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# GHORA NIDAN

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OF

TEZPUR

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## PREFACE.

In June last when I attempted for the first time to read "Ghora Nidan" as it is, after having received a copy from the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti through Pandit Hemchandra Goswami, I found myself quite at sea with regard to its vocabulary, much of which is unknown and obsolete, and the text all jumbled up together, and the stops are so misplaced that they served only to render the confusion worse confounded. The *puthi* contains 40 leaves of thick brown and unpolished paper, 38 of which are written on both the sides, and the rest on one side only. The leaves are all uniform in size,  $11\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length and 4 inches in breadth. Almost all the pages contain 7 lines each in old Assamese script. The first two lines at the beginning are so effaced that they are practically unreadable, while the second leaf is missing.

It is said that the *puthi* was found with an Assamese Brahmin gentleman of Nowgong district where his grandfather for certain reasons went to settle on the boundary of Darrang and Kamrup.

Unfortunately the *puthi* bears no name of the author. In course of my travels in the Mangaldai Sub-division in connection with the reading of the *puthi* I came across several copies of *Ghora-Nidan* which differ a great deal so far as their style and composition are concerned. There is only one *puthi*, with the Goswami of Kulbil Satra in Kamrup, which is exactly the same with only slight variations here and there, probably due to clerical mistakes. The incomplete text of the *puthi* I copied was redeemed to a great extent with the help of the second manuscript. It contains only about a dozen of Sanskrit words. Some of the important words which are Greek at present to almost all the Assamese are even now used in some localities of Mangaldai. The method, style and treatment of the subject are so peculiar that it can be recognised at a glance that it is not a translation from other Sanskrit treatises. Unlike any other medical treatise in Sanskrit which is commonly met in other parts of India this treatise has no mention either of spices or

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herbs which are rare in Assam. It is striking to note that the custom of weaving the author's name into the text of a literary composition has not here been adhered to, nor does it contain any prologue or epilogue or invocation either in the beginning or at the end of the *puthi*. I am therefore naturally inclined to believe that the *puthi* embodies a compilation based on experiences of horses acquired specially in the Mangaldai Subdivision which has long since been the main gate for horse-import from Bhutan. The grounds deduced from the reading of this *puthi* go a great length to deny the authorship of Sagarkhosi, the writer of "Aswakarnaryudha" who is supposed to be the author of 'Ghora Nidan' by some Assamese writers.

As to the date of its compilation no trace can be found in the body of the book. It is certain that in this treatise there is no trace of the influence exercised by the Vaisnavi writers over the literature of Assam. Its style and diction are plain and homely, and resemble more faithfully those of the Buranjis of Assam than other literary productions. As such it can naturally be regarded as a piece of work compiled sometime during the administration of the Ahoms from whom the idea of recording important experiences has been borrowed; besides the horse was an important factor in the civil and military functions of the state, and had a special department under a Ghora-Barua.

Obviously, on the grounds stated above it cannot also be held that this treatise has any connection with the Sanskrit treatises *Aswanaydakam* by Srinat Mohasant Jaydatta, son of Vijay Latta, which is now being translated into English and published as a serial in the quarterly Indian Veterinary Journal from Madras nor with *Aswachikichitam* attributed to Nakula, the fourth Pandava, who is described in the 'Mahabharata' as a veterinary expert of immense reputation.

This *puthi* therefore seems to me to be a product of experience acquired independently in Assam with reference to horses trained and domiciled in the land and

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will, I hope, be a valuable supplement to those Sanskrit treatises named above, and specially to " Haya-Lakshana-Sara " which contains valuable contributions from Salihotra, Nakula and King Bhojo who are reported to be great authorities on horsemanship.

The *puthi* may broadly be divided into two parts, one dealing with the classes, colour and characteristics of ponies, and the other with diseases, their general symptoms and treatment. It is very interesting to note that unlike any other medical treatise in Assamese this *puthi* contains no symptoms of diseases except in very few cases. It is also interesting to note that no mention has been made in regard to a dose of medicine which according to the Garura-Puran is from 8 to 144 tolas. I should like also to add here in this connection that equal quantities of ingredients should be taken so as to make the required dose where measurements of the different ingredients have not been specifically mentioned.

The classification of the *puthi* is not systematic ; I have however tried my best to impart a system to it purposely, for the convenience of readers without effecting any change in composition or attempting any correction in the spelling except in very few cases where there is a chance of misunderstanding the sense.

For clear elucidation of the technical terms this *puthi* badly wants a glossary. I found two *puthis* with Goswami of Kulbil Satra, namely " Ghorar Lakshana " and " Ghotoka Ratna " besides the one mentioned above, the latter of which for all purposes can be used as a supplement to this *puthi*. But for the " Ghorar Lakshana " nearly 50 technical words used in " Ghora Nidan " would have remained inexplicable.

I travelled in many places and consulted the Ahom translator Rai Sahib G. O. Barua and many leading gentlemen of the province, but these were unable to help.

I am fully aware I have not been able to do justice to the subject as I would like to do, and I hope there should be some allowance made for this maiden

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attempt in my old age. I shall consider that my labour in this direction to be amply rewarded when a better qualified man comes forward to take up the subject to make further research into it. As the effort had to be made against many odds I feel mistakes have crept in here and there, and I shall be glad to mend them if reasonable suggestions come forward from any quarter in Assam.

My thanks are due to Srijut Padmakanta Goswami of Kulbil Satra, Kamrup, who has rendered me great help by lending me his *puthis* on the subject.

[November 1927.]

TARINICHARAN  
BHATTACHARJEE.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

Srijut Tarini Charan Bhattacharyya, the editor and translator of *Ghora-nidan*, died at Gauhati on December 15th, 1927, while he was enjoying his well-earned pension after having served the Government as Sub-Deputy Collector. The book kept him busy for more than a year. He had to plod on with the text bristling with obsolete technical terms, identify the species of horses and antilopes mentioned and find out their English equivalents. Besides, the manuscripts were in many places undecipherable; and the first-hand experts whom he approached for elucidation of a difficult text had no special acquaintance with the equestrian science preserved in the treatise *Ghora-nidan*. Under these circumstances the preparation of a correct text and its rendering in English constituted in themselves a work of tremendous labour; and what the author has achieved in this unpioneered field during such a short time reflects credit on his energy and tenacity. Perfection in such a venture is not a matter of one but of several generations. *Ghora-nidan* and the more artistic, erudite and laborious sister treatise on elephants *Hasti-vidyarnava* are valuable contributions to the veterinary science of the Assamese people, and both the books were, in all likelihood, compiled under the commission of the state for use as staff manuals by officers and men employed by the Ahom Government under the Ghorachowa Barua and Hati-Barua, heads of the departments of horses and elephants respectively; and as far as *Hasti-vidyarnava* is concerned we know positively that it was compiled in 1734 by one Sukumar Kaith under the orders of Queen Madamvika, consort regnant of King Siva Singha, 1714-1744, while the illustrations were supplied by two court painters Dilbar and Dasoi. Their use was naturally extended to private owners and professional dealers. These two representative treatises reveal the richness and variety of the Assamese pharmacopœia, and their literary value consists in the preservation of a very large number of expressions now thrown into disuse.

It is regrettable that the author could not give the book the benefit of his final revision which he proposed to do before submitting it to Government. In November 1927 Mr. Bhattacharyya and myself were constantly engaged in revising the translation, but he died before this part of the work was completed. I returned a part of the manuscript which was with me to his brother at Tezpur, Srijut Kalicharan Bhattacharyya, B.L., who prepared the press-copy and submitted it to Government in May 1928. The proofs have been corrected by Srijut Kalicharan Bhattacharyya. They have been further revised. Mr. A. H. W. Bentinck, C.I.E, I.C.S., M.A., F.R.G.S., Honorary Provincial Director of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, has gone through the English portion, and corrections and alterations have in many places been considerable. Mr. A. C. Dutta, M.Sc, Lecturer in Botany in the Cotton College, has kindly revised the botanical terms. I have revised the Assamese text.

It is hoped that the publication of this book will lead to the unearthing of similar treasures and the stimulation of interest in the cultural legacies which old Assam has made to the new.

COTTON COLLEGE, }  
December 9, 1931. }

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