজ নগৰত শ্ৰী-শ্ৰীমতি  
মহা ৰানিএ ৰাজ মেল পাতিলে।

১৩ ফ্ৰেন্সোআৰিত কলিকতা নগৰত জুই লাগি  
অনেক ঘৰ পুৰিলে।

৫ হাত বহল, ৩৬ হাত দিঘল, এনে বৰ দুৰ্বিন  
ৰচ নামেৰে এজন ল'ৰ্ত সাহাৰে সাজি ৫ মাৰ্চত  
প্ৰথমে ভাক দুপি আকাশলৈ চাই, কোন তৰা  
আৰি কৰি সকলোকে অতি ভাল কৰে দেখিলে।

জিউতৰা বেলৰ পৰা জি কোবো বাপু লোকে  
সদ্ধাত যৌতমা অৰ্থাত বোধ দেহতাক নেহা  
কৰিবলৈ গৈছিল, সিবিলাকৰ আগত এক দাঁত  
যৌতমাৰ দাঁত সুপি লছাৰ বাপুএ ১৫ মাৰ্চত ধৰন  
কৰালে।

হুইচ দেশৰ মানুহৰ ভিতৰত কীজিলা লাগি  
বন কৰি, মাৰ্চৰ দেশ এপ্ৰেলৰ প্ৰথম এই হুই বি-  
নত হুই তিনি হেজাৰ মান মানুহ মৰিল।

৭ এপ্ৰেলত মেক্‌চিকো নগৰত বৰ জুইকপ  
গল, তাতে নাম ঘৰৰ মট আৰু আন আন পৰি-  
ঘৰো অনেক ভাগি পৰিল।

১১ এপ্ৰেলত আমেৰিকা মিল দেশৰ পিচ্চ-  
বৰ্গ নামেৰে এক নগৰত জুই লাগি ১২০০ ঘৰ  
পুৰিলে। ঘৰ বহু এন্ধাৰে ২ ৪০০০০০০  
টকা হানি হ'ল।

গ্ৰেট ব্ৰিটন নামেৰে লোহাৰ এধান নছন বৰ  
জাহাজ ৰাজ নগৰত ২২ এপ্ৰেলত মহা ৰানিএ  
চাবলৈ গল। সেই জাহাজ ২১৫ হাত দিঘল,  
জি ভাপৰ কল লগোআ হৈছে, তাৰ ১০০০  
ঘোঁৰাৰ সমান বল হ'ই।

কাতুল কাছাৰে উত্তৰ বোৰাৰা দেশৰ ব-  
জাই হু জন সাহাৰক খৰি বাৰিচে সুপি সুনি,  
উলু নামেৰে এক ইং-বেজি পানুৰি সাহাৰে  
আগৰ বচৰত ভালে গৈ বজাই সেই হুই সাহা-  
ৰক মৰা আদি, উলুজি আৰি এপ্ৰেল মাহত ইং-  
লণ্ড বেচ পাগেৰি।

কলিকতা দেশৰ বজাই চৰকাৰি দেশৰ পৰ্বতৰ লো-  
কে লৈতে বন কৰিবলৈ ১ ৫০ ০০০ সেনা পা-  
তিলে।

ইংলণ্ড দেশৰ হাৰ্মত নগৰত এক বাজিকৰে  
জামোটাৰ নিমিত্তে এটা চৰিতা নৈত পেলাই, চা-  
নিবলৈ ৪ ৰাজ হাঁহ লগাই, পাচে চৰিতাত উটি

# ASSAMESE PRESS

Sunil Pawan Baruah

The Indian Press is the by-product of British rule in the sub-continent that continued for about two hundred years. THE BENGAL GAZETTE or CALCUTTA ADVERTISER, which was published on 29 August 1780 by James Augustus Hickey, is considered to be the first newspaper in India. The American Baptist Mission published the first newspaper in the State as well as in the entire north-eastern region of the country 66 years after the publication of THE BENGAL GAZETTE and 26 years after the imposition of the East India Company's rule. In January 1846 BRUNDOOI was published from the Baptist Mission press at Sivasagar of upper Assam under the joint efforts of O T Cutter and Nathan Brown. It was a monthly paper aimed at spreading the message of Christianity among the indigenous people of the Brahmaputra valley. In spite of its religious character, the paper adopted a secular view to focus on the socio-economic problems of the region. BRUNDOOI was received well by the people. Initially, the writings of the paper were based on the spoken language of the people as the missionaries did not possess extensive knowledge of the Assamese language. The paper played an important role in the formation of modern Assamese literature and transformed the realm of the Assamese mind. The paper rendered a great service to the people of Assam for about 36 years by opening a window on the world.



## LAKSHMINATH BEZBAROA

*Ananda Bormudoi*

Lakshminath Bezbaroa (1868-1938) is one of the most influential writers of the last two decades of the 19th and the first three decades of the 20th century. The last decade of the 19th century marked the beginning of romanticism in Assamese literature, and Bezbaroa was a leading figure of this development. His literary career spreads over half a century, and the period is usually referred to as the age of Bezbaroa. It was the period of building the foundation of modern Assamese language and literature, and Bezbaroa played a leading role in it. He was a prolific writer, who tried his hand at different genres of literature. His writings can be read as a series of re-discoveries. He was a writer with a mission, and with reforming zeal he chose humour and satire as a weapon to change the Assamese society. His satire projects ideals, morals, standards and aesthetic values before his readers. His humorous pieces and satirical temper explored the comic potential of the Assamese language.

Bezbaroa was born at a time when Assam was ravaged by the Burmese invasions and went under British rule in 1826. Assam lost her freedom, and the economy was shattered by invasions and inner strife. During the early part of British rule, the Assamese language was also replaced by Bengali in schools and courts of Assam. It was an important agenda of Bezbaroa to create in the Assamese mind a sense of confidence of their culture and heritage.

Bezbaroa was born and brought up in an environment of Vaishnava culture. Bezbaroa carried forward the legacy of the neo-Vaishnava spirit and was instrumental in re-introducing Sankardev and Madhavdev to a new generation of Assamese readers. He wrote *sri sankardev* and *sri sri sankardev aru sri sri madhavdev* on the lives and works of the two saints of the Brahmaputra civilization. Bezbaroa brought out Sankardev and Madhavdev from the *satra* and the *naamghar* to modern platforms for scholarly discussion of their works. Bezbaroa's autobiography, *mor jivan soncaran*, not only presents his life story, it also sheds light on the contemporary socio-cultural scene of Assam. His autobiography is a witness of his sharp memory, intellect, and like a spectator he had the ability to distance himself from his own emotions and feelings. The thoughts, ideas and attitudes of his own youth have been subjected to severe criticism by Bezbaroa in his autobiography. He wanted his countrymen to learn from



## JYOTIPRASAD AGARWALA

*Madan Sarma*

For every Assamese the name Jyotiprasad Agarwala conjures up the image of a truly genius and a revolutionary artiste whose signal achievements in the fields of literature, art and culture immensely enriched the social and cultural life of Assam.

He is known as *rupkonur* (prince of beauty) after the wandering artiste-hero of his poetic play *nimati kotna*, who made the beautiful, silent princess sing with him. However, the epithet *ganasiipi* (the people's artiste) is more appropriate, as he identified himself with the toiling, suffering masses through his activities and artistic creations. In one of his immortal songs Jyotiprasad Agarwala says:

*O, my people  
at the core of your heart  
in the depth of your mind  
I, the artiste  
Keep myself ensconced, unseen...*

Jyotiprasad was a multi-faceted personality. He was a revolutionary with a poetic temperament and a true humanist who believed that "it is transformation that makes the world a beautiful place." He was a highly creative composer, a consummate lyricist, an accomplished short story writer, an astute playwright and director, a film maker, a newspaper editor, and above all, a freedom fighter. He was very much aware of his limitations imposed by colonialism on the natural aspirations of the people. His thoughtful prose writings record his views on art and culture, on the role of the artiste in ushering in changes into the lives of the ordinary people, and his vision of a future that is full, newer and life-enriching possibilities.



## BISHNUPRASAD RABHA

*Pradip Acharya*

**B**ishnuprasad Rabha (1909–69) was a complete man, a total Renaissance personality. He had time for everything and room for all human concerns. He was always at one with the dreams and wishes of the people, and whatever he dealt with and excelled in was always infused with his love for the people. Poet, dramatist, musician and redoubtable actor, Rabha always strove for unity and harmony with his entire ammunition. The person, who could call the hard-earned national freedom false, was an underground party worker for some time with a price on his head. But the gun-toting revolutionary was not separate from the committed minstrel. He drew his inspiration from folk realities and had gone on to enrich our music and revolutionize our stage. He talked to the people in their language both literally and metaphorically. Rabha was a huge man but there was no intimidation in his presence. This had helped people accept him and helped him merge with them. He had begun by rallying the youth behind him, and together and in unison, he sang and marched with the people. Brilliant as he was in his studies, it was more as a sportsman that he was more popular in his school and college days. The element of protest in his make-up was quite evident then itself as was his capacity to capture the essence of things. The inherent anarchy of free creation in him and his will to 'beautify' everything was naturally sympathetic to the call of the anarchists, but these led to his being harried out of Kolkata, and his next sojourn was in Coochbehar. Here also he had participated actively in the movement against the Dewan and the Regent. He wrote a playful verse in racy colloquial Bengali and had the daring to hang it up on the portals of the Rajabari:

*rajye ache duiti patha,  
ekti kalo ekti sada,  
rajyer jodi mongol chon,  
duiti pathar boli dau.*

*two pests infest the realm,  
one white the other black.  
if you want the land to thrive,  
slaughter both while you strive*



with brother Jayanta Hazarika on guitar

## BHUPEN HAZARIKA

*Mitra Phukan*

There is uniqueness to the music of the valley of the Brahmaputra, of which Bhupen Hazarika is the undisputed bard. The uniqueness comes from its location, the environment in totality, the cultural heritage and the histories of migration. The melodies of the West and the East meet and mingle in the songs of the valley. There is a special individuality about airs such as *bihu* or *nisukani* geets or the great songs of the *satra* tradition, *bargeets*, which immediately stamp them as being from this State. Bhupen Hazarika's melodic sensibility is firmly rooted in this land. He has showcased the astonishing beauty of music of Assam before the world. And while doing so, he has even revived certain musical forms, beauty of which was wilting away because of lack of patronage. Bhupen Hazarika has gone to the areas where the forms were practised by a few and then brought them before the world again giving a new lease of life.

Yet Hazarika, being a musician of the world, has not confined his melodies to those of his land only. As occasion and the lyrical content of the song have demanded, he has moved effortlessly to the tunes of *ruags* such as 'snehe amaar soto srabonar', based on the rainy season 'raaga megh' and of melodies that are more recognizably sub-continental. Indeed, the melodies based on the folk tunes of Assam that he has used in his Hindi songs have endeared the listeners. The famous *kamrupi lohageet*, for example, 'he mai joshowa he',

## GUWAHATI, THE GATEWAY

*Kumudeswar Hazarika*

The city of Guwahati, known as Pragyothispur in the days of yore, has a chequered history. Kamrup, the former name of Assam and Pragyothish, finds mention in the two epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. *Adikanda Ramayana* has mentioned Amritraj, an Aryan king as the founder of Pragyothish. According to the *Ramayana*, Pragyothispur, the capital of Narakasur, was situated at the foot of the Barah mountains of the Barun region. However, there are diverse views regarding the exact location of Pragyothispur. The name means a 'land of eastern astrology.' It was known as a centre of study and research of astrology. According to the *Kalika Purana*, Chitrachal (now Navagrah Hill) was the abode of the nine grahas (planets).

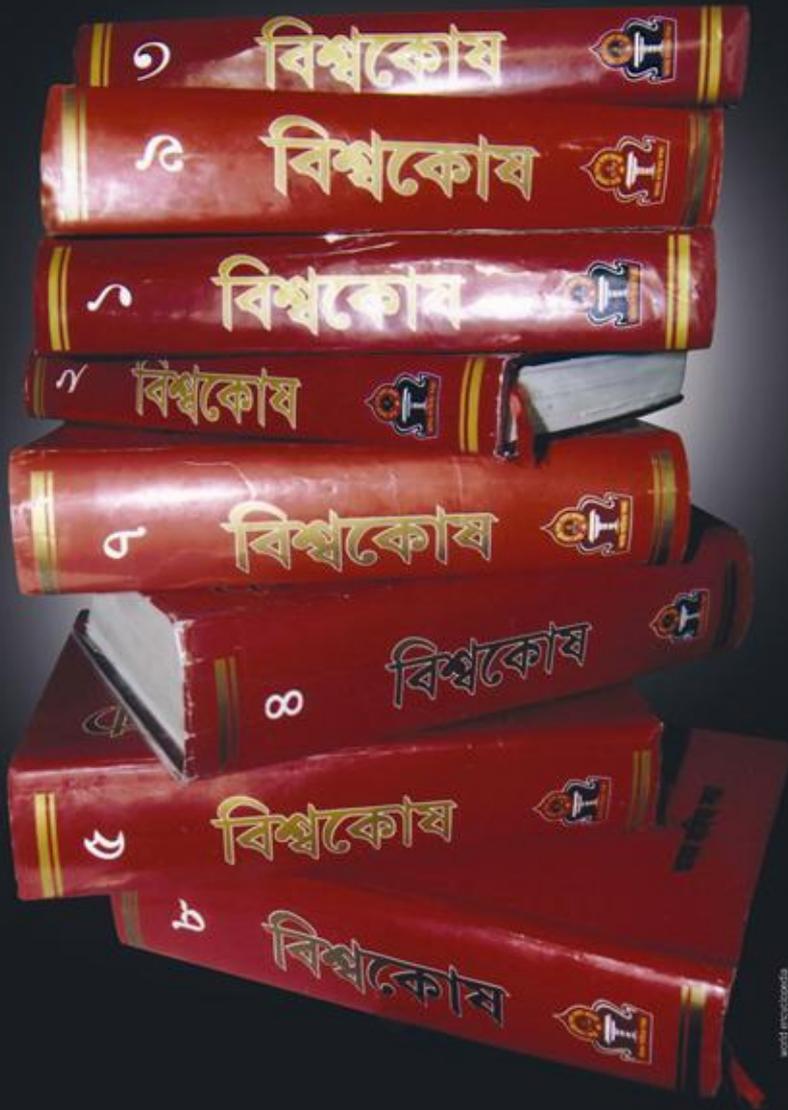
The Chinese traveller Hsien Tsang, who came during the reign of Bhaskar Barman, gave a beautiful account of Pragyothish in his travelogue and described the place as a centre of art and culture. The stone engravings of the 11th century recorded the glorious days of Pragyothish as, "It is adorned by learned men, religious preachers and poets who have made it their place just as the sky is adorned by Mercury, Jupiter and Venus." The engravings (AD 1197-1201) on the huge *kanai barasi* bousa rock at North Guwahati recorded that the strong Turkish army was defeated by the army of the local King Pritu.

## ECONOMY: AN OUTLINE

*Atul Sarma*

The growth performance of Assam economy was more or less comparable with that of all-India during 1951-79. Thereafter, it lagged behind the rest of the country except for 1990-92. The Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of Assam grew at the rate of 3.57 per cent and 3.52 per cent as against the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 5.23 per cent and 5.86 per cent of all-India during the periods from 1980-81 to 1993-94, and from 1993-94 to 2004-05 respectively.

With high population growth, the gap in per capita income between Assam and the rest of the country widened sharply with every passing year. Assam's per capita income rose by 7.0 per cent as against 12.5 per cent of all-India between 1970-71 and 1980-81. The differential growth sharpened in subsequent decades particularly in the decade of economic reforms. Between 1993-94 and 2004-05, Assam's per capita income grew at the rate of 1.86 per cent per annum as against the national average per capita income growth of 4.03 per cent. In short, Assam was the fifth highest in terms of per capita income among the major states of India and above the national average by four per cent at the beginning of the



## ASSAM SAHITYA SABHA

*Paramananda Rajbongshi*

The literary form of the Assamese language found its origin in the folklore and fables, mostly in oral form. The first book in the Assamese language was *prahled sarit* by Hem Saraswati. Madhav Kandali's *ramayan*, and *pasali kabys* of the 15th century throw light on the history of Assamese literature of the early middle period. Srimanta Sankardev, with his vast knowledge of Sanskrit, translated epics into Assamese for propagation of his Bhakti movement. Sankardev's literary activities laid the foundation of the most creative chapter of the Assamese language. He enriched Assamese literature and culture with his outstanding contributions in every area. From the times of Sankardev and his disciples, Assamese literature had to wait for a long period till the 17th century when the Ahoms started the systematic writing of history. An important chapter in the history of development of the Assamese language

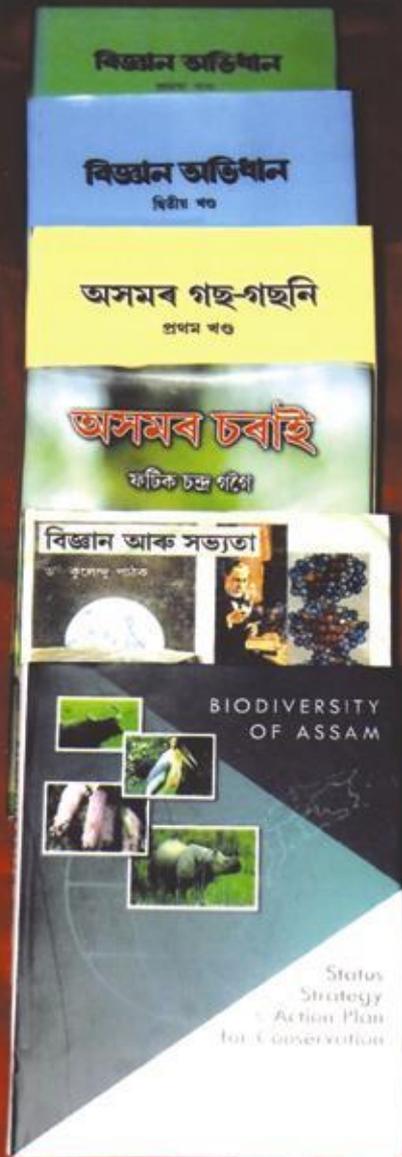
# SRIMANTA SANKARDEV SANGHA

*Bhabendra Nath Deka*

Established in 1930 at a village named Palasani in the district of Nagaon, the Srimanta Sankardev Sangha is an organization of Assam based on the social, cultural, religious and spiritual ideals of Srimanta Sankardev, the great Vaishnava saint and religious preceptor of the medieval age. Over the years it has grown into a vast organization in the north-east India having several lakhs of its *sangit* (members) in Assam and the other states of Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and West Bengal. The organization has contributed significantly to religious and spiritual regeneration, social and cultural change and moral and intellectual growth. Above all, it has created an environment of peace, unity, integrity and amity among the large followers belonging to diverse ethnic groups, castes and creeds of the entire north-east India.

The advent of Saint Sankardev (AD 1449/1568) in the medieval Assam was a historic necessity. The personality of Sankardev emerged at a time when the socio-political and religious firmament of Assam was in utter chaos. Sankardev shouldered the responsibility of redeeming the society and initiated the neo-Vaishnava movement in the north-east

Dinesh Chandra Baruah



# ASSAM SCIENCE SOCIETY

*Kulendu Pathak*

On 13 February 1953 the Gauhati Science Society was formed with the aims of 'promoting the researches in different fields and developing proper scientific outlook amongst people of Assam by spreading scientific knowledge and technique.' The Society broadened its vision and sphere of action by transforming itself to the Assam Science Society on 19 November 1956. The aims and objectives of the Society as enshrined in the constitution adopted in 1958 are 'to promote and advance the cause of science in both pure and applied branches, to promote education and research in different branches of science, to disseminate scientific knowledge by holding symposia, seminars and discussions on original works and to popularize science by holding meetings and organizing popular talks and science exhibitions.'

The first meeting was attended by the teachers of various science disciplines from Cotton College and Gauhati University. In the formative period itself, the Society appealed to the governments in 1954 to establish a full-fledged central river research institute to collect hydrological data, study courses of the rivers, devise methods against soil erosion, etc. In the same year the Society also suggested establishment of a scientific and industrial research institute to study the forest and mineral resources of the State. In 1956 the Society argued in favour of an oil refinery in Assam. As Assam is abundantly rich in the natural resources of water, forest, mineral and oil, these resolutions speak of the farsightedness and commitment of the

# ALL ASSAM STUDENTS' UNION

*Shikhar Kumar Sarma*

The All Assam Students' Union is the largest students' organization of Assam. Popularly known as AASU, the Union has a history of contributing towards socio-economic, cultural and academic developments of Assam. AASU has earned the distinction as the most influential non-political organization of Assam after Independence of the country.

Originating from different college entities, the organization took organizational shape in the late sixties. Since its formation, AASU has continuously involved itself basically to protect the interests of Assam on various issues. The democratic functioning of AASU is the principal source of its organizational strength. It has always strived to mould public opinion and adopted non-violent methods in order to intervene in the governmental policies. The transparency in the decision making process has also helped AASU to earn confidence of the common man. The organization has built up its image to reflect the hopes and aspirations of the people of Assam.

In the pre-Independence period, the students of Assam actively participated in the Freedom Movement and responded to the Non-Cooperation call of the Congress. The scenario changed in the post-Independence era and the students felt the necessity of working outside the arena of party politics. The students' community had the first opportunity to organize against the government in 1956-57. The Union Government decided to establish an oil refinery in Bihar ignoring the claim of Assam which produced the oil to be processed in the proposed refinery. The Guwahati Students' Oil Refinery Action Committee was formed to participate in the massive spate of protest that was triggered by the decision of the Union government. The government finally withdrew the decision respecting the sentiments of

## Contributors



Professor Md Taher obtained PhD degree from Auckland University for his research work, completed with a Commonwealth Scholarship. Professor Taher, who retired as Dean of the Faculty of Science of Gauhati University, has authored several books and atlases. Professor Taher has penned short stories also.



Professor Dulal Chandra Goswami was awarded PhD degree by John Hopkins University, and retired as Head of the Department of Environmental Science of Gauhati University. With specializations in fluvial geomorphology, environmental science and geo-informatics, Professor Goswami worked as Senior Research Fellow in NASA Project on Himalayan Snowmelt Modeling, and also served as Consultant for World Bank and Asian Development Bank Projects related to the river Brahmaputra.



Hiranya Kumar Choudhury, AIFC, joined the Department of Forest, Government of Assam, and has served in various capacities. Choudhury is Chairman of Wildlife Areas Development and Welfare Trust, Assam.



Alak Kumar Buragohain was awarded PhD by University of London, DIC by the Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, London for his Research in Molecular Biology. Buragohain was a faculty member in the Department of Botany, Gauhati University, before joining Tezpur University as the founder Head of the Department of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology in 1997.



A prolific writer, Arup Kumar Dutta completed his Master's degree in English from the University of Delhi and started his career as a college teacher. A freelance journalist and satirical columnist, Dutta is known for his juvenile novels including *The Kaziranga Trail* and *The Blind Witness*. Dutta also served the Jawaharlal Nehru Indian Cultural Centre, Indonesia, as its Director.



Professor Sachin Kumar Borthakur, PhD, teaches in the Department of Botany, Gauhati University. Professor Borthakur also worked in Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata and National Botanical Research Institute, Lucknow. Professor Borthakur has authored ten books including *Biodiversity of North-East India: Wealth or Resource?* and *Bamboos of North-East India*.



An electronics engineer, Bhubupati Kumar Das did his MBA from Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, and obtained his PhD degree for his thesis entitled 'Impact of Reforms on the Performance and Valuation of the Companies Operating in the Oil Sector in India' from Gauhati University. Das, Managing Director of Numaligarh Refinery Limited, has published his collections of poems *May 9* and *Life and Beyond Life*.



Professor Subhas Chandra Dey, DSc from Calcutta University, retired as Head of the Department of Zoology, Gauhati University. Professor Dey worked in the areas of ornamental fish farming, trade and ecology, and fishery of the hill streams, rivers and wetlands. Professor Dey has published several books.



Professor Bhuban Mohan Das was awarded PhD and DSc degrees by Calcutta University. After retiring as Head of the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University, Professor Das was Emeritus Fellow of University Grants Commission. Professor Das authored 12 books in English and 26 books in Assamese. The article in this book was Professor Das's last contribution before his death.



Tabu Ram Taid obtained Master's degree from the University of Delhi. Taid taught English at Cotton College for more than a decade from where he moved to work as an educational administrator under the Government of Assam. A writer in Assamese, English and Mising, Taid has published several books including *A Dictionary of the Mising Language*.



Professor Priyam Goswami, PhD, Head of the Department of History in Gauhati University, was selected by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations as Professor of Modern Indian History on South Asian Affairs at the University of West Indies, Trinidad. Professor Goswami, author and editor of several books, works in social and economic history of modern north-east India, gender studies and the Indian National Movement.



Professor Sandhya Goswami is Head of the Department of Political Science, Gauhati University. Ms Goswami was awarded PhD degree by Gauhati University. Ms Goswami has authored the book *Language Politics in Assam*, has co-authored of the book *North-East India—Development, Communalism and Insurgency*.



Sivanath Barman was awarded PhD degree for the thesis entitled 'The Origin & Development of Science in Pre- Independence India' by Gauhati University. Barman, who retired as a lecturer in physics in A V College, has authored several books in Assamese and English including *An Unsung Colossus: A Introduction to Life and Work of Sankaradeva* and *Tradition to Modernity: Essays on Assam*.



Pradip Chandra Sarma, PhD, served the Directorate of Archaeology, Assam as a conservation officer. Sarma obtained doctorate degree for his thesis on 'The Temple Architecture of Assam' from Gauhati University. Sarma has published books on archaeological heritage of



Naren Kalita was awarded PhD degree by Gauhati University for his thesis entitled 'Saiva Cult and Saiva Literature of Assam.' Among the books authored and co-authored by him, two are *Descriptive catalogue of manuscripts and bardowa silparastu* (Objects of Art in Bardowa).



Dilip Ranjan Barthakur was awarded PhD degree by Dibrugarh University for the thesis on 'The Musical Instruments of Assam with a Statistical Note.' A tablist, Barthakur has authored several books including *Tabla Vidyān* and *Khol Vidyān*.



Professor Hrinchi Kumar Medhi, PhD, is working in the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University. Professor Medhi has also contributed to Assamese literature as a novelist and a lyricist.



Professor Pranavjyoti Deka obtained PhD degree in Geology from Leningrad Mining Institute of former USSR. Professor Deka, who worked in Gauhati University, has contributed three volumes of short story collections, five detective novels, two Assamese-English dictionaries, a bilingual (Assamese and English) thesaurus and several other books to Assamese literature.



As Director of Central Muga, Eri Research and Training Institute, Central Silk Board, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, Rajen Chakravorty has experience in research and development in the field of sericulture for the last 30 years.



Sunil Kumar Saikia obtained PhD degree in Management from Gauhati University. Saikia has authored nine books on industrial development and management, health management, travelogue, etc. Saikia is Head, Centre for Enterprise Development and Management in the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship.



Bisweswar Hazarika served as a lecturer in the Department of Assamese, B. Barooah College. His literary works include *Assamese Language: Origin and Development* and *Chaitanya's Impact on the Vaishnavism of Assam*.



Professor Birendranath Datta retired as Head of the Department of Folklore Research, Gauhati University. He was awarded PhD degree for the thesis entitled 'A Study of the Folk Culture of the Goalpara District of Assam' by the Gauhati University. Professor Datta shouldered the responsibility of building the Department of Traditional Culture & Art Forms of Tezpur University. An artiste, Professor Datta has authored more than 20 books in Assamese and English including *Folk Toys of Assam* and *Historiography and Folklore*.



Professor Nabin Chandra Sarma was awarded PhD by Gauhati University for his thesis entitled 'Ananta Kandali and his works: a critical study.' A recipient of Emeritus Fellowship, Professor Sarma has authored and edited more than sixty books in Assamese and English, including *Essays on the Folklore of north-eastern India* and *Ritual Tales of Assamese Women*.



A Reader in the Department of Assamese, Gauhati University, Pradip Jyoti Mahanta received his PhD degree for the thesis 'The Role of Assam Vaishnavism in the making of Assamese Life and Culture: A Study in an Enduring Tradition.' Besides the two books on Sankardev, Mahanta has authored several other books.



Professor Dambarudhar Nath is holding the Sri Sri Aniruddhadev Chair in Dibrugarh University for his contribution in the studies of social and cultural history of Assam. Professor Nath has authored several books including *The Koch Kingdom* and *The Opening of the Stilwell Road – Prospects and Problems*.



Upendra Nath Sarma, after retiring from Cotton College as Professor and Head of the Department of English, joined the Post-Graduate Department of Gauhati University. A literary critic, Professor Sarma is a prolific writer in Assamese and English. Professor Sarma has published eight books including the translations of Bertrand Russell's *Marriage and Morals* and Rabindra Nath Tagore's *Gitanjali* into Assamese.



Bhupen Narzaree, PhD, is Head of the Department of Boro in Gauhati University. Narzaree was awarded doctorate degree by Gauhati University for his thesis on the subject of social customs of Boro people of the Brahmaputra valley. A writer in Boro and Assamese languages, Narzaree has published ten books.



A lecturer of Political Science in R G Baruah College, Mallika Kandali received PhD degree from Gauhati University for her thesis entitled 'The Satriya and Odissi Dances: A Comparative Study.' A performer of *satriya* and Odissi dances, Kandali has authored two books on *satriya* dance and culture.



A former Professor and Head of the Department of English, Dibrugarh University, Pona Mahanta, PhD, has authored and co-authored twelve books in English and Assamese including *Western Influence on Modern Assamese Drama* and *Eliot in Assamese Literature*. Professor Mahanta reviews dramas and theatres regularly.



A critic-turned-film maker, Altaf Mazid has served as jury member of several international film festivals. Mazid won the Best Director prize for *juwan* (Life, 1998) in the Seventh Pyongyang Film Festival of Non-Aligned & Developing Countries 2000. Mazid's reconstructed version of the first Assamese film *joymoti* was screened in international film festivals.



A freelance writer and a columnist in the Assamese journals and newspapers, Sunil Pawan Baruah received his PhD degree in History from Gauhati University, and retired from Barooah College as Head, Department of History. Baruah authored among others *Press in Assam* and *Origins and Development of French Revolution*.



Ananda Bormudoi, PhD, is Head of the Department of English, Dibrugarh University. Bormudoi has published four books including *samaj sahitya samalochana* (Criticism of Social Literature) and *adhunikatar para uttar adhunikataloi* (From Modernism to Post-modernism).



Professor Madan Sarma, PhD, a critic and a writer, is Head of the Department of English and Foreign Languages, Tezpur University. Professor Sarma has published over two hundred short stories and several collections of critical essays.



Pradip Acharya retired as Head of the Department of English, Cotton College. Acharya's translations have appeared at home and abroad including *Poetry* (Chicago) and *Verse* (Oxford). Acharya is involved in making documentaries on wildlife and environment.



A classical vocalist and a short story writer, Ms Mitra Phukan has authored several books for children. Her first novel *The Collector's Wife* was published by Penguin-Zubaan.



Kumudeshwar Hazarika joined Sonaram Higher Secondary School as a teacher after graduating from Cotton College, and served the same school as Principal. Hazarika has authored the book *Brief life-sketches of fourteen illustrious sons of Assam*.



After serving the Indian Statistical Institute, New Delhi, as Director, Professor Atul Sarmah, PhD, became Vice-Chancellor of Rajiv Gandhi University of Arunachal Pradesh. Professor Sarmah is a member of both the Steering Committee for the Five Year Plan (2007-2012) for the north-eastern states of India and the 13th Finance Commission of India.



Paramananda Rajbongshi, PhD, is Head of the Department of Assamese in Pragytosh College, Guwahati. Rajbongshi has published five short story collections and nine plays including *tejmala* and *farmud garakhia's premgatha* (Love songs of Farmud, the Cowherd). Rajbongshi has also authored books on Assamese literature and Folk Culture.



Starting his career as lecturer in English, Bhabendra Nath Deka retired as Principal of Ranga College. Associated with Srimanta Sankardev Sangha since 1983, Deka has edited Sangha's monthly news magazine *MANIKANCHAN* for the last ten years.



Professor Kulendu Pathak, a writer and science communicator, had PhD degree from Birmingham University and worked in experimental high energy physics in CERN. After retiring from Cotton College as Head of the Department of Physics, Pathak became Vice-Chancellor of Dibrugarh University. Professor Pathak served the Assam Science Society as its Secretary before becoming its President.



A doctorate in Computer Networks, Sikhar Kumar Sarma, PhD, is the Reader of Information Technology in the Department of Computer Science, Gauhati University. Earlier, Sarma served Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, as Assistant Registrar (Academic) and Rajiv Gandhi Central University, Itanagar, as Reader and Head of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering.



Ms Waheeda Rahman, a graduate, is the first branded jewellery designer of the north-east region. Ms Rahman's designs are inspired by the cultural traits of different tribes of the region.

Manoranjan Dutta received PhD from Gauhati University in the field of Ancient Indian History and Art. A Joint Secretary in the Government of Assam, Dutta has authored several books including *Sculpture of Assam* and *assamar uttar-madhya jugar arthanoitik uttaran aru samantatantrik skhalan* (Economic Upliftment of Post-Middle Age Assam and Feudal Degradation).



### Editor

Basanta Deka is a lecturer in the Department of Physics, Handique Girls' College. Deka has co-edited two science dictionaries in Assamese published by the Assam Science Society. Deka has authored elementary level books on the quantum idea, special theory of relativity and elementary particles. Deka has translated Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld's *Evolution of Physics* into Assamese.



### Associate Editor

After serving in the Department of Political Science of M N C Balika Mahavidyalaya, Nalbari, for a brief period, Hitesh Deka joined K C Das Commerce College as Principal. Deka was awarded PhD degree by Gauhati University for his thesis on *All Assam Students' Union and its Impact on the Politics of Assam since 1979*.



### Assistant Editor

Ms Archana Bora is a lecturer in the Department of English, K C Das Commerce College. Ms Bora has been awarded MPhil by Madurai Kamaraj University for her research on 'Identity of the women in the novels of Shashi Deshpande.'



### Literary Editor

Bibhash Chandra Choudhury is Reader in English, Gauhati University. He is the author of *English Social and Cultural History: An Introductory Guide and Glossary* (Prentice-Hall India, 2005). He has also published widely in various national and international journals in both English and Assamese.



### Literary Editor

Nirendra Nath Thakuria, a lecturer in the Department of English of Pragytosh College, is the Associate Editor of *YAATRA*, a journal of Assamese literature and culture. Thakuria has translated Sameer Tanti's *Seven days*.

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অ' মোৰ আপোনাৰ দেশ  
অ' মোৰ চিন্তুনি দেশ  
এনেখন শুভলা  
এনেমান সুখলা  
এনেচাঁপ মৰমৰ দেশ।

অ' মোৰ সুৰীয়া মাত  
অসমৰ সুৰনি মাত  
পৃথিৱীৰ কাণত কিচৰি কন্যটো  
লোপোৱা কৰিলেক পাট।

অ' মোৰ ওপজা ঠাই  
অ' মোৰ অসমী! অহি  
চাই ল'ওঁ এবাৰ মুখনি তোমাৰ  
ঠোঁপাহ মোৰ পলোৱা নহি।

লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱা

anthem of Assam composed by  
Lakshminath Bezbaroa,  
the most prominent litterateur.

O my own, my dear Land  
O my looney Land  
Such rich, sweet stretches  
such loving reaches.

O my sweet tongue  
O my caring voice  
the dulcet notes of my Assam  
nubere on earth  
would you find  
even if you spend your life.

O the place where I was born  
O my mother, my Land  
do let me look at you again  
your face I gaze at  
and would never tire.

Lakshminath Bezbaroa

translated by Shri Pradip Acharya, retired Professor  
of English of Cotton College.



time to go home, to prepare for another day



The sun sets majestically on the Brahmaputra