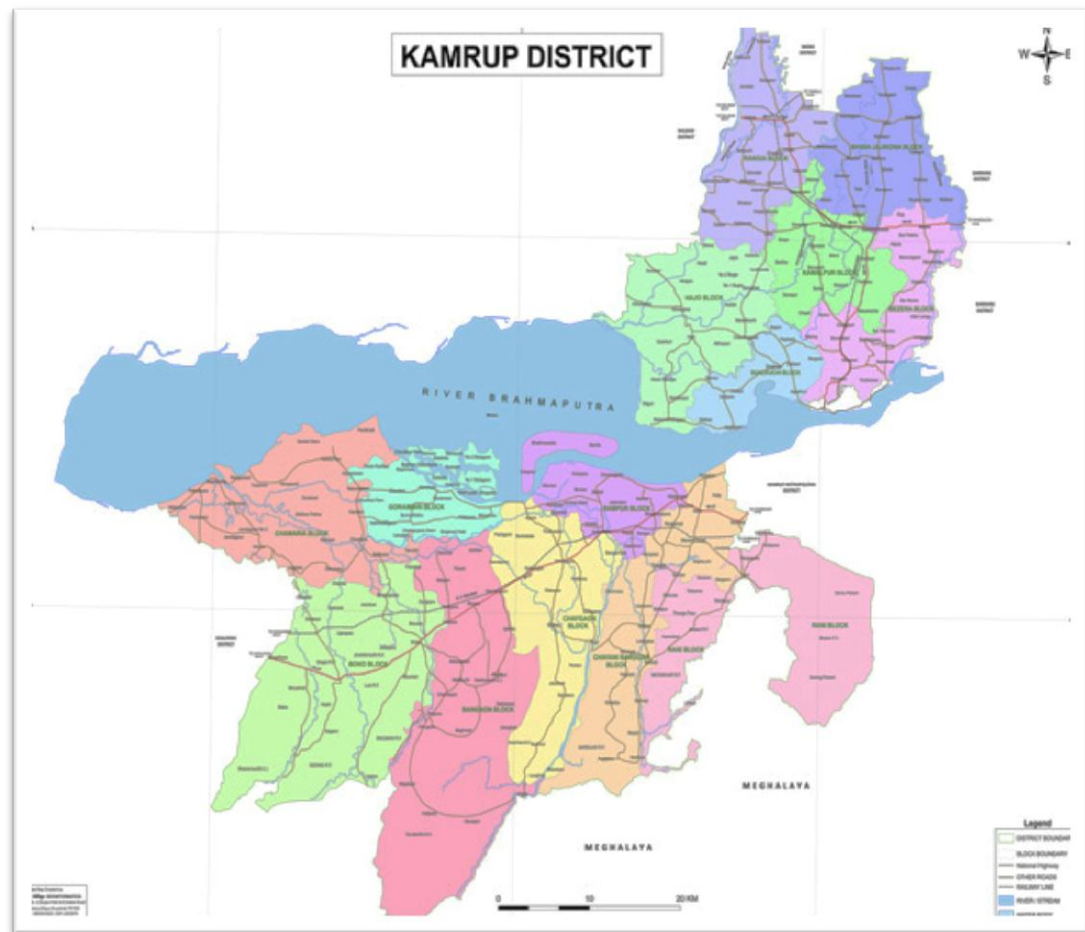


## CHAPTER - 4

## RESEARCH SETTING



Assam with its unique culture and the excellent performance of its sports, music, Bihu dance, vast literature, cinema, theater have been widely acclaimed. Kamrup district consists of wide plains through which the mighty river Brahmaputra makes its way flowing a steady course from east to west. The demographic pattern of Kamrup District is a heterogeneous one. However, there exist a perceptible degree of mutual love, respect and inter-religious tolerance amongst them. According to the 2011 census Kamrup district has a population of 15, 17,202. Kamrup has a sex ratio of 946 females for every 1000 males, and a literacy rate of 72.81%. In the context of silk weaving in Assam, Sualkuchi is a name that stands apart, situated on the bank of the river Brahmaputra, about 35 kms from Guwahati, Sualkuchi is a block of Kamrup District with a population around 52,679 with 90 sq km. There are 8 G.P. in Sualkuchi

block out of which, weaving is a dominant occupation. In fact Sualkuchi is known as the Manchester of the East.

Assam is a northeastern state of India. Its capital is Dispur, located within the municipal area of Guwahati city. Located south of the eastern Himalayas. Assam comprises the Brahmaputra and the Barak river valleys along with the Karbi Anglong and the North Cachar Hills with an area of 30,285 square miles (78,438 km<sup>2</sup>). Assam is surrounded by seven other States Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya and Sikkim. Geographically Assam and these states are connected to the rest of India via a narrow strip of land in West Bengal called the Siliguri Corridor or "Chicken's Neck". Assam shares international borders with Bhutan and Bangladesh; and cultures, peoples and climate with South-East Asia.

#### **GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF KAMRUP DISTRICT**

Kamrup district is divided into two parts namely Kamrup metro and Kamrup rural. Kamrup district is rich in culture, ethnic groups, languages spoken and literature. It is known for tea, large and old petroleum resources (the first oil reserves of India were discovered in Assam in the late 19th century), and Assam silk and for its rich biodiversity. Assam has successfully conserved the one-horned Indian rhinoceros from near extinction, along with the tiger and numerous species of birds, and it provides one of the last wild habitats for the Asian elephant. It is becoming an increasingly popular destination for wildlife tourism, and Kaziranga and Manas are both World Heritage Sites. Kamrup was also known for its Sal tree forests and forest products, much depleted now. A land of high rainfall, Kamrup is endowed with lush greenery and the mighty river Brahmaputra, whose tributaries and oxbow lakes provide the region with a unique hydro-geomorphic and aesthetic environment. Kamrup district consists of wide plains through which the mighty river Brahmaputra makes its way flowing a steady course from east to west. The demographic pattern of Kamrup District is a heterogeneous one.

## **LOCATION & GEOGRAPHICAL AREA**

Geomorphic studies conclude that the Brahmaputra, the life-line of Assam is an antecedent river, older than the Himalayas. The hills of Karbi Anglong, North Cachar and those in and close to Guwahati In the south, the Barak originating in the Barail Range (Assam-Nagaland border) flows through the Cachar district and enters Bangladesh with the name Surma. Assam has petroleum, natural gas, coal, limestone and other minor minerals such as magnetic quartzite, kaolin, sillimanites, clay and feldspar. A small quantity of iron ore is available in western districts.

With the "Tropical Monsoon Rainforest Climate", Kamrup district experiences heavy rainfall and high humidity. The climate is characterized by heavy monsoon downpours reducing summer temperatures and affecting foggy nights and mornings in winters, frequent during the afternoons. Spring and autumn are usually pleasant with moderate rainfall and temperature.

Geographically, district is located at Western side of the state and Agro-climatically falls in Lower Brahmaputra Valley Zone. Total geographical area of the district is 4345sq. km (4, 34,500 ha) viz. 5.5 % of the total geographical area of the state. The district is surrounded by Darrang and Morigaon district on the East, Nalbari and Goalpara district on the West, Udalguri and Baska District on the North and Meghalaya on the South. The mighty Brahmaputra passes through the district. The district headquarter Guwahati is the doorstep to the North Eastern States of India.

## **AREA AND LOCATION**

Kamrup District is situated between 25.46 and 26.49 North Latitude and between 90.48 & 91.50 East Longitude. It is bounded by Udalguri and Baksa districts in the north, Meghalaya in the south, Darrang and Kamrup Metropolitan in the east and Goalpara and Nalbari district in the west. It has a total geographical area of 4, 34,500 acres. Historically, present Assam was referred to as Kamrup in many of the ancient Indian literature. Till the Ahom conquest, Kamrup district was known as Pragjyotispur due to the astrology (Jyotish Shashtra) practices that prevailed in this part of the country. The mythologies of ancient Assam reveal that the word "Kamrup" means the land where

‘Kamdev’ regained his “Rupa” (form). During Ahom reign, Guwahati became an important strategic point and saw the famous battle of Saraighat between Ahom and Mughals, and since then Guwahati as well as Kamrup district continue to play the Political, Social, Economic and intellectual leadership of the state.

## **HISTORY**

Vaishnav Movement, the 15th century religion-cultural movement under the leadership of great Srimanta Sankardeva and his disciples have provided another dimension to Assamese culture. Historically, it is not difficult to understand that on one hand, during the strong political and economic systems under stronger dynasties, greater cultural assimilations created common attributes of Assamese culture, while on the other during smaller politico-economic systems or during political disintegration, more localized attributes were created with spatial differentiation. Time-factor for such integrations and differentiations has also played extremely important role along with the position of individual events in the entire series of sequential events. With a strong base of tradition and history, the modern Assamese culture is greatly influenced by various events those took place in the British Assam and in the Post-British Era. In 1947, Assam including the present Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya became a state of the Union of India and a district of Assam. Assam till 1950s; the new states of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram formed in the 1960-70s. From Shillong, the capital of Assam was shifted to Dispur, now a part of Guwahati. After the Indo-China war in 1962, Arunachal Pradesh was also separated out. Since 1947, with increasing economic problems in the region, separatist groups began forming along ethnic lines, and demands for autonomy and sovereignty grew, resulting into fragmentation of Assam.

## **AGRICULTURE**

In Kamrup among all the productive sectors, agriculture makes the highest contribution to its domestic sectors, accounting for more than a third of Assam’s income and employs 69% of workforce. Kamrup is one of the leading producer of Tea in the world. It produces some of the finest and most expensive teas and has its own variety. Kamrup also accounts for a fair share of India’s production of rice, rapeseed,

mustard seed, jute, potato, sweet potato, banana, papaya, areca nut, sugarcane and turmeric. It is also a home of large varieties of citrus fruits, leaf vegetables, vegetables, useful grasses, herbs, spices, etc. Kamrup's agriculture is yet to experience modernization in a real sense.

## POPULATION

As per the Census data 2001, the demographic profile of the district shows that 34.17 percent of the total rural population in the district belongs to the minority community of which Muslims comprise 93 percent. The population density in the district which stands at 581 percent per sq.km is second highest in the state and is significantly higher than the state average which stands at 340 persons. Although the Muslims have a sex ratio higher than that of the district, in rural areas however, the Muslim sex ratio is the lowest across religious and social groups, which indicates that gender discrepancy within the Muslims is more prominent in rural areas.

**Exportable Item:** Tea, Silk and Handloom are the major exportable item. Kamrup is the home of several types of silks, the most prestigious are: Muga – the natural golden silk, Pat – a creamy-bright-silver coloured silk and Eri – a variety used for manufacturing warm clothes for winter. Apart from Sualkuchi, the center for the traditional silk industry, in almost every parts of the Brahmaputra Valley, rural households produce silk and silk garments with excellent embroidery designs. Moreover, various ethno-cultural groups in Assam make different types of cotton garments with unique embroidery designs and wonderful colour combinations.



Assam Silk known as Muga with Japi

## **LITERACY RATE**

Kamrup district has the third highest literacy rate in the State. It is the only minority identified district in the State which has more than 70 percent literacy rate. Distribution of literacy rates by religious groups in the district reveal that Hindus have a literacy rate of 74 percent, Muslims 50 percent and Christians have a literacy rate of 68 percent, which shows that access to and attainment of education for the Muslims has been much slower. This low level of literacy and consequent educational attainment has its bearing on the employment and livelihood opportunities of the Muslims. The main reason for educational backwardness of Muslims is poverty due to which children are forced to drop out after the first few classes. This is particularly true for Muslim girls. Little children are expected to provide for their families by working in small workshops, as domestic help or by looking after their siblings while their mothers go to work (Sachar Committee Report, 2006). The opportunity costs involved in sending children to school is also too high for poor and illiterate parents. The community-specific factor for low educational achievement is that Muslims do not see education as necessarily translating into formal employment (Sachar Committee Report, 2006). While the Christian females have literacy rate higher than the average district rural literacy rate for female, the Muslim female literacy rate in Kamrup is much lower than the district average. The female literacy rate for Muslim females is at par with the literacy rate of Muslim females in the state which stands at 40.23 percent. This clearly reveals the poor educational attainment among the Muslim females in the district. The gender discrepancy in terms of sex ratio and literacy rate is thus more prominent for Muslim females in Kamrup district which corroborates the findings of Sachar Committee report.

## **DISTRIBUTION OF WORKFORCE IN KAMRUP DISTRICT**

The distribution of work forces in the district as per the Census 2001 data shows that of the total rural population 32.42 percent are total workers while 67.58 percent are non-workers. Cultivators comprise 39.11 percent, agricultural workers comprise 14.19 percent, 6.89 are household industry workers and 39.81 are other workers. The work participation rate among the religious groups reveal that the work participation rate for the Hindus (33.11 percent) is higher than the average rural work participation rate

in the district vis-à-vis the Muslims as per the Census 2001 data. However, the work participation rate for the Christians in rural Kamrup is highest among all religious groups. The high proportion of non-workers in the district reveals the distressed livelihood opportunities and this is particularly more severe for the Muslims. The low literacy rate of the Muslims is a major deterrent for getting gainful livelihood opportunities. The classification of workers shows that cultivators are the major work force in the rural areas. Within the cultivator households, 62.53 percent are Hindus, 32.37 percent are Muslims and 5.10 percent belong to other religious groups. Within the agricultural workers, 57 percent belong to Hindu households.

## **EDUCATION AND HEALTH**

The educational level of the population of the district is abysmally low. Of the total population with some educational attainment 2.12 percent receive education below primary level, 19.41 percent, attain education up to primary level and 17.12 percent complete middle level schooling. Of the total educated only 29 percent complete their matric/higher secondary/diploma courses. The percentage of graduates in the district is only 10.5 percent. The poor educational attainment in the district also reflects the poor quality of employable human resource and low work status for the vast majority of the workforce. An important indicator of health status is the sex ratio especially of children in the age group of 0-6 years. The child sex ratio in the district as per the estimate of Census 2001 is 957 girls per thousand boys while the rural child sex ratio is 964. A comparative picture across religious groups shows that Muslims have the highest child sex ratio in the district at 964 girls per thousand boys which is significantly higher than the state average of 954. The high child sex ratio of the Muslims is attributed to the high birth rates. The infant mortality rate in the district is 77 per thousand live births. As per the estimate of the Assam Human Development Report 2003, 7.28 percent of the population is not expected to live beyond the age of 40 years. In respect of disease among the population of the district, prevalence of cancer is alarmingly high in the district. The records from the B.Barooah Cancer Institute which is the nodal Cancer treatment Centre in the North East region, reveals that of the total cancer patients treated during the year 2005-06 highest percentage belonged to Kamrup district. In so far as the status of RCH is concerned 12.1 percent of the girls get married below the age of 18 years. In respect of maternal health, 18.4

percent of the pregnant women received full antenatal care, 44.7 percent had institutional delivery and 55.6 percent had safe deliveries. As many as 3.8 percent of the women suffered some form of post-delivery complications as per the RCH 202-04 Report. Natural resource base.

## **LAND AND ITS QUALITY**

Among the 15 agro-climatic regions of the country, categorized or identified on the basis of homogeneity in agro-characteristics, Kamrup falls in the Eastern Himalayan region. This region as a whole has high forest cover and practice of shifting cultivation. Felling of trees in upper reaches or hills and catchments areas of the Eastern Himalayan region has caused denudation and Kamrup district falls under the Lower Brahmaputra Valley zone. Soil structure of the district is mainly alluvial in nature. The result is heavy run-off, massive soil erosion and floods in lower reaches and basins. Large scale floods cause substantial damage to crops in the district. The major portion of the geographical area of Kamrup district is put to agricultural uses.

## **FOREST**

The district has 1, 16,694 Hectors of forest land which comprised 26.86% of total area of the district. The district has 13 reserve forests. The district is one of the richest biodiversity zones which consist of tropical rainforests, deciduous forests, riverine grasslands, bamboo orchards and numerous wetland ecosystems. Forests are an important part of Assam's economy. Timber is a major product of the state's extensive forests and bamboo is another product, bringing Assam substantial revenue and adding to its wealth. Development of farm forestry by bringing wasteland into use is of great significance. It not only fulfils fuel and wood requirements of the people but also ensures supply of raw materials for the forest based industries besides maintaining ecological balance. Kamrup district is rich in flora and fauna. The forest resource base of the district comprises of 23 reserve forests under three forest divisions of Kamrup East, Kamrup West and North Kamrup. The total forest area in the district is 1, 22,905.105 hectares excluding the unclassified state forest. Although the total area under reserve forest in the district is 151446.575 hectares, the rate of deforestation in the district is 2.5 percent per annum and rate of urbanization is about



7 percent per annum. In respect of farm forestry, the district has vast scope for development of bamboo sector. The two paper Mills existing in the state depend on bamboo as their raw material. The bamboo existing in the forest areas are limited in supply and also exist in inaccessible areas.

## **SOIL AND WATER**

The district falls under Brahmaputra river basin. The district has large reservoir of water resources with the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries of Puthimari, Borno, Nona, Kulsi, Pagladiya and Kalajal. The rivers also act as reservoir for fisheries. The district has a total of five registered river fisheries along with 20 registered beel fisheries. The district experiences heavy annual rainfall in the range of 1500 mm to 2600 mm. As the soil in the Eastern Himalayan region is highly susceptible to erosion, top soils of the hills gets washed away and are deposited in lower reaches. Due to rolling nature of the plain especially towards western part of Guwahati sub-division, some pockets are prone to gully erosion. The natural depressions and low-lying areas are still un-claimed causing water stagnation in most of the eastern part of the valley mainly in Chandrapur block. Construction of farm ponds for storage of excess rainfall and using the same for providing critical irrigation during dry spells with user charges have significant opportunities for creating minor irrigation potential in the district. The district approximately shares six percent of the usable ground water resources in the State of which 18 percent is usable for drinking water purpose. This indicates the necessity for harnessing alternative water use facilities as source of drinking water in the district.

## **ECONOMY**

Although the rural economy of Kamrup district is agrarian in nature however, the tertiary sector is dominant in terms of its income share and employment and livelihood generation. The sector contributes 66 percent of the total income in the Gross District Domestic Product while secondary sector contributes 20 percent. The primary sector contribution is estimated to be 14 percent. The per capita Gross District Domestic Product of Kamrup estimated at Rs.22292 is the highest among the districts of the state. The industrial base of the district is agro based. The district has

676 (23 percent of State total) industrial units registered which comprise of food products and beverages, manufacture of wood and wood products. The district has a total number of 14776 SSI units which is almost 30 percent of the State total. The largest concentration of industry is in and around Guwahati due to availability of various infrastructure facilities and proximity to the main commercial and trading centers in the N.E. Region. The district is covered under District Rural Industries Project (DRIP) of NABARD from the year 2000- 2001. The main objective of DRIP is to create sustainable employment avenues in rural areas through enhanced credit flow to RNFS with complementary promotional support. The industries having major concentration around Guwahati include engineering, agro based and chemical industries. The forest based industries are concentrated in Palasbari, Sualkuchi, Hajo and North Guwahati. Sualkuchi and North Guwahati are also famous for handloom and handicraft activities. The existing RNFS activities in the district are classified under three broad heads as manufacturing and processing, trade, transport and service. The data from District Industries & Commerce Center, Kamrup shows the various categories of Industries already set up in district and where high growth potential exist. The agro-climatic condition of the district is suitable for sericulture. The muga silk of Assam is popular in India and other countries. Since sericulture mainly involves women in rearing and spinning, it has great potential for creating employment opportunities for them. Around 420 villages in the district are involved in sericulture activities. The silk and weaving industry of Sualkuchi is one of the traditional handicraft activities which has generated employment and provided livelihood opportunities to people in the district. The North Eastern Council has provided financial assistance for promotion of weaver self-help groups which is being implemented by the DC Kamrup.

## **PLANTATION AND HORTICULTURE**

The agro climatic condition of the district makes it ideally suited for plantation and horticulture. Development of horticulture not only helps in creating additional job opportunity for the unemployed youth but is also useful from the point of view of value addition to the food and food processing units. The district has good potential for growing of fruit crops which include pineapple, litchi, orange, lemon, papaya,

banana, mango, guava, etc. The district also offers good scope for mushroom cultivation and floriculture, being close to the urban center like Guwahati.

### **LIVESTOCK AND DAIRY**

Dairying is practiced by most of the small and marginal farmers and landless labourers in the district and to them this activity provides economic security by serving as a hedge against crop failure. The economy of the district is basically agrarian and as such the economic development of the district is highly dependable on agriculture and allied activities. Traditionally, dairy farming is a subsidiary occupation of the farmers of the district. Despite the large population of livestock, the milk production in the district is low mainly due to predominance of local cows with a poor genetic make-up. The approximate annual milk production of the district is 450 lakh liters at present.

### **INDUSTRY**

Industrial scenario has undergone a vast change in Kamrup. Apart from tea, petroleum and petrochemicals, other industries in various sectors like paper, fertilizer, cement, coke, lime, sugar, engineering, plastic, steel, printing, cosmetics, poultry & dairy products along with handloom and handicraft have thrived in the state. Moreover, with its rich flora and fauna, breathtaking natural beauty, age-old temples and monuments, Kamrup district offers a unique potential for tourism industries for both domestic and foreign market.

### **LANGUAGES**

Assamese and Bodo are the major indigenous and official languages while Bengali holds official status in the three districts in the Barak Valley and is the second most widely spoken language of the state. Dimasa is a one of the oldest languages spoken in North East India particularly in Assam. Dimasa Nepali is also spoken in almost all parts of the state. There are also small groups of people speaking their own dialects such as Manipuri, Khasi, Garo, Hmar, Kuki, Naga etc. in different parts. Bengali is the official language in Barak Valley and the widely spoken language there is Sylheti,

a dialect of Bengali. Bengali is also largely spoken in the western districts of Dhubri, Barpeta and Goalpara. Santali is also spoken widely by the tribal population in the tea garden districts of Assam. Bishnupriya Manipuri language is also spoken by a small minority of people in Barak Valley. Some of the other languages spoken in Assam are Missing, Rabha and Karbi.

## **MUSIC**

Kamrup district, being the home to many ethnic groups and different cultures, is rich in folk music. The indigenous folk music has in turn influenced the growth of a modern idiom, that finds expression in the music of such artists are Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Bishnuprasad Rabha, Bhupen Hazarika, Nirmalendu Choudhury and Utpalendu Choudhury, Pratima Barua Pandey, Luit Konwar Rudra Baruah, Parvati Prasad Baruva, Jayanta Hazarika, Khagen Mahanta. And among the new generation Zubeen Garg, Angaraag Mahanta, Joi Barua and Jitul Sonowal are wellknown. And other than traditional Assamese music Assam's capital city Guwahati have become country's capital for rock music other than Shillong. A number of talented rock bands have formed showcasing their talents around the world.

## **FESTIVALS**

There are diversified important traditional festivals in Kamrup district. Bihu is the most important and common and celebrated all over Assam. It is the Assamese New Year celebrated in April of the Gregorian calendar. Bihu is a series of three prominent festivals. Primarily a non-religious festival celebrated to mark the seasons and the significant points of a cultivator's life over a yearly cycle. Three Bihus, rongali or bohag, celebrated with the coming of spring and the beginning of the sowing season; kongali or kati, the barren bihu when the fields are lush but the barns are empty; and the bhogali or magh, the thanks giving when the crops have been harvested and the barns are full. Bihu songs and Bihu dance are associated to rongali bihu. The day before the each bihu is known as 'uruka'. The first day of 'rongali bihu' is called 'Goru bihu' (the bihu of the cows), when the cows are taken to the nearby rivers or ponds to be bathed with special care.



Bihu dancers and drummer with drum

## **CULTURE**

Symbolism is an ancient cultural practice in Kamrup district and is still a very important part of Assamese way of life. Various elements are being used to represent beliefs, feelings, pride, identity, etc. Tamulpan, Xorai and Gamosa are three important symbolic elements in Assamese culture. Tamulpan (the areca nut and betel leaves) or guapan (gua from kwa) are considered along with the Gamosa (a typical woven cotton or silk cloth with embroidery) as the offers of devotion, respect and friendship. The Tamulpan-tradition is an ancient one and is being followed since time-immemorial with roots in the aboriginal Austro-Asiatic culture. Xorai is a traditionally manufactured bell-metal article of great respect and is used as a container-medium while performing respectful offers. Moreover, symbolically many ethno-cultural groups use specific clothes to portray respect and pride.

## **TOURISM**

Assam is the central state in the North-East Region of India and serves as the gateway to the rest of the eight States. For the purposes of tourism there are wildlife preserves like the Kaziranga National Park, Manas National Park, Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, Dipor bill bird sanctuary in Kamrup district, Dibru-Saikhowa National Park (Dibrugarh- Tinsukia), among others. Jokai Botanical Garden (Dibrugarh) the only Natural Botanical Garden in entire North- East India. Cultural and historical destinations also provide opportunities for tourists. Apart from wildlife preserves there are many historical places in the state like Rang Ghar, Talatal Ghar of Sivasagar, Kareng Ghar of Garhgaon, Agnigarh of Tezpur, Madan Kamdev archeological site of

Kamrup etc. While visiting Madan Kamdev Tourist can also visit in Famous ancient temple. Gopeswar Mandir situated in Village Deuduar. Cultural places are mainly great temple of Kamakhya, pilgrimage place Hajo, the great Vaishnava Sattras of Majuli and Barpeta and many more.



An Indian rhinoceros in Kaziranga National Park