

## Impact of the Satras

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The Satra institution that was born in the 16th century A.D. has been playing a remarkable and leading role in the religious, social and cultural life of Assam, till today. The Satra institution is not only the centre of spreading of Vaishnava religion, but it is the soul centre of education, culture and art in the life of the people of Assam. The Satra in one hand fulfils the national unity and on the other hand awakening of the living consciousness of general people supplies the enlivening power in the national life.

### **A. Religious impact:**

The main objectives of the Satra are to spread the religion, to initiate the disciples in the religion and to explain the main facts of the religion to disciples. The main duty of the Satra is to increase the standard and moral character of the disciples through the explanation the morality of the Bhakti cult. By following the *Chari-bastu* (Four devotional truth), *Guru, Dev, Nam, Bhakat of Ek-Sarana Nama Dharma* at the Satra, what have been practised in the ideal of both the Gurus, even today by dance, song, music, Bhauna, Nama-Prasanga, Ghosha-Kirtana are nowhere to be found in any religious institution of other states of India. The practice of the Nama-Prasanga etc. in the harmony of the sounds of Khol-Tal is the rare example in the other religious sects of the world.<sup>1</sup> For the propagation of the *Ek-Sarana Nama Dharma* through the monotheistical ideal of *eka deva eka seva*, Srimanta Sankaradeva has been opened the way of nine-folded Bhakti as follows:

*Sravana Kirtana      Smarana Bishnuka*  
*Archana Pada-Sevana /*  
*Dashya Sakhitta      Bandana Bishnuka*  
*Kariba Deha Arpana //*

The sravana-kirtana was given the prime place by the Mahapurusha in the Bhakti Dharma. In this regard Dr. Nagen Saikia says that Mahapurusha Sankaradeva along with the other Gurus established an unique institution like the Satra as the centre of spreading the Bhakti-cult. These Satras have been established as a centre of moral, spiritual, social and cultural teaching and exercise. It succeeded the first renaissance in the social life of Assam. Even in the mental and intellectual life of Assamese people also it influence in such a way that those who are outside the Satras turns into the jurisdiction of moral, social and cultural comprehensive value. That is why irrespective of cast, colour even creed the social, cultural and moral character of Assamese people are same.<sup>2</sup>

In the later part of the Neo-Vaishnava Dharma in Assam there resulted four *Sanhahatis* in the name of *Brahma, Purusha, Kala and Nika*. So many Satras have been grown up under each Sanhatis in their own respective customs and rituals. Unlimited Namghars have been created in support of the

each Satras. At least one Namghar was born in every village in Assam . According to an observational report there are more than 25-30 thousand Namghars in Assam in the support of each village at present. It is remarkable that some of the villages of Assam have different Namghars in each Cuburi (Part) of a village.<sup>3</sup> In this way the Satra have been succeeded to able to bring a revolutionary change in the Neo-Vaishnava religion. The people of a village under one Namghar of one Satra and each Satra having remained in one Sanghati or in the main Neo-Vaishnaava religion, on the one hand performed religious and cultural functions widely and deeply in discipline, and on the other hand expanded religious and social bindings firmly. No body can deny the saying which has been supposed to be believed that the influence of the Vaishnava religion in Assam today has been spread and expanded from the Satras. The religion that has been published by the Satras is seen reflected in every sphere of Assam today. Today in each villages of Assam at least one Nam-party (Group of devotional singers) viz., Namar Dal, Ayati Dal, Nagara Nam, Thiya Nam etc. is obtained. Even in city area also now a days the groups of the Ayati Nam Dal is beyond calculation. The uncountable names of institutions - establishments, schools- colleges, organisations, theatres - dramatizations, hospitals etc. of Assam are kept in the Vaishnavite traditions prove that the Satras play an important role on spreading and publishing the Neo-Vaishnavite religion. According to Dr. Hiren Gohain it is clear that the flow of the Assamese Vaishnavite culture is survived and flourished only in support of the Satras.<sup>4</sup>

### **B. Social impact :**

The Satras are the inseparable organs of Assamese social life. Its relation is unavoidable like a warp and woof of a woven cloth. Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva by an attempt to organise a new society and to bring forward the mass people to Bhagavata Bhakti, forgetting the differential thought of caste, introduced the Satra culture through the Namghar. The Vaishnavite disciple Leela Mahanta says that the sole aim of Gurujana (Sankaradeva) was to organise a healthy systematic society by removing the dirty minds of mass people through the Satra culture. Like a holder, bearer, and an institution the Satras keeping the Khol-tal (drum and cymbal) in the bosom with Chari-Nam (four items of devotional song), –Caidhya Prasangas (14 items of prayer) had been running continuously for 550 years. The Satras are performing the activities without taking care for thankfulness or unpleasantness from any as a self-duty ceaselessly even today. Holding Nam-Kirtana the whole, some celibacy Satras remained far away from today's materialistic idealism (Bhogbad). It is also a significant point.<sup>5</sup>

The Satras bear the sign of steady progressive social life. They have been playing an important role in the building up of a benevolent society. In this regard Dr. Bhimkanta Barua writes that Satras are like the chief-post of Assamese culture. It teaches the spiritual knowledge. It has been playing mighty role in Assamese culture, pious conduct and as a centre of learning amongst the common illiterate people. The Dhuti-culture (Dhuti-a long and broad waist cloth worn by man) which was derived from Satra culture is very popular in Assamese society. The common people obtain the knowledge of pious conduct from the Satras as to how they keep themselves neat and clean along with the religious fact. For which unity and peacefulness are prevailing along with other civilities. It shows the path of civil culture for the well-subdued and well-systematic life.<sup>6</sup>

Satra is the supreme authority amongst the villagers in the field of social rules and regulations.<sup>7</sup> Satras and Namghars are the prime centre of public and social works of villagers. Herein discussing

about the various problems the villagers take decisions and process of executing, celebrate religious and social festivals etc. The Satras and Namghars are like the public court. If any person of a village involves in sin or commits social crime or any quarrel created amongst somebody under any circumstances, the leading figures of the village organise Mel (tribunal) getting together in the Satra or Namghar. In the Mel these crimes are tried and punishment has been given in the act of offence and expiation in the sin by the ordinance. Both the complainant and accused parties have been compelled to obey this verdict. In the monarchical days from the king's court also supported to this decision or verdict. Only the political offences have been justified by the king's court. The ordinance of penalty that has been given to the offenders by the Satra or the Namghar and if the offenders do not abide by the same the offenders has been eghariya (dwelling away from others) or alag (excommunicated) from the society. That means the offenders are not allowed to participate in any of the social or public performances and nobody is allowed to go home or accept the invitation of the offenders. Thus the Satra and the Namghar solve the disputes by justification amongst the villagers and on the other hand save the unity of the village also firmly.

The decisions taken by the Satras or Namghars for the development of the village all the men and women agree to perform their duties accordingly. If any family has to face any disaster under the jurisdiction of Satras and Namghars then the people of the locality try to rescue the family from the same. At the time of common disaster the villagers of Satras and Namghars unitedly stand for the protection of the village. Thus the Satras and Namghars play an important role on showing the mentality of co-operation and helping hand from age to age. Therefore M.K. Gandhi opined, "what I am going to do is that the Neo-Vaishnavism spread it five hundred years ago in Assam."

To say about the Satra traditions the scholar Bapchandra Mahanta writes that all classes of people of society is not equally forward. That is why the chief aim of the Satras is to bring forward the people of the backward classes. From the another point of view the Satras also can be regarded as a training centre of social system. Both trainees and trainers of this are called in common language as Bhakat or Bhakta (devotee).<sup>8</sup> Because of this training system of the Satras it is seen that the villagers of Assam are more educated than the villagers of the other states of India. They (Assamese villagers) know the stories of our *Sastras* (holy books) well; most of them know the dances, songs, playing music, acting and varieties of cultural art. Besides these, they are consistent with ethics, doer of pious conduct, bearer of civility mild and gentle.<sup>9</sup> This developed social standard of our society mainly grown up by the influence of the Satras, Namghars and the Neo-Vaishnavite movement. On the whole among the human society of Assam in the vains and fibres, in the fooding and sleeping, in sitting and standing, in inspiration and respiration in every sphere the influence of Satras are flowing in each people without their own knowledge.

In the systems of Satras and Namghars the democratic thinking have been playing an important role. Some deserving persons from the society were appointed as officials to perform the religious activities. In course of time these officials have been introduced as a common title in the Assamese society. These titles obtained from the Satras and Namghars are being prevailed in Assamese society as follows : Adhikary, Gayan, Bayan, Pujari, Barpujari, Bharali, Pathak, Bhakat, Medhi, Kakati, Lekharu, Khataniyar, Daloi, Bardaloi, Oja, Dainapali, Bhagavati, Sutradhar, Mahanta etc. Besides these above mentioned titles or portfolios, the actors and actresses of the Bhaona and in all respect the rule of appointment has been prevailing through democratic process. Irrespective of caste or creed, those persons who are expert or eligible than others in the villages given these portfolios.

Through this system along with the growing up of the competitive sentiment the practice of art-culture also being developed.

### **C. Cultural impact :**

At the beginning the Satra did only the work of spreading the religion. But in course of time the most important role of the Satras towards the society are to develop the education, the literature, the acting, the art and craft, the social reformation etc. through the religion.

**(i) Education :** In the medieval period when the king's courts were not interested in education then the Satras played the role as a centre of education. In the main Satras there are Vidyalaya, Tol or Catuspadi under the scholars wherein students from different parts of Assam gathered to achieve the knowledge in various subjects. According to scholars only the Satra institutions were lighting the lamp of education and knowledge from the 16th century A.D. to the 19th century A.D. in Assam continuously.

The most important role of the Satra for Assamese nation is the spreading of education traditionally amongst the illiterate people to which Dr. Surya Kumar Bhuyan mentioned as Anakhari or Anakhari Siksha (illiterate education). Nam-kirtana (congregational prayer), Ojapali (a choir or party of singers), Bhaona (theatrical performances), reading of Puthi (religious book) etc. have been running traditionally in the Satras. In addition to this the wise persons practise the pious religious discussions and the holy books frequently. From these discussions the common people have been learning about the pious practice, well-behaviours and conduct besides learning the main fact of the religion. About this Dr. Surya Kumar Bhuyan writes that through these Satras and Namghars the knowledge have been flowed amongst the illiterate Assamese people in our state. For the Assamese people illiteracy is not a bar to earn knowledge ; because there is a system of reading the religious books and explanation of necessary parts on presence of the common people. Besides these, Bargit, dance, acting etc. also have indirectly been educating the illiterate people. That is why Dr. Bhuyan says that in this way a system of education has been spreading from age to age in Assam as Anakhari Siksha, which is nowhere to be found in India except Assam. This tradition has been continuing amongst the aged persons of the villages in Assam till today. If we are able to give them to speak freely and frankly then we will see that they are well conversant with the subject matters of our Puranas and Mahakavyas etc.<sup>10</sup> The lamp of the Anakhari Siksha has been lighting in the Satras and Namghars of Assam till today as has been told by Dr. Bhuyan.

**(ii) Literature :** As a centre of practice of literature the contributions of the Satras are immeasurable. In the medieval period the Satras grew up as the main centre of practice of literature. In the field of song, drama and biographical literature it made remarkable contribution. Most of the Vaishnava literature have been composed at the Satras.<sup>11</sup> Staying at Satras the Gurus wrote the books in Sanchi-barks, cotton-leaves etc. To write the books necessary articles like written instruments (pen), ink, Sanchi-barks, cotton-leaves were made at the Satras. At the post- Sankara age the writers got the chances of composing as well as copying through the Satras and Namghars. The Carit Puthis (Biographies) and the other religious manuscripts enriched the treasure of the Assamese literature. In each main Satras of Assam there are such a kind of uncountable books written in Sanchi-barks, cotton-leaves etc.. Only the Chamariya Satra possessed more than 200 (two hundred) such a kind of

books (Manuscripts). On being destructed for so many reasons only the 47 (forty-seven) books have been preserved there.<sup>12</sup> More than five hundred such books have been preserved in the Krishna Kanta Handique Library of Gauhati University. More than such kind of 30 (thirty) books have been preserved at the Museum of Dakshin Kamrup Girls' College, Mirza. In this way there are uncountable such old manuscripts at various Satras, Namghars and individual families of Assam.

Various kinds of religious books, Ankiya- Nat (one act play) and the songs composed by Srimanta Sankaradeva are not only in Assamese but in Indian literature also is an indescribable contribution. The Satras are the treasure-house of literature wherein the devotional flow (1375-1700 A.D.) of Indian literature has been connected with the Assamese literature. This of unbrokable flow of literature carries the national integrity.<sup>13</sup>

**(iii) Drama and Dance:** The dramatic art of Assam also has been flourished through the Satras. The Gurus themselves composed many songs and plays. They also arranged to perform the acting of the dramas composed for the common devotees and disciples to attract the devotion towards God. Sankaradeva created the full-fledged Ankiya Bhaona by assimilating the dance, ojpali, acting etc. Though the Bhaonas were composed for the spreading of religion yet in course of time it becomes the carriers of mass education. The Bhaonas are considered as the altar of sermons of the Gurus, centre of practice of literature, field of exercise of dances, songs and musical instruments etc.<sup>14</sup> Once through the Satras and Namghars the dramas and dancing art of Assam flourished in a particular way. Besides these the new Satradhikaras had to compose dramas or Bhaonas before or after the ceremony of being a Satradhikara. In case of subsequent Satradhikaras composition of dramas became compulsory.

The Satriya dance also which is developed through the basis of the Satras have been achieving the popularity and glory amongst all classes of audience from the beginning till today. The unique creation of songs, dances, dramas on the auspicious of Satras and Namghars are truly the most excellent contribution to the Assamese society. Hence, Dr. Birinchi Kumar Barua says that as the Mahapurusha fulfil the Bhaonas through dance, song, acting etc. so he erected the foundation of Assamese national theatrical stage. No repetition is required about the contributions of the Namghars in social, religious and cultural life of Assamese. The Namghar is the Museum of national culture of Assam. It also the national Rangalaya (stage). Namghar carries the welfare for Assamese Nation. Namghar is the Nation-theatre (Bhaonaghar) of Assam. In this nation-theatre all communities have the right of entry without any cost. For all, the poor and the rich there is the same seat of Kath-Kuhila (a mat made of grass or cork). All the eligible persons from all caste may take part in the Bhaona, may take part as Sutradhara,<sup>15</sup> may dance as a dancer, may play Khol-Mridanga (a kind of drum) as a Bayan (musician) etc.. Thus the Nation-theatre (Bhaonaghar) is preserving the social power of Assamese nation.<sup>16</sup>

The Satriya dance created by the Satra has been upgraded to Sastriya dance. The Satriya dance which obtained the standard of Sastriya dance under the jurisdiction of all India Sastriya dance is the glorious matter for Assam. The Khol and Bargit created by Sankaradeva becomes the flow of vitality of Assam as well as Assamese through the Satriya culture. Moreover through the application of Khuti tal (a kind of small cymbal) and Bhor tal (a kind of big cymbal) the Satra supplies remarkable

contributions to Assamese culture. The Satras become a kind of library as well as a national museum by collecting the various articles along with the awakening of national sentiment.

**(iv) Art-Practice :** The Satras were the prime centre of high standard cottage industry, and art, craft and sculpture. The expert artisans got the chances to exhibit and practise of their variety of artistic works through the Satras and Namghars. The craftsmen depicted various beautiful flowers and statues on wood. The writers prepared the Sanchi barks from Sanchi tree to write or copy the Puthis (holy books). They used various colours by preparing from various trees - grasses, barks and leaves as well as Hengul-Haital (vermilion-yellow arsenic). Through the Satras and Namghars the artisans like the craftsmen, the carpenters and bamboo workers, bell-metel workers, the leather workers etc. bestowed their deep devotion, complements and excellency to the Satras and Namghars by making their artistic works. The artisans of the villages sitting together at Namghars or Satras make necessary articles like wooden Sarai (a tray with a stand), Thagi (a kind of wooden tray with one leg), Singhasana (a seat supported on legs made in the form of lion), statues of Garura, Jaya-Vijaya, Hanumana etc. for the Satras and Namghars. They also make necessary bows and arrows, gada (an iron mace, club), Kiriti (coronate), Mukut (crown) and wooden musks of Ravana, Kumbhakarna, Kaliya-Sarpa, Narasingha etc. for the Bhaona. Once on the basis of the Satras and Namghars the cottage industry, the cloth industry, the clay industry, the bamboo industry etc. of Assam were born. Even today too that practice of artistic activities are prevailing more or less in all villages of Assam. In all those activities individual need, religion, commercial attitude were connected and it is being connected. The Satras caused the paintings also to flourish. The Vaishnavite movement of Assam originated the custom of paintings in religious books. It is known that Mahapurusha Sankaradeva did paintings himself. It is mentioned in the Carit Puthi that the Gurujana (Sankaradeva) depicted the picture of seventh heaven on the cotton leaves. It is also known that Sankaradeva presented the Gunamala, the holy book to Maharaj Naranarayana in a wooden box whereupon the picture of elephant was depicted. Again on Vrindavani Vastra<sup>17</sup> the depiction of the sports of Srikrishna of Vrindavana has been known from the Carit Puthi.

Uncountable depictions are found on the gates, doors and walls of various Satras of Assam.

**(v) Festive Impact :** Satras and Namghars are the main centre of the religious festivals. The villagers organise their festivals and ritual ceremonies in the Satras and Namghars. Besides the daily prayers the festivals like three Bihus (Rangali, Bhogali and Kati Bihu), the Janmastomi (the birth anniversary of Lord Krishna), the Doul-utsava, the Nandotsava (Piyak Nam), Pal Nam, Suwari or Sori, Bar Sabah, Raij Sabha, the anniversaries of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva, the anniversaries of the Gurus, Anniversaries of the Atas, Ras Purnima, Bhaona etc. are observed by the villagers in the Satras and Namghars. These festivals have been creating the unity amongst the mass people. In addition to this on the auspicious of the Satras and Namghars the competitive games and sports have also been organised. In this sphere specially the competition of Nao-Khel (boat-race) is remarkable. The boat-race competition held at the Chamariya Satra and at Kukurmara area have been uniting all irrespective of caste, creed and colour. This boat-race competition has been establishing as a symbol of unity and integrity amongst various castes and tribes of Assam.

**2. Position of women in the Satra culture of South Kamrup :**

The women have been achieving high position and high dignity in the Vaishnavite tradition of Assam from earliest time. It is seen from the study of the history of the Vaishnavite culture that in making Satra culture and Vaishnavite traditions the great several venerable women cast special contributions. Amongst them, Srimanta Sankaradeva's grand mother Khersuti Ai, wife Surjavati, Kalindri Ai, ai Kanaklata, wife of Chaturbhuj Thakur, Chandari Dhari, the explainer of the Gitatattva, Radhika Santi, Bhuvaneswari, wife of Chilarai, Bhanumati wife of Maharaja Naranarayana, Padmapriya, the daughter of Gopaladeva, Santa Ai, wife of Mathura Das Burha ata etc. are specially remarkable.

The women have been playing the important role in the history of Satra of South Kamrup. In the Satra society of South Kamrup, the position of women are very high. The preacher and the first news-bearer of Vaishnava culture in Dakshin Kul, the founder Satradhikara of Chamariya Satra Sri Sri barvishnu Ata gave initiation at first only to his wife Candravati in the Ek-Sarana Hari Nam Dharma. It is found in the Carit Puthi of Bar-Vishnu Ata that by getting initiation from Mahapurusha Madhavadeva, Bar-Vishnu Ata came to the village Malaca and enchored his boat in the river bank. After enchoring the boat he was not interested to go his own home. Having known this information his (Ata) wife Candravati sent their son Gopala to bring his (Gopala) father home. But Bar-Vishnu Ata refused to come home. Then Candravati herself went near Bar-Vishnu Ata who was staying at the bank of the river. At this Candravati requested her husband to come to their own home. Then Bar-Vishnu Ata says to Candravati that Ata was kept as a slave by someone for his previous debt. So he was unable to go home. On hearing this Candravati says in laughing by salutation that she too becomes a slave from that day. She also requested to take her as a companion and not to leave her. Having heard these words Vishnu Ata went home. Candravati Ai arranged newly after washing all the domestic utensils and the oven. After washing all the clothes she cleaned and wiped over the home. Having finished all the cleanliness works she remained in fasting the whole night. Next morning Candravati got initiation under Bar-Vishnu Ata. It is found in the Dakshin Kuliya Sri Sri Bar-Vishnu Atar Carit as -

*moka dharuwai pai /  
bandha laila eka thai //130  
ehise karane mai /  
nejao tak cal tai //  
suni ai bole hasi /  
amiyo bhailoho dasi //131  
layo moka saga kari /  
najaibaha pari hari //  
atayo navaka eri /  
grihaka gailanta lari //132  
ayo pachhe pache jai /  
pravesila grihe gai //  
caru patilaka dhari /  
pelailanta ranga kari //133  
vastrako bhijai dila /  
griha gota malachila //  
ano karma jata ache /  
sabe pura kari pache //134*

*ai upabasa dila /  
harit sarana laila //  
ehimate kato dina /*

*acha ata ranga mana //135* 18

From the day of the initiation under Bar-Vishnu Ata, Candravati Ai assisted him as a companion for whole life. After getting initiation Candravati Ai dedicated herself in the spreading of the Ek-Sarana Nam Dharma in Dakshin Kul.

From those days in the field of Vaishnava culture the women- society have been bestowing a remarkable contribution in South Kamrup. Therefore in South Kamrup the women-society have been receiving a special dignity. The women plays an important role in the Tithis (anniversaries), festivals, Nam-Kirtanas etc. in every respects. The women related with the Satras perform Nam-Kirtana (congregational prayer) daily in the morning and in the evening in the Satra. These women who perform Nam-kirtanas are called Ai Sakal.<sup>19</sup> Since these Ai Sakal perform their Nam-kirtanas sitting on the Kathi or Varandah of the Satra so they are called Kathir Ai Sakal. The ai Sakal also have their own designations, duties and responsibilities. Everybody perform these duties and responsibilities sincerely. Nam-kirtanas of women go on in the Namghars also. Almost every villages have at least one Nam-party relating with the Namghars. These Nam-parties have been identified as Ayati-Dal (Ayati = women who sings Nam, Dal = Party). In some villages there are the prayer parties called Nagara Namar Dal<sup>20</sup> of women (Nagara = drum). After all in every sphere of Satra culture of South Kamrup the women have been bestowing a remarkable contribution. So without women it is not possible to uphold the Ek-Sarana Bhagavati Dharma in South Kamrup.

Another most important matter is the entry of women in the Kirtanghara of the Satra. In most of the Satras the women are not allowed to enter in the Kirtanghar of the Satra. But the most remarkable point is that except a few Satras the women can enter into the Kirtanghar of the Satras of South Kamrup at all the time. Specially in the Kirtanghar of Chamariya Satra, the prime Satra of Dakshin Kul, the women can enter freely. There is no any obstacle (bar) for women to enter into the Kirtanghar of the Chamariya Satra. In this respect the Chamariya Satra is imitable for the other Satras of Assam. In present perspective, entering into the Kirtanghar of a Satra of women is a very important matter. Because in the Barpetta Satra, a leading Satra of Assam the women are not allowed to enter into the Kirtanghar of the Satra. Of course, a very few Satras which are established at South Kamrup by bringing the Sala-banti (lighting lamp) from Barpetta Satra have been forbidding for the women to enter into the Kirtanghar according to the tradition of the Barpetta Satra. As for example Sikarhati Satra can be taken.

Whatsoever, from the above discussion we may easily assume that the position of women in the Satra culture of South Kamrup is very high. The women-society have been playing a very important role in the upholding and forwarding the Vaishnavite traditions and Satra culture in South Kamrup.

### **3. Influence on Tribal community of South Kamrup :**

People of various tribal communities live in South Kamrup. Amongst these tribal communities Garo, Khashi, Boro, Rabha, Hazang etc. are the main. In South Kamrup from the beginning of the Neo-Vaishavite movement and the establishment of the Satras, the Satra culture began to influence over the tribal people of this area. The people of tribal communities have also been offering irreproachable contributions to the Satra culture of South Kamrup from the beginning



wholeheartedly. The influence of Neo-Vaishnavite faith began to run in South Kamrup from the 15th-16th century A.D. During that period the entire South Kamrup was ruled over by the tribal kings. So, from this it has been proved that in the beginning South Kamrup was mainly influential area of tribal communities.

The contributions of tribal people are unlimited in making the Satra culture uphold in South Kamrup. It has been assumed that at the beginning the sentiment of Vaishnavite culture awakened amongst the tribal people in South Kamrup by Garo Gobinda Ata, the favourite disciple of Mahapurusha Sankaradeva. It is known from the Carit Puthis of Barvishnu Ata that Madhavadeva came to Malaca himself at the time of the establishment of the Malaca Satra. At that time uncountable visitors gathered at Malaca to see Madhavadeva. Amongst these uncountable visitors the people of Garo and Miri (Khashi), were large in number. It is in the Carit of Bar-Vishnu Ata-

*Garo Miri desa jata ache prajagana /*

*sabe gaila Madhavaka dekhbara mana // 21*

Again it is known from the Carit of Parhiya Madhava Ata that Heremeswar, the king of Heramda wanted to take initiation near Madhavadeva.<sup>22</sup> The matter of taking initiation of the king of Heramda near Madhavadeva proved that the influence of Neo-Vaishnavite religion had on the tribal people at that time.

The Ek-Sarana Namdharma have been influencing in a remarkable way in the social, religious and cultural revolving of tribal people of South Kamrup from 16th century A.D. till today. At present amongst the tribals who take initiation in the Ek-Sarana Nam-Dharma, the people of Rabha and Boro communities are large in number. Some tribal people after taking initiation in the Ek-Sarana Dharma identify themselves as Saraniya and write Saraniya as a title after their names. Again some others write Das title. Das means slave, that means slave of God. On the other hand many people go with Vaishnavite customary traditions without changing their original titles. After having initiated in the Vaishnavite cult it is seen that their food habit, custom and usage, dress, style of talking, behaviour etc. are changed in every sphere. Those persons who performed idol worshipping, after their initiation to Vaishnavite faith. Again it is seen that they attracted wholeheartedly to the Vaishnavite customs giving up the hunting of wild animals, fishing, rearing the pigs and hens, drinking and making wine etc. Leaving their traditional dresses the wearing Dhuti by men and Mekhela-cadar<sup>23</sup> by women proved the moulding of Vaishnavite influence upon their culture.

Today various Satriya cultures, viz. Satriya-Nritya (dance), Bargit, Khol, Tal (cymbal) Nam-prasanga etc. are very popular amongst the tribal people. In the field of Satra-culture many tribals are further forward now. Even many of them obtaining acknowledgement as a scholar are servicing as a trainer also in Vaishnavite songs, musical instruments and dances. The Vaishnavite culture builds up the unity and integrity between the general and tribal people in South Kamrup. As a result of which the matrimonial relations also built-up amongst the various tribal and non-tribal people. The tribal people have also been taking the leading part in the various tithis, festivals etc. in various sides and been obtaining high positions also in the society. There is at least one Namghar in every tribal villages. On being popularised, the Nam-party, the Nagara Namar Dal etc. amongst the tribal women truly reminded the Vaishnavite influence on tribal communities of South Kamrup.

#### Footnote & References:

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  5. Mahanta, Sri Leela : Asam Aru Asamiya Jatir Amulya Sampad Satranusthan (Article), Satra Pradip, p-21.
  6. Barua, Dr. Bhimkanta : Paran Nigare, p. 10.
  7. Rajguru, Dr. Sarbeswar : Asamiya Samaj Aru Sanskriti, Vol. I, p. 110.
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  11. Bhakat, Dr. Dijendra Nath : Satrar Samikshyatmak Itibritya, p. 11.
  12. Adhikary, Narakanta : Chamariya Satrar Hate Likha Puthi-Paji, Sancipat-Tulupat Ityadi, p. Introduction.
  13. Bairagi, Parag Ch. : Satra Sanskriti Aru Samajik Dayabadhata (Article), Satra Sourabh, p. 72.
  14. Bhakat, Dr. Dijendra Nath : Satrar Samikshyatmak Itibritya, p. 12.
  15. The chief actor or interlocutor in the prelude to the drama and to each scene of an Assamese drama.
  16. Barua, Dr. B.K. : Namghar, Jatiya Natsala, (Article)
  17. A cloth on which figures depicting the sports of Srikrishna were made.
  18. Das, Dr. N. & Adhikary, Sri N.K. (edi.) : Dakhin Kuliya Sri Sri Bar Vishnu Atar Carit, p. 52-53.
  19. Ai = mother, a respectable mother-like woman - in Satra culture the women who perform Nam-Kirtana are called Ai-Sakal (Sakal = all) respectfully or devotionally.
  20. The party of prayer in the name of God with a special kind of drum.
  21. Das, Dr. N. & Adhikary, Sri N.K. (edi.) : Dakhin Kuliya Sri Sri Bar Vishnu Atar Carit, pp. 55-56.
  22. Neog, Dr. M. : Pariya Madhav Atar Carit, p. 13.
  23. A kind of long skirt and sheet used by Assamese lady.