

CHAPTER-V

BARDOWĀ THĀN: ITS CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS VALUE EDUCATION

“BARDOWĀ”, a living institute of medieval Assamese Vaiṣṇava religion and culture is the birth place of great Vaiṣṇava leader, prophet and social reformer Śaṅkaradeva (1449-1568). Śaṅkaradeva started his journey to reform the Assamese society by his philosophy of life from his own birth place Bardowā.

5.1 The Name and Derivation of Bardowā

The word “Bardowā” has been derived from the two words *Bar* and *Dowā*. In Assamese ‘Bar’ means ‘big’, ‘Senior’, ‘Best’ or ‘Fine’ or ‘Superior’¹ and *Dowā* means ‘blessing’² best blessing.

Bardowā is also known as ‘Baṭdrowā’ where ‘Baṭ’ means ‘pipal tree’ (ficus Religious) and ‘drowā’ means ‘melted’ i.e. where the pipal tree is melted.³ There are various legends found about the origin of the word ‘Bardowā’. In *Satya Yuga* when Lord Viṣṇu’s incantations of Vorāha (Boar or hog) at that time there become a pond when he took bath. There grew a *Baṭa* tree from a hair of Vorāha. In the *Dwāpar Yuga* when Lord Viṣṇu’s birth as Kṛṣṇa and kept rest under the tree with his wife Rukmiṇī, at that time Rukmiṇī’s *temi* (lime pot) fell down and from that the name of the place

1. Deka, P. (2011) *Student’s own bilingual Dictionary Assamese English*: P 375.

2. Barua, H (7th Ed. 1989) *Hemkosh* : P, 522)

3. Dutta Barua, H.N (ed 2000) *Pachim Kāmrupiya kāyatha Sāmājar Itibṛitta*: P 29-30)

became Tembuāṇī and other is Bardowā⁴. Ālipukhurī is a village of greate Bardowā in which *Āli* means ‘road’ and *pukhurī* means ‘pond’.

5.2 Location and Administrative Division of Bardowā Thān

Bardowā Thān is situated 15.42km. distance from present Nagaon District headquarters. Bardowā lies between 25.45 and 26.45' north latitude and 91.50' and 93.50' longitude, height above sea level is 63.69metre. Bardowā Thān is under the District Sub-Division Nagaon, police station Baṭadravā, Mouza Baṭdrava, Revenue Circle-Dhing and Baṭadrabā legislative assembly constituency, Block-Baṭdravā, village-Borhisā and Saruhisā, state Assam, Country India ,Pin No -782122. There are two *Sattras* within the Bardowā Thān Narowā and Salguri, with two villages Barhisā and Saruhisā.

5.3 Population Structure

Bardowā is a place of various caste and community like other places of Assam i.e. Brāhmin, Koch, Kalitā. Kaivatra, Kacharī, Ahom etc. The main language of Bardowā is Assamese. People of both Borhisā and Saruhisā of Bardowā are Hindu with vaiṣṇava culture.

5.4 *Khel* : There were two *Khel* in the Bardowā Thān i.e. Barhisā and Saruhisā. The *Khel* is an “Official organized, an occupational or territorial lines, on the basis of the service, it rendered to State,” for example – *Nāobaichā* (Boat Playing) *Khel*, *Dhenuchachā* (arrowmaking) *Khel*.⁵

4. Bora, K (3rd Ed. 2015) *Bardowā Smriti grantha*: P. 17-19.

5. Rajguru: S. (1988) *Medieval Assamese Society*: P. 222.

But here *Khel* is a social unit related with *Nāmghar* or village. In Bardowā *Thān* there are two *sattras*-Narowā and Śālguri. The *Khel* related with Narowā was known as Borhisā and related with Śālguri was Saruhisā. But both *Khel* are unitedly done the every observances of the *Thān*. (Source- *Gaon Burah* (village head))

Now there are 6 (six) *Khels* –where three in Barhisā and three in Saruhisā, because the growth of population. Though there are six *Khels* yet they have worked unitedly.

Hātī Bhakats i.e the residential devotees also followed the rules and regulations of Borhisā and Saruhisā of the Bardowā *Thān* accordingly (source- Jogesh *Ātai*).

5.5 Bardowā During the time of Śaṅkaradeva and His Predecessor

In ancient and medieval times rivers were the main ways of communication and transport. So ancestors of Śaṅkaradeva settled on the bank of the river. They selected, Bardowā because this place was very rich in fish, vegetables and crops. Again this place was near the mighty river Brahmaputra. According to Śaṅkaradeva

bardowā nāme grāma śaṣye

matse anupāma

*lauhityar ati anukūl/*⁶

(Bardowā is very rich village with fish and agricultural crops situated near the Lauhitya, i.e. present Brahmaputra)

Again in his *Rukmiṇī Haraṇa Kāvya* and *Ajāmila Upākhyāna*⁷ we have found about the birth place of Śaṅkaradeva, i.e. Bardowā and his predecessor.

6 . *Bhāgavat* X. V. 1476

7. *Bhāgawat* VI.

tembuāni bāndhe *vaisāilā pravandhe*
bardowā name grāma'
durllābhā nārāyaṇe *yak bahu māne*
dilā debīdāsa nāmea
tahāne santati *mahā dharma mati*
rājadhara nāmā jara,
tāne garveśwara *bhailā sūrjyabara*
*kāyastha kula udhāra/*⁸

(The king of Kamatā, Durlobh Nārāyaṇa gave settlement to Rājdhara the ancestor of Śaṅkaradeva on the bank of Tambuāni stream at Bardowā) From this it is also found that Śaṅkaradeva and his family were Kāyastha.

Again the various hagiographies describe about Śaṅkaradeva's residence e.g.

candibare rājsewā bistar karilā
durlabha nārāyaṇe devidāsā nāmā dilā
devidās basailanta tembuāni bāndhe.
*bardowā name grāme parama ānande*⁹

(The king of kamatā, Durlabha Nārāyaṇa enthroned Candibara at Bardowā on the bank of Tembuāni and Candibora extended his domain territory)

According to Rāmcarāṇa Thākura's *Gurucharit*

8. *Rukmini haran kavya*, V. 529

9. Thākura, Dwaitari (ed) (2016) *Śaṅkara-Mādhava Charitra*: V. 12, V. 13.

mahāsukhe roila āsi

*tembuāni pāi//*¹⁰

(Bhūñās lived at leṅgāmaguri and then Went to the Ṭembuāni and lived happily)

According to Rāmānanda Dwija, Caṇḍībara stayed at first at Tumbuāni in Bardowā.

At that time seven families of Brāhmiṇ and seven families of Kāyaṣṭhas were sent by the Gauḍeswara to Kamatā, i.e., from Dharmanarayan territory Gauḍa to Durlabha – Nārāyaṇā (1330-1350 A.D.) territory Kamatā. Among the Kāyaṣṭha's Caṇḍībara was the most cultured and learned person and hence he made the leader of all. The great Vaiṣṇava reformer Śaṅkaradeva was the great-great grandson of Caṇḍībara, who was called the “Śiromoṇi Bhūñā” (or the leader) on account of his special ability.¹¹ He subsequently settled at Bardowā in Nowgong.¹²

(Seven Kāyaṣṭha family – Hari, Śrīhari, Śrīpati, Sridhar, Cidānanda, Sadānanda, and Caṇḍībara)

(Seven Brāhmaṇa families – Kṛṣṇapaṇḍit, Rāambar, Lohār, Bayān, Dharma, Mathurā, Raghupati)¹³

Śaṅkaradeva belonged to a leading Bāra Bhūñā family, and his verse translation of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* he explain about it.¹⁴

10. Thakur Ramcharan *Gurucharit* V. 224, *Rmananda Dwija's Śrīguru Carit*, V. 57)

11. Acharyya, N.N (2003) *The History of Medieval Assam*: P 160.

12. Gait, E (2006) *A History of Assam*: P 41.

13. Acharyya, N.N (2003) *The History of Medieval Assam*, P. 160.

14. Neog, M (1998) *Śaṅkaradeva and his Times* :P 48

tāne putra anupama prasidha kusuma nāma
mahantara jiṭo agragaṇī
purṇyāra nāhikai pāra bhaumika madhyata sāra
*jār yaśe dhakilā dharaṇī//*¹⁵

In this verse he said that, his father Kusumbara as chief *Bhaūmika* i.e. Chief *Bhūñā*. The word *Bhūyā* or *Bhūñā* (Skt. *Bhūmi*) thus seems to carry the simple meaning ‘land lord’ equivalent to person *Zamindār* and Sanskrit *Bhaūmika* the *Bhūñā* of Assam. The *Bhūñā* of Assam are not all *Kāyaṣṭhas* or any one ethnic group of people as it sometimes popularly supposed. It is a little that was held by virtue of power and property.¹⁶

According to K.L. Barua at first the Śiromoṇi *Bhūñā* Caṇḍībara settled in *Kāmrūpa* about the middle fourteen century and his great grandson i.e. the father of Śaṅkaradeva migrated to Bardowā when the king Viśwa Singha was extirpating the *Bhūñā*, within Āhom Kingdom.¹⁷ The Śiromoṇi or overlord of *Bhūñā* chiefs were held their small principalities on the bank of the Brahmaputra in the middle of the present day state of Assam.¹⁸

The fertile soils of the Brahmaputra Valley provide the people with no great labour. The forest, minerals and other resources of the land also were plentiful.¹⁹

15. *Srimad Bhāgavat VI Ajāmīl* उपकन्याना, १. ३३१.

16. Neog, M., 1998. *Śaṅkaradeva and his Times* : P 48

17. Barua, K.L (1966) *Early History of Kāmarupa* : P 204.

18. Neog, M (1967) *Śaṅkaradeva and his Times* : P 48

19. Ibid. P. 80.

After Caṇḍībara, Rajadhara became the head of the Bāra Bhūñā and after that Sūryabara, then Śaṅkaradeva's father Kusumbara became the Śiromoṇi Bhūñā.²⁰

At that time there were three Assamese states in Eastern India, namely Asama, Kāmarūpa and Koch-Behār and were covered by the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century.²¹

In 1516 Śaṅkaradeva and his family went to north bank of the river Brahmaputra and stayed different time in different places, i.e., Rautā, Gaṅgmou, Belguri, Dhuāhāt etc. before he went to Koch Kingdom in his last life.²² He migrated to the north bank of the Brahmaputra to avoid frequently clashes with the Kachārīs, a Mongoloid tribe.²³ Bardowā remained resourceful and prosporous till 1516 A.D. But after that when Śaṅkaradeva and his family left Bardowā to save themselves from the atrocities of Kachārī then Bardowā became abandoned homestead before Āi-Kanakalatā the grand-daughter-in-law of Śaṅkaradeva rediscovered it in the year 1656.²⁴

5.6 Contribution of Śaṅkaradeva During He Stayed at Bardowā

When Śaṅkaradeva stayed at Bardowā He contribute to the socio-cultural development of Assamese society, as a multifaced genius, person.

20. Lekharu, U (ed 1952) *Kathā Guru Charit*: P 8-16.

21. Neog, M (ed. 2011) *creative force*: P .7.22. Lekharu, U (ed 1952) *Kathā Guru Charit* :P 223-224), (*Daitary Thakur, Śaṅkaradeva and Sri Madhabdeva carit*, V. 89-91.

22. Lekharu, U (ed 1952) *Kathā Guru Charit* :P 223-224), (*Daitary Thakur, Śaṅkaradeva and Sri Madhabdeva carit*, V. 89-91.

23. Borpujari,H.K (2007). 3rd Ed, *The Contemporary history of Assam* : Vol III, P 232.

24. Bora,K (reprint ed 2015) *Bardowā Smriti Grantha*, article 'Aai Kanaklata' : P 113.

A society is a group of organized individuals. This organization helps the people to maintain themselves, and provides them security. Mac Iver and Page have rightly pointed out that man is dependent on society for protection, comfort, education and multitude of definite services which society provides.²⁵ The Assamese society at the time of Śaṅkaradeva was formed with different faith and different caste with different religion. To overcome these problems and develop and integrate the society he innovated various methods to educate the mass people of Bardowā as a member of Śiromoṇi Bhūñā family.

“Culture” according to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, is the way of life in which the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group.²⁶ According to the Dictionary of Education, ‘culture’ means, - total values, belief, customs, arts, scholarship, institutions or nation.²⁷

According to great social worker and educationist Biswanārāyan Śāstri – culture is the result of the struggle and victory of the human mind over impulses.²⁸

Culture is the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.²⁹

Śaṅkaradeva tried to develop the Assamese society with the help of various literary and socio-cultural activities related with religion and his philosophy, which

25. Mac Iver and Page: (1950) *Society an introductory analysis*, P 40-42.

26. Wehmeier (Ed. 2003) *Oxford learners dictionary*: P 373.

27. Taneja, R.P (1989) *Dictionary of Education* :P 56.

28. Bharali, Arunima (2009) *Assamese culture*: P: 5.

29. Tylor, E.B (1871) *Primitive Culture* :P 1.

has a great impact in the present society. Śaṅkaradeva tried to give a picture of the society at that time through his writings and literature--

kariyā kīrtan kalita āti

*pāwai baikuṇṭhaka cautiśa jāti//*³⁰

(“Thirty four castes can attained heaven if they chant the name of God in the Kali Yuga”) – i.e. at that time there are various caste and caste system prevailed there)

5.6.1: Establishment of the *Thān/Sattra* and *Kīrtanaghar*

At Bardowā Śaṅkaradeva established a *Kīrtanaghar* / *Sattrasabhā*, according to the request his friends and relatives have already been discussed in Chapter No.I. In 1468 he established *Kīrtanaghar* at Bardowā on the mastered seed field of Kusumbar.

Śaṅkaradeva created institutions become the instruments of social discipline and repositories of the cultural wealth. *Nāmghar* (or *Kīrtanaghar* or *Harimandir*) is the general prayer house.³¹

There were no gender inequalities within the floor of *Nāmghar*. Ladies can go to the prayer hall and took part in the prayer. We have found the name of Candarī or Radhikā Satī,³² two mass women who gave full respect by Śaṅkaradeva.

He adopted the attractive method of holding *kīrtana* or mass prayer and dramatic performances, and this soon attracted many people to his religion. He made a *Kīrtana-ghar/Nāmghar* near his official headquarter at Bardowā and this institution became the nucleus of the vaiṣṇava organization which later spread of

30. *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā (Pāsaṇḍa Mardana)*. V. 73.

31. Neog, M (2011) *The Creative Force*: P 153.

32. Lekharu, U. (ed 1952) *Kathā Guru Carit*: P 36.

Assam, Kamarūpa and Kochbihar, in the form of regional establishment called *Sattrā* and village *Nāmghar*.³³

The *Thān*, *Sattrā* and *nāmghar* organize the religious and cultural activities to propagate the spiritual and moral education. The greatest features of Śaṅkaradeva's religion was first recognition of spiritual equality among all man, secondly universal brotherhood of mankind, where caste distinctions were ignored, and untouchability was condemned. All man are equal under the banner of one God, the creed of *Bhāgavata* profounded in it.³⁴

There are many literary contributions of Śaṅkaradeva to reform the Assamese society before he leaved Bardowā in the year 1516. In 1516 Śaṅkaradeva and his family went to north bank of the river Brahmaputra and stayed different places in different times. He stayed at Routā, Gāṅgmou, Dhuwāhaṭ etc. before he went to Koch Kingdom in his last life.³⁵ He migrated to the north bank of the Brahmaputra to avoid frequent clashes with the Kachāris a, Mongoloid tribe³⁶

As a member of the Śirumoṇi Bhūṇā family his grand mother Khersūtī explained the value of education when Sankaradeva was twelve year age as.

mātā sātru, pitā bairī, yen valya no pathitā

*sabhā madhye no śobhante haṁsa madhye bako yathā*³⁷

(Parents are became enemy if they will not educate their child)

33. Neog, M (2011) *The creative force*: P 2.

34. Chaliha, Deveswar (2000) *Origin and growth of the Assamese Language and its Literature* : P 96.

35. Lekharu, U (ed 1952) *Kathā Guru Charit*: P 223-224).

36. Borpujari, H.K (3rded 2007) *The comprehensive History of Assam* Vol III, P 232.

37. Lekharu, U (1952) *Kathā Guru Charit*, P 25.

So khersūtī admitted Śaṅkaradeva at Mahendra Kandali's residential 'Tol' (a Sanskrit, medium residential school). During this period in the tole of Mahendra Kandali he completed four Vedas, 14 scriptures, 18 purāṇas, 18 Kāvya, 18 koṣa, 14 grammars, 18 Saṁhitās and both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*.³⁸

5.6.2 Cihnayātrā

Śaṅkaradeva was not only a religious preacher but he was a man of multifaceted genius. He enacted the *Cihnayātrā* in his early period, where he painted the pictures of *Sapta Vaikunṭha* (Seven heavens) and song with musical instruments.³⁹ *Cinayātrā* which literally stands for a "Pageant in painted scenes"⁴⁰ He composed various types of songs such as *Bhaṭimā*, *Payār*, *Bargīt* etc. to motivated the mass people to his equalitarian and humanitarian religion. Śaṅkaradeva himself painted celestial figures on scenes for popular dramatic performances known as *Cihnayātrā* and also a large number of illuminated manuscripts in mainly *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

It may be mentioned that Śaṅkaradeva innovated a special type of drum, which is known as "*Khol*". It is an earthen drum. In *Cihnayātrā* he used the drop scene. He was also the director to use elevated stage for play.⁴¹ The word *Cihnayātrā* is derived from the '*Cihna*' which means '*Mudrās*' 'gestures' and "*yātrā*" means 'journey'. It is his first journey of drama though it is a pantomime. Bhārata's *Nāṭya Śāstra* was the

38. Neog,M (ed 2003) *Guru Carit Kathā*.: P 13.

39. Lekharu , Upen (ed 1952)) *Kathā Guru Charit* :P 36)

40. Barua, B.K.(2009) *Śaṅkaradeva Vaiṣṇav saint of Assam* :P 70

41. Borkakaty, S.K.(2005) *Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradeva* :P 19.

guide lines for him regarding the writing and enactment of plays before the audience.⁴²

The venue of *Cihnayātrā* was in an open field and it held for seven days. People were so mesmerizing that they did not know how seven days had gone and who was their husband or father. In the *Gurucharit* of Rāmcharan Thākur explain it as follows –

*nāzānile sabhasade kibā rāti dina,
dekhi vaikhunthaku yena paṭo vailo khīṇa//
nārīsabe nisinaya kunjon swāmī
sabe hante jeheno vailā mukhyāgamy.
bālake nisine kunjan māu-bāpa
samastare atarilā śarīrar pāpa//*⁴³

(The audience became surprised to see the *Vaikunṭha* and forget about day or night, wives did not identified their husbands and children did not identified their fathers and discarded their sin to enjoyed it)

Both aesthetic and spiritual values have been found in his *Cihnayātrā*. Painted background with the God, seven heavens and seven Lakhmīs and musical instrument gave a spiritual and aesthetic environment. From Rāmcharan Thākur's *Gurucharit* it is found that there was a work culture and unity among the people of that time. Here Śaṅkaradeva trained the people in various fields and all people co-operated with him, e.g.- Balrām Ātai gave the measurement of *Khol*, Katāi went to cobbler's house to bring cow hide, Bhūñā built the tent, katekhā and others, learned music (*gāyan*) and dance (*Bāyan*) etc.⁴⁴

42. Pathak, D. (2012) *Beautiful mind of Srimanta Sankaradeva* : P 98.

43. Ramcharan Thakur, *Gurucharit*. V. 1501-1502.

44. Ramcharan Thakur *Gurucharit* 1453 – 1460.

5.6.3 Literary Contributions

Śaṅkaradeva composed a poem even before completed the course of alphabets, which have no vowels except 'A'. The first two lines are –

karatala kamal kamal dala nayan
*bhavadaba dahana gahana bana śayaṇa.*⁴⁵

(Here he described the beautiful looks of the God with his cheriot and his omnipresent qualities) After that Śaṅkaradeva's pen was not stop for a while upto his last moment of life. Śaṅkaradeva's literary career was devided into three periods according to Maheswar Neog. The early period was upto 1516 A.D, middle period upto 1516 to 1543, and final period was upto 1543 to 1568.⁴⁶

1. *Kartal Kamal* (A sweet peom) 2. *Gopī Uddhaba Saṁbāda* (*Bhāgavat X*)
3. *Cihnayātrā* (A pantomime) 4. *Hariścandra Upākhyāna* (*Mārkondeya purāṇa*)
5. *Rukmiṇī Haraṇa Kāvya* (*Harivaṁsa*) 6. *Bhakti Pradīpa* (*Garuḍa Purāṇa*)
7. *Kīrttan Ghōṣā – Oreshā varnanā* (*Brahmapurāṇa*)

- 1) *Ajāmil Upākhyāna* (*Bhāgavat VI*)
- 2) *Amṛat Manthan* (*Bhāgavat VIII*)
- 3) *Guṇamālā* (From 2nd to 6th Chapter)

b) *Kīrtan-Ghōṣā* –

- 1) *Dhyān varnaṇ*, 2) *Ajāmila Upākhyāna*, 3) *Prahlāda Charitra*,
- 4) *Gajendra Upākhyāna*, 5) *Harmohana* and 6) *Balichalana*

45. Lekharu. U, (1952), *Katha Guru Carit*, P. 27.

46. Neog, M (1998) *Śaṅkaradeva and his Times*: P 160

8. *Bargīta: rāmameri hṛdaya pañkaja, raise* – (Composed at Roumari)
Man meri rām Caranehi lāgu – (Composed at Badarikashram)
9. Cihnayātrā (A pantomime, but there is no written form of the play available now)

After Bardowā Śaṅkaradeva went to Āhom Kingdom (1516 Ad to 1543). This period is known as middle period.⁴⁷

Though in this period he was not peacefully settled in a place and he wondered many places, yet he had not stopped his pen.

c) Kīrttan Ghoṣā : 7) *Pāsaṇḍa Mardan* and *Nām-Aparādh* (*Bhāgavat* and *Brhannāradiya purāṇa*, *Viṣṇu-dharmmottara* and the *suta saṁhitā*) (8) *Śisulilā* (9) *Rāsakriyā* (iv) *Kaṅsabadha* (10) *Gopī Uddhab Saṁbāda* (11) *Kujīr Vāṇchā purāṇa*, (12) *Akurar Vāṇchā purāṇa* (*Bhāgawat purāṇa X*)

In this period he composed the Bargīts e.g. *Pawe pari hari*, *Gopāl ki goti kaile* etc.

10. *Patnī Prasada Nāt* (*Bhāgavat Purāṇa X*)

Final period (1543 to 1568) (In the Koch Kingdom)

This period is marked by a comparative quite in the life of Śaṅkaradeva and the career of his order, by the fullest development of mind and art, and the fulfillment of the mission of his life.

11. (i) *Bali-chalana* (Book VIII *Bhāgavat Purāṇa*)

47. Neog, M (1998) *Śaṅkaradeva and his Times*: P 161)

(ii) *Anādi-Pātana* (Book VIII *Bhāgavat Purāṇa*)

Bhāgvat tales from book X (*Uttarardha*) XI and XII

- d) Kīrttan-Ghoṣā 13. *Jarāsanda-Yuddha*, 14. *Kāla-Yavana-vadha*,
15. *Musukunda stuti*, 16. *Śyamanta haraṇa*, 17. *Nāradaṛ Kṛṣṇa darsana*,
18. *Vipra Putra Ānayan*, 19. *Daivakīr Puttra – Ānayan*, 20. *Veda-stutī*
(i) *Lilāmālā*, 21. *Rukmiṇīr Prem-Kalaha*, 22. *Bhṛgu Parīksā*, 23. *Śrīkṛṣṇar-*
Vaikuntha Prayān, 24. *Caturvīṃśati-Avatāra-Varṇana* 25. *Tātparya*

13. Renderings of the *Bhāgavat-Purāṇa* taken Skandha –

Bhagavata X, XI, I, III, XII, *Kurukṣetra*

14. *Nimi-Nava-Siddha-Saṁvāda*

15. *Gunamālā*

16. *Rāmāyana Uttarākāṇḍa*

17. Lyrics – a) *Bargīta*, b) *Toṭaya*, c) *Bhaṭimā*

18. Doctrinal treatise – a) *Bhakti Ratnākara*

19. Dramas – a) *Kāli damana*, b) *Keligopāla*, c) *Rukmiṇī haraṇa*,

d) *Parijāt haraṇa*, e) *Rām vijaya*

These are the literary contribution of Śaṅkaradeva to our society,⁴⁸ which have religious, moral, spiritual, social, hygienic and environmental value.

The *Thān* and *Sattrā* served as a centre of learning and culture of vaiṣṇavite movement in the sixteen century. The path finders of the vaiṣṇavite movement gave driving force to the study of the vernacular language and for the benefit of the people they rendered the religious scriptures in particular language i.e. into Assamese.

48. Neog, M (1998), *Śaṅkaradeva and his Times* : P 160-162S)

Henceforth Assamese become a popular medium of expression and instruction. In the *toles* and *Sattras* knowledge of higher order, spiritual in content, was generally imparted. In the *toles* the curriculum of studies included sanskrit literature, grammar, philosophy, law, astronomy, the *Vedas*, the *Bhāgavata Gītā* and the *purāṇas* and stress was laid on memorization of the *sūtras* and commentaries.⁴⁹

As a *vaiṣṇava* leader Śaṅkaradeva also wrote in Assamese and Brajāwali language for the benefit of women and common people.

kāka buli hari kathā harir kīrttana kibā
yito save akove nājāne
śtrī sūdra antya jāti tāko śikṣā dibā māti
*dharībe sisave aho prāṇe//*⁵⁰

(Education should be given to illiterate, women and low caste people to learn by them with heart)

It is found from early writings of Śaṅkaradeva that he had gave importance on guest. So he wrote –

atithik nedi kimbā karili bhojana
*sizil pātek kibā agamya gamana//*⁵¹

(Depriving the guest is sin as like as perversion)

49. Indian Gazetteer, (1967) *Assam State* : P. 343.

50. *Bhāgavata XI Part, Nimi-Nava-sidha Sambada*, V.332.

51. *Bhāgavata XI : Uddhava Sambād*, V. 748.

Hospitality, truthfulness, purity, forgiveness, kindness were the cultural tradition of Assamese society. When Śaṅkaradeva searched for pure and chaste women to embake the Ṭambuani, then he gave importance on these qualities.

satya, śauca, kṣamā, dayā, atithi satkāra,
*kadācito nakarohu kāko tiraskāra//*⁵²

(Truth, purity, forgiveness, kindness, and hospitality to guest and never rebuke others) said by *Sati Rādhikā*.

According to Narowā *Sattrādhikar* Debananda Goswami, if a guest comes without any invitation or information then it is good luck for the host and such guest is known as *Amayā Atithi* (Devine guest).

Śaṅkaradeva gave importance on moral education and truth in his writings –

satye niye urdhaka asatya adhogoti
*hen yāni satyaka rākhibe karā moti//*⁵³

(Truth brings progress and prosperity and lie brings downfall)

Śaṅkaradeva suggested people to be sympathetic to other people though they have different religion and should not envy against them.

parar dharmaka nihingsibā kadācita
*karibā bhūtaka dāyā sakaruṇa chitta//*⁵⁴

As religion and morality are inter connected, Śaṅkaradeva's writings put much emphasis on the ethical aspects of religion with apt illustrations from the epics and the

52. Dwija, (2008) *Srī Srī Dwārikānāth Santāwalī*, P. 476

53. Śaṅkaradeva's *Harichandra Upakhyān*.

54. Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti Pradīp*, V. 141.

purāṇas he extolled and elaborated the merits of such virtues as *satya* (truth), *dayā* (mercy) *dāna* (charity) *ahimsā* (non-violence), *Kṣamā* (forgiveness) *anasuyā* (absence of envy) *dhṛti* (patience) *Śraddhā* (respect) *dama* (control of sense).⁵⁵

yat dekhā bhūta prāṇī sabe viṣṇu hena jāni
himsā eri karā upakāra
viṣṇuka manata dharā śravaṇa kīrtana karā
*nistāribā tebese saṁsāra/*⁵⁶

(All creatures are the form of God. So help them and do not harm them, and chant the name of God Viṣṇu to relief from the mundane world)

5.7 Āi Kanaklatā and Rediscover of Bardowā Thān

Kanaklatā alias Lakṣmī Āi was the first of the three wives of Caturbhuja Ṭhākura. She was a woman of much ability and great personality.⁵⁷ Puruṣottama Ṭhākura was the only son of Śaṅkaradeva's son Ramanānda Ṭhākura and was the establisher of *Puruṣa Saṁhati*. Before his demise in 1619 he appointed Śaṅkaradeva's younger son's son Caturbhuja Ṭhākura as *Adhikāra*. Āi *Kanaklatā* was the elder wife of Caturbhuja Thākura among his three wives. Caturbhuja Ṭhākura had no son. So in 1648 before the death of Caturbhuja Ṭhākura he appointed his elder wife Kanaklatā as *Adhikāra* of *Puruṣa Saṁhati*.⁵⁸

55. Barua, B.K (2009) *Śaṅkaradeva vaiṣṇava saint of Assam* : Preface.

56. *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* VIII, Balichalan, 303.

57. Neog, M (1998) *Śaṅkaradeva and his Times* : P 150.

58. Kalita, N "Āi Kanaklata" Bora (ed 2015) *Bardowā Smṛitigrantha*: P 102.

mor ārdhāśarīra bara rāndhanī hovaya

dharmat nīpuṇa sarva kāryat śakata

āmāto bhakata patibratā dharmarata.

mahāpuruṣara dharma sadā ācaranta.

*āmār pācat tohu dharma rākhibanta/*⁵⁹

(My better half, elder wife is the expert in all works-e.g. *dharma* and also devotion so she can protect the *dharma*)

In Ramākānta Muktiar's *Āi Kanaklatār Carit* (P.12 to P. 16) and Bhadracāru's *Anantarāma Carit* (P. 57- P. 68) it is found that Caturbhuj Ṭhākura bestowed his charge to his wife *Āi Kanaklatār*.

After Caturbhuj's death his wives and the wives of Puruṣṭam Ṭhākura used to live in Koch Bihar at the *Bhela-Sattrā*. But before long they had occasions to fear persecution from the Koch King with the advice of Dāmodara, they with their daughters, Dāmodara and other relatives made their way to Āhom Kingdom.⁶⁰

Dāmodar Ātā was the nephew of Caturbhuj Ṭhākura. Caturbhuj Ṭhākura adopted Dāmodaratā from his sister Govinda Priyā in 1626 because he had no male child.⁶¹

Anantarām was the grandson of *Āi Kanaklatā* and son of Subhadrā was established the *Salguri Sattrā* which is at present in Bardowā *Thān*.

59. Ibid: P.103.

60. Neog, M (1998) *Śaṅkaradeva and His Times* :P 151.

61. Sarma, S.N (reprint 2016) *The Neo vaiṣṇavite movement and the sattrā institute of Assam* : P 93.

Āi *Kanaklatā* heard the name of Bardowā, her grand-father-inlaw's birth place,
from her grand mother –inlaw Kālindī Āi, the second wife of Śaṅkaradeva.

pūrve śaṅkara *patnī gosānīye*
lakhi āit kahaya
uttarat bardowā *bordoul*
dakṣiṇata prakāśaya
tahara madhyata *gosāir mandira*
ase bheṭi ucattara /⁶²

(The abode of Sankara and his temple was in the middle and North and South
both side of Bardowā and Bordoul was there)

From the *Thān Varnana Gīt* i.e. the song described the place about Bardowā
Kanaklatā searched for Bardowa.

jay jay batadrawā vaikuṇṭha dutaya
*sehi sthāne nija guru bhailanta udaya.*⁶³

In 1655 Damodar ata came to Assam. Damodaratā Ātā and Āi Kanaklatā with
the help of king Jayadhvaja Singha re-established the Bardowā *Thān*.⁶⁴

Mikir King Setu” and *Banbāshi Bhakat* (Forest dewellar devotee) Joyram also
helped them to discover the Bardowā *Thān*.⁶⁵

62. Muktiar, Ramakanta (1935) *Aai Kanaklata Charitra*: P. 51.

63. Purusuttam Thākur.

64. Bora, K (2016) *Bardowa Smritigrantha* : P 110.

65. Saikia, Hemchandra (1998) *Dwitiya vaikuntha Bardowar Buranji*: P 57.

At first they arrived at a place which is known as Āibheti (abode of mother) about five miles to the east of Bardowā.⁶⁶ In 1656 after 140 years Kanaklatā and Dāmodaratā rediscovered the birth and residential place of Śaṅkaradeva, i.e *Bardowā Thān*. After that *Doul Mandir, Idol of viṣṇu, Padasilā* (foot print of Śaṅkaradeva) *Silikhā Vṛksha* (terminalia citrine) and the abode of the *Kīrtanghar*, all are found out and re established there which the essests of our present Assamese Society are.

Āi Kanaklatā initiated many people into bhakti and deputed twelve apostles, six Brahmanas and six non Brāhmanas. Later on she moved to Cinatali near Narowa, at present Lakhimpur District, where Dāmodar established a *Sattrā* under the royal patronage, which is known as Narowā *Sattrā*.⁶⁷

After rediscovered of Bardowā *Thān* Kanaklata's elder daughter's son Anantaram was born.

In 1662, 4th January Mirjumla invaded the Assam⁶⁸ Dāmodarata also died in that year. So Āi Kanaklatā went to Chinatali with her apostles and appointed Anantarām (her grand son) as *dharmachārjya*. (Spiritual guide)

After that Kanaklatā returned to Bardowā. But in her return journey she was suffering from small pox and died in the year 1668 *Kṛṣṇa Caturdaśī* (4th day of Dark Lunar) at Kaliābor. She was the only last generation of Śaṅkaradeva family.⁶⁹ Āi Kanaklatā was responsible for a considerable furtherance of the faith of her

66. Neog, M (1969) *Pabitra Assam* : P 118.

67. Neog, M (1998) *Śaṅkaradeva and his Times* : P 151.

68. Begum, Chenehi (1999) *Asom Buranji* : P 112.

69. Kalita, N “Aai Kanaklata”, Bora,K (ed) *Bardowar smiritigrantha* 2015: P.116.

grandfather-in-law. It was for the first time in the history of Assam Vaiṣṇavism that a woman acted as a religious head and appointed other persons as superiors.⁷⁰

After the death of Kanaklatā there started a clash between *Ramākānta* the son of Dāmodar Ātā and Anantarām the grand son of Kanaklatā. So in reigned of Kamaleswar Singha Bardowā devided into two parts. Ramākānta's grand son was Rāmdew and his part was known as Narowā or *Borhisā*, on the other hand Anantarāms family *Rāmcharan*'s part was known as *Śalguri* or *Saruhisa*. Narowa's *Sattrādhikār* held on the basis of hereditary (*Putrānukram*) and the *Sattrādhikār* of *Salguri* by elderly (*jeṇṭhānukrame* or eldest male member of the family) (source- Debananda Dev Goswami). In the year 1958 11th Oct Bardowā again united for endeavored of some renowned persons of Assam mainly famous Vaiṣṇava Scholar Sahitya Ratna Harinārāyan Duttabarua and then Finance Minister Motiram Borā, rural development Minister Mahendra Mohan Chaudhury etc. and other cultured persons after five hundred and ten years.⁷¹

The important and memorable year for the Bardowā *Thān*-

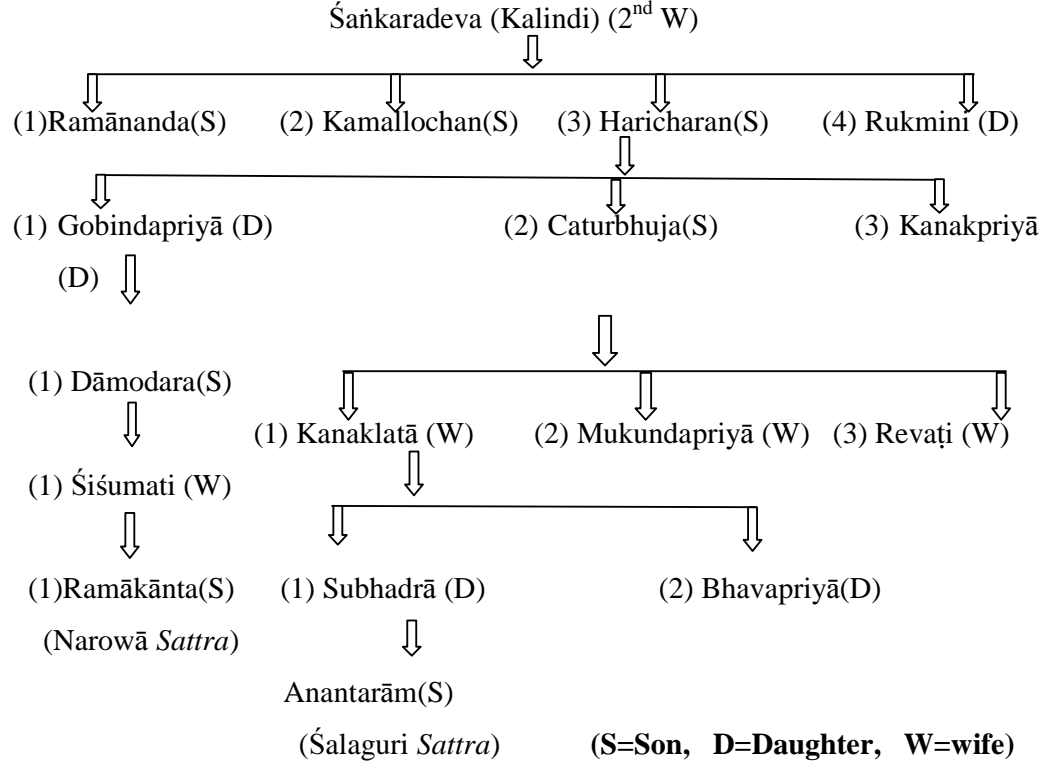
- 1) Śaṅkaradeva left Bardowā -1516 A.D
- 2) Rediscovered *Bardowā Thān*-1656
- 3) Clash between Salaguri and *Narowā Sattrā*-1799
- 4) *Kīrttanghar* devided into two parts and King offered the *Tāmar Phali* (copper inscription)- 1805
- 5) Attempt to unite Salaguri and *Narowā Sattrā*- 1953, 7th March
- 6) United the two party (Salaguri and *Narowā*)-1958,11th Oct.⁷²

70. Neog,M (1998) *Śaṅkaradeva and his Times* : P 151.

71. Bora, K (2015) *Bardowar Smritigantha*: P 47-52.

72 . Ray Choudhury, Bhupendra (2017) *Bardowā Thānar Itihās*: P 159.

5.7.1 Family tree of Narowā and Śālguri Sattrā (From Legecy person Śāṅkaradeva)



5.7.2 There are Some Branches held from Narowā and Śālguri Sattrā of Nagaon

Branches held from Narowā Sattrā of Nagaon

1. *Kuji Sattrā* (Near Kuji Bill (Lake).
2. *Bāli Sattrā* (Near Bardowā).
3. *Bheṭianī Na Sattrā* (Near Bardowā)
4. *Talibil sattrā* (Dhing)
5. *Itākhuli Sattrā* (At Morigaon)

Branches held from Śālguri Sattrā of Nagaon-

1. Āibheṭi Na *Sattra*, the first Place where Āi Kanaklatā Landed and stayed for some days, five (5) miles distance from Bardowā.
2. *Sukdal sattrā* (Barbori)
3. *Sukdal Sattrā* (Sarubori)
4. *Itākhuli*⁷³

Now the various branches of these *sattras* are spread all over Assam and diffuse the Vaiṣṇava culture and value education of Bardowā *Thān*.

5.8 Functions and Festivals Celebrated at Bardowā *Thān* :

There are celebrated various functions and festivals at Bardowā *Thān*, which are related to different values. These are:-

5.8.1 *Daul Utsava* :

Daul Utsav is known as the festivals of colours in all over India. Śaṅkaradeva arranged this festival on the request of his friends and relatives of Bardowā. After that Assamese people also celebrate it in the month of Phālguna or Caitra (Feb/March) in the day of the full moon.

phālgunita govindaka tuliā daulata,
daulyātrā karai mohotsava śivetāta,
tāta govindaka yatne dekhe yitojane,
govindara pure sio bānchai raṅgamane//⁷⁴

73. Neog, M (Ed. 1969) *Pabitra Asom*: P 121-122.

74. *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā*, Ureshavarnan, V. 2246.

(In the month of *Phālgunā* the image of Govinda is placed on altar and there takes place *Daul-yātrā*, a superb function. If one sees Govinda, with careful efforts, one dwells in Govinda's city with pleasures mind.)

The first day of *Phākuā* is *Gandha*, celebrated as *Meshdāha*. According to *Sattradhikar* of *Śālguri Sattrā Pūrṇānanda Devmahanta* burying the goat (hair of goat) was symbolic i.e, the burying of greed and bad desire of the people.

Both Narowā and *Śālguri Sattrā* have observed this festival, at *Doul Mandir* and at *Kīrttanghar*. The new dress and ornaments are weared to Lord Kṛṣṇa after had a ceremonial bath. Then the *Phāku* is offered to the God Viṣṇu. The term *Doul Yātrā* means the travel of the God with temple. After that the travels start and at first to the *Sattradhikars* house and then come out to the street of villagers. The villagers offer prayer along with some *Arihanā* (money) and other articles. After observe some ritual returned journey was held to the *Daul Mandir* and the *Kīrttanghar*. Then the devotees enjoyed *Phākuā utsava* by giving *Phākuā* powder to one another. Many people come from various places to enjoy the *Phakua utsava*. The villagers of Bardowā arranged various types of cake, laddoo for hospitality of the guest, and visitors. Various *Melā* (fair) also held for the convenience of visitors Other *Thān and sāttra*, town or village *Nāmghars* of Assam observed this festival very joyfully. (Sources: Field study and interview)

5.8.2 Pāl Nām :

The *Pāl Nām* is a religious festival, which is celebrated in the month of *Phālguna* or *Caitra* from the *Ekādaśī* to *Pūrṇimā*. (From the eleven day to full moon). According to *Barbāyan* (Head drummer) of *Śālguri Sattrā* Upen Kalita (teacher),

when Āhom King Suhungmung (1497-1539) captured Mādhavadeva and Śaṅkaradeva's son-in-law Hari on charges of their failure to capture elephant for the king, then Śaṅkaradeva and his devotees started a kind of prayer for their life and from that time the *Pālnām* was started. It was started at Belguri Dhuwāhāt for seven days, and now at Bardowā *Thān* and all over Assam is observed pāl nām in different times. The word *Pālnām* is derived from two words, where *Pāl* means by turn and *nām* means 'prayer'. It is a continuous chanting of prayer by groups of devotees in turn, came into practice among the Vaiṣṇava circle.

The main objective of the *Pālnām* was seeking welfare of the *Jīva* or *Prāṇī* (all creatures). One such type of prayer is –

kūipāra sāgara daivaki nandana purio manara kāmā/

*bhakatar saṅga sadā nugusuka mukhe tuwā guṇa nāma//*⁷⁵

(O merciful God of Daivakī's son, fulfil our wish and bless us to always be we can live together with Bhakat (devotee).

To maintain purity of mind and body is compulsory in the *pāl nām*. Now there is observed the *pāl nām* three times in the year after *Daul Pūrnimā* at Bardowā *Thān*.⁷⁶

In the Bardowā *Thān* during this festival thousands of people come from various places of Assam to visit the *Thān* and offer prayer. There is a custom of the *Śrī Batadravā Thān* parichalana samittee to feed from the store (Bharāl) all the devotees who attend the *pālnām* of the *Thān* in the last day of the *pālnām*.

(Sources – Field study and interviewed with Upen Kalita Barbāyan, Śalguri *Sattra*).

75. Goswami, Tirthanath (ed 1982) *Madhavadeva: Namghosa*: P 67.

76 . Rajkhowa, Gajen (2011) Barduwat basartu aru Aai sakalar nama : P 3.

5.8.3 *Ambubāṣī*

In the month of Āsār (June) *Ambubāṣī* is observed by the people of Bardowā from 7th day of Āsār to 11th day of Āsāra. In these days *Śarāi* (Prasad) have not been offered to *Kīrttanghar*. At the 11th days of Āsār after bath and purification again *nām prasaṅga* is started inside the *Doul* or the *Kīrttanghar*.⁷⁷

Bardowā is known as a centre of culture from the time of Śaṅkaradeva. The two *Sattras* of *Bardowā Thān* – Śalguri and Narowā have been known as institutions of excellence in the field of art and culture. *Bardowā Thān* celebrates various other socio-religious festivals and functions in daily and occasionally system –

5.8.4 *Caidhya prasaṅga*

The prayer functions performed daily in a *Thān* or *Sattra* is known as *prasaṅga*. *Caidhya prasaṅga* was not held at the time of Śaṅkaradeva, some hagiographers said it started by Madhavadeva and some said that from the time of Śaṅkaradeva's grand son, Purusottama Thākura was the inaugurator of *Caidhya prasaṅga*.⁷⁸ There are various rules and regulations to perform these *prasaṅgas*. *Devotees* should follow the dress code and other rules and regulations.

These are –

1. Male Devotee should wear clean white *dhūti*, *cādar* and *gāmoachā*. (Rapper cloth and Assamese towel)

77. Ibid : P4.

78. Goswami, K.N.D (2014) *Sattra Sangskritir Ruprekha*: P 26.

2. The main *nām lagowā* (Leader of congregational prayer) can eat only light food and he should take *Sarumāla* (Rosary) and should not keep beard and mustaches.
3. The *deurī* (*Prasād* distribution) must be free from any disease and cut the nail and keep very clean. He must learn the rules of lit the light and other regulations from seniors. At the time of prasād distribution he must fasten his mouth with a cloth for hygienic reason.
4. They can sit on the seat of *Kath* (mat) Devotees may arrange their seat in vertical way. They can not leave the place before end of the prayer.
5. The offering tray (*Śaraī*) must be covered with a *bānānā* leaf, and is offered by *deurī*.
6. Women devotee should follow the dress code. They must wear *mekhelā cādar* and *rihā*. (They can sit horizontally after the idol of Hanumān and Garuḍa Pakhī)
7. Act of Bathing and combing the hair is compulsory before prayer, take food etc. (Source: Śalguri *Sattradhikar* Paramananda Deva Mahanta)

Caidhya Prasāṅga is the daily agenda of prayer in the *Sattra* or *Thān*. Now a day *Caidhya prasāṅgas* are not observed in all *Sattras*. *Bardowā Thān* is followed these *Caidhya prasāṅga* (Fourteen Prosāṅga) in every day and on some special occasion there are three extra prasāṅgas, observed here. Each prasāṅga consists of several units, should depict four sentiments, viz -

- i) *Ānanda*,
- ii) *Sthāpāna*,

iii) *Bandanā*,

iv) *Khelā*⁷⁹

These are grouped into three divisions to be observed in morning, afternoon and evening. The major portions of prayers, songs, hymns and recitations are adopted from the writings of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva.⁸⁰

- 1) *Tāl Koboā* (Cymbal performance): In the dawn senior *Hatī bhakat* comprises a song with four *ghoṣās* and moves from the 4 houses of the disciples. The round concluded with the words – *Bhakat bāndhava Horibol* and he sits on his own place.
- 2) *Manjīrā nām*: *Manjīrā* performs with *khutitāl* (small cymbal) with four *Ghosās*.
- 3) Morning *prasaṅgas* of women devotees: Here the women devotees sing five *Ghosās*.
- 4) *Derporiā prasaṅga* (afternoon *Prasaṅga*) : Inside the *Kīrttanghar* lit the light and both the *Sattras* performs *nām prasaṅga* together. *Prasād* is offered in this *prasaṅga*.
- 5) *Pāth prasaṅga*: In this *prasaṅga* devotees read out a portion from the *kīrttan*, the *Bhāgavat* or *Rantāwali*.
- 6) *Śūnya pāth*: Here devotees read out the *Bhāgvata* without any *nām prasaṅga*.
- 7) *Nām prasaṅga* or *Biyalir jorā*: with *Tāl* and *Khol*, *Gāyan-Bāyan* performs this *prasaṅga* with a song.

79. Lekharu, Upen (ed 1952) *Katha.Guru.Carit*: P 521.

80. Sarma, S.N (2016) *The Neo-Vaiṣṇavaite moventmeny and The satra institution of Assam*: P 127.

- 8) *Ghoṣā Kīrtan*: In this *prasaṅga* comprises four *Ghoṣās* with *Tāl* (cymbal). Then a *kīrttana* is also performed in this *prasaṅga*.
- 9) *Biwalee Prasaṅga* (Evening performance of women devotees): The women devotees perform *Nām prasaṅga* with four *Ghoṣās* in this *prasaṅga*.
- 10) Evening *Prasaṅga* cymbal performance: As like as morning a senior devotee performs this *prasaṅga* with a pair of cymbal.
- 11) *Guṇamālā prasaṅga*: After beating the *Dobā* (drum), this *prasaṅga* is performed with reading ‘*Guṇamālā*’ and *Bhaṭimā*, *Toṭaya* and *Chapaya*.
- 12) *Khol prasaṅga*: In this *prasaṅga* is performed with Khol. It is a very amusing and funny *prasaṅga* for devotees.
- 13) *Ghoṣā prasaṅga or ghoṣā kīrttan*: Like *biyali prasaṅga* in this *prasaṅga* is performed with *kīrttan* and *ghoṣā*.
- 14) *Śeṣa pāl jorā or path prasaṅga*: This is the ending *prasaṅga* of the *daily prasaṅga*. Here is read out one stanza from the *Bhāgavat* and conclude the *prasaṅga* for one day.⁸¹

5.8.5 *Bhāda Māhar Tithi and Nām*

The *Tirobhāva* (death anniversary) *Tithis* of both Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva fall in the month of *Bhādra*. Again the birthday of Lord Kṛṣṇa which is known as *Janamāṣṭamī* also falls in this month. The people of Assam observe this month as *Puṇya māha*, i.e. religious or piety month and both male and female devotees

81. Goswam, K.N.D (2014) *Sattra sangskritir Ruprekha*. Pp. 28-32.

chant the *Nām* starts from the day of *Śaṅkrānti* (last day of the month of *Śawon*) according to the Assamese calendar. The entire month of the *Bhādra* was devoted to *nāmkirtana* by men and women of the two *Sattras* of *Bardowā Thān* at *Kīrttanghar* and *Padaśilā*.

5.8.5.1 *Śaṅkaradeva's Tithi*

On the second day of the bright moon (*Śuklā Dwītiyā*) is held the *Tirobhava Tithi* of *Śaṅkaradeva* which is observed all over Assam. This function is observed in *Bardowā Thān* for two days. The daily *prasaṅgas* are held regularly and in the day time both *Sattras* enacted *Bhojan Behar* and on the night *Śalguri Sattras* enacted the *Rukmiṇī Haraṇa Nāṭ* and *Narowā Sattras* enacted the *Kaṁsa Vadha Nāṭ* at night. Seminars and discussions are also held in this day to discuss about religious and spiritual subjects and invited the *Sattradhikaras* and other intellectual persons to participate the functions. Many peoples are come to *Bardowā* from far and wide to attend and participate in the seminars and *Tithi* of *Śaṅkaradeva* irrespective of caste and creed. Moreover other cultural functions are also observe this day. *Nāmkīrtana* is continued whole the day in the *Kīrttanghar* and *padaśilā*.

The first day of the *Tithi* is observed as *Gandha*. On this day every head of the family offers the annual *Gurukar* (tax, tithe) to the *Sattradhikars* of both *Sattras*. *Sattradhikars* offer these collected *Gurukar* to the *Batadravā Thān Parichalanā Committee*. Committee offers *Prasād* to all visitors and guests.

(Source – Field study and interview with Gajen Rajkhowa)

5.8.5.2 Tithi of Mādhavadeva

In the Kṛṣṇa *Pañcamī Tithi* of Bhadra (5th day of the dark moon), is observed the Tithi of Mādhavadeva all over Assam. In *Bardowā Thān Caudhya Prasāṅgas* is a *nitya Karjya* (Regular work). In this day *Na-ghoṣā* of Purusottama Thakur is chanted specially with other *prasaṅga*. Like on Śaṅkaradeva's *Tithi* there enacted a day *Bhaonā Dadhi-Mathan* and in the night enacted the *Pārijat Haraṇa* and *Kaṅgsha badha*, on the tithi of Mādhavadeva.

5.8.5.3 Janamāṣṭamī

Birthday of Lord Kṛṣṇa is celebrated on the dark eight lunar day of *Bhādra* all over India. In the *Bardowā Thān* also celebrate the *janamāṣṭamī* with great joyful haste for two days. Śaṅkaradeva said to worship one God i.e. Kṛṣṇa. According to Śaṅkaradeva –

*kṛṣṇa se īśwar charāchar jagatora,
yara ājnā pāle brahma viṣṇu mahesvara*⁸²

(Kṛṣṇa is the Lord of the whole universe, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva also obey the order of Kṛṣṇa).

Bardowā Thān celebrates *Janamāṣṭamī* for two days. *Ladoo* (a sweet made off rice powder) is the special item of the *Prasād* on this day. The first day night there is enacted the *Sri Kṛṣṇa Janmayatra* and second day was the *Pacati Utshav*. Women and children participated in this function with much pomp and pleasure.

(Same – field study and interview with Bhubaneswari Mahanta)

82. *Bhagavat VI, Ajamil Upakhyan*, V.321.

Other functions are observed at *Bardowā Thān*, which have also social, moral spiritual, aesthetic and religious value.

5.8.6 Birth Anniversary of Śaṅkaradeva

The birth anniversary of Śaṅkaradeva is celebrated in the *Bardowā Thān*. In the *Śuklā Daśamī Tithi* (tenth day of bright moon) of the month of *Āswina* the *Tithi* of Śaṅkaradeva is celebrated all over Assam and now in various places of the world also. Birth anniversary is celebrated for three to four days in the *Bardowā Thān*. *Pācati Utsava* followed the next day of the *Janamotsava*. The women devotee and children take part on this *utsava*. It is found that young generation also takes part by beating *Khol* and other performing art for *Śaṅkara jonamotsava*. All children maintain dress code and offered, prayer which is learn from *Bor-gāyan* and *Bor-bāyan* of *Bardowā Thān*, when they participate in the *nām prasaṅga*. (Source – field study). In the year 1968 *Śaṅkar Janamotsava* was celebrated for forty five (45) days with grand provision. Various renowned persons and ministers such as – Bimala Prasad Chaliha, Mahendra Mohan Chaudhury, Laksmi Prasad Goswami etc. attended the *Janamosava* of Śaṅkaradeva. Various religious seminars and discussions, *Bhāonā* and cultural functions are also held for that reason.⁸³ Nowadays so long celebration is not observed.

5.8.7 Rāsa Utsava

Like other performing arts, *Rāsa* is one of the most outstanding art forms performed by the people of Assam, specially in the *Thāns and Sattras*. *Rāsa Utsava* is observed on the day of full moon in the *Śarat kāl* (autumn season)

83. Bora (Ed. 2015), *Barduwar Smritigrantha*: P. 143

sarata kālara rāti ati bitopana,
*rāsa kriḍā karate kṛṣṇara bhaila mana//*⁸⁴

(In the beautiful and charming autumn season, Lord Kṛṣṇa desired to enjoy the Ras sport).

In Bardowā, *Rāsa* was performed in the local stage for three to four days. The *Rāsa līlā* is related with *Bhakti*. Śaṅkaradeva's *Kelilgopāla* nāt was based on the story of *Rāsa līlā*, where Lord Kṛṣṇa played with the *Gopīs* of Vrindavana. In the *Bardowā Thān* there one *prasaṅga* is held from the *Rāsa kīrttana* and *Biyalee* (evening) women devotees also chant the *Rāsa kīrttana* and end the function with *Rāsa nām*.

(Source .Gajen Rajkhowa)

5.8.8 Guru Tithis

Like the Tithis of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva in Bardowā the Tithis of ancestors were observed to offer respect for them which is known as *Guru Tithi*. In Assam, other *Sattras* and *Thāns* also observed the Tithi of their ancestors. On the day of the death anniversary of Late *Sattradhikars* both the *Sattras* of Bardowā observed their *Tithi* by organize *Nām-kīrttana* and other cultural activities.

These are –

- a) Tithis of *Narowā Sattra* : *Narowā Sattra* is known as “Borhishā”, where ‘Bar’ means ‘big’ or ‘elder’ and ‘hishā’ means part.⁸⁵

In 1799 the *kīrttanghar* of *Bardowā Thān* divided into two parts. Rāmdeva Ātā i.e. Narowā was known as Borhisā, because he was elder than Ramcharan Ātā of

84. *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā* (Ras Kriḍā), V. 807.

85. Mahanta ,Maheswar (ed 2001) *Hindī Asomiya Abhidhan*. P. 632.

Śalguri. *Sattrādhikar* of Narowā is inherited i.e.(*Putranu Krame*) the elder son of *Sattrādhikar* will become next inheritor of the *Sattra*. After a prolonged quarrel in 1958 on 11th Oct for the endeavour of some well wisher took decision to remove the partition of the *kīrttanghar* and started to perform the regular *Prasaṅgasa* and other religious and socio-cultural activities by both *Sattra* under the same roof.⁸⁶

5.8.8.1 The *Narowā Sattra* celebrated total twelve tithis of their predecessors *Sattrādhikars* from Purusottam Thakur to Purna ch. Dev Goswasmi Ātā. (Souree-Devanand Devagoswami)

5.8.8.2 Tithis of the *Śalguri Sattra* : The *Sattrādhikars* of *Śalguri Sattra* is selected on the basis of being elder of the whole family. This *Sattra* is known as *Saruhisa*. *Śalguri Sattra* observed the Tithis of the twenty predecessors from Purusottam Thākur to Someswar Deva Mahanta. (Source- Bhuvanesani Bor namloguwani.)

5.8.9 Bihu : *Bihu* is the main cultural festival of Assamese society. The Assamese people celebrate three Bihus in a year:

i) *Kāti Bihu*, ii) *Māghar Bihu*, iii) *Bahāg Bihu*

Kāti Bihu is related with agriculture. In the *urukā* (before the Bihu) each Assamese family planted a *Tulsī* (Basil) in front of their courtyard and lit a light to protect the home from pollution, because tulsi has a meditational value. In the morning people go to the paddy field with a bunch of *Suwā* (a kind of tree) leaf to protect the paddy from insects.

86. Roy Choudhury, B (2017) *Bardowar Thanar Itihas* : P 159.

People of Bardowā offer new cloths to the *Guru Āsan*. On that day devotees offer an extra *kīrttana* in the *kīrttanghar*. It is known as *Kaṅgālee Bihu* (poor bihu) so in the evening people offer *Prasāda* to the Tulsī (Basi plant) and distribute these *Prasāda* mainly to the children.

Māgh Bihu: Māgh Bihu is celebrated on the day of *Makar Saṅkrānti* (January fourteenth of fifteenth). In the night of *Urukā* i.e. the day before bihu there built a temporary house like *Nāmghar* which is known as *Bhelāghar*. In that house people built a temporary *Thāpanā* (holy altar) and offered *Prasāda* with prayer by performing *Khol* and *Tal*. After distribute the *Prasād* a ceremonial feast is arranged by collecting food materials from villagers by *hātimotā* (inviter).

In the morning of the Bihu fired the temporary house with prayer for the welfare of the villagers. People offered new cloth to the Altar of *kirtanghar* and new rice to the *Haṭī Bhakat* for *Māgh Bihu*. In the first day of the Māgh people of Bardowā offered *Na-chāul* (New rice) to the *Doul Mandir* also: This *Bihu* is known as *Bhogāli*, because abundance of all sorts of food items. Unity and brotherhood is the main aim to celebrate this Bihu. It was found that Śaṅkaradeva celebrated *Māgh Bihu* on the way when he went to Borpetā.⁸⁷

Bohāg Bihu: Bohāg Bihu is known as *Raṅgālee Bihu*. The first day is the *Garu Bihu* (Cow Bihu) cow is an essential animal for agricultural country. So the day Assamese people workship the cow by giving bath and new *poghā* (rope) and *pithā* (cake). *Boardowā Thān* offered *Gandha tel* (scented oil) to all families of Borhisā,

87. Rajkhowa, G (2011) *Bardowat Basartu*: P. 14.

Saruhisā and Aibheti. With new cloth in the morning people go to the *Bardowā Thān* and *Daul Mandir* and offered cloth, *prasāda* etc. *Prasaṅga* is also held with *Uruli* (thrilling sound) and hand fan is used in this day to God.

Raṅgālee Bihu is enjoyed with various ways and *husari* and *Bihu* song is sung by beating *dhol*, bamboo instrument, *pepā* etc. Unity, brotherhood, hospitality to guest are other important subjects in this *Bihu*. They show respect and affection to each other by offering *gamosā* and other things, which are the customs of Assamese society.

(Source : Field Study)

5.8.10 *Ekādaśī*

There are observed twenty five *Ekādaśī* (eleventh day of the Lunar month) in year at Bardowā. It is found that at the time of Śaṅkaradeva, observed *Ekādaśī* was compulsory.⁸⁸

According to Śalguri *Sattrādhikār Paramananda Deva Mahanta*, *Ekādaśī* fasting is observed for hygienic value, because we should give a rest to our internal body atleast two days in a month. On the day of *Ekādaśī* there are performed two extra *prasaṅgas* one by men and the other by women in the *Bardowā Thān*.

5.8.11 *Satī Rādhikā Utsava*

Satī Rādhikā is recognized as a chaste woman at the time of Sankaradeva, who brought the water with *Pola* (hollow fishing basket) to embaked the Tambuani. She

88. Lekharu (1952) *Katha Guru Carit* : P. 112, Daitary Thakur : V. 543.

was a woman of low caste. According to Śaṅkaradeva there was no difference between high and low castes because all are equal in the sight of God.

brahmanara chāṇḍalr nibisāri kula
*datata chorata yena drsti ekatula//*⁸⁹

(There should not be any difference between *Brāhmaṇa* and *cāṇḍāl*, thief or donor).

In 1960 there was established a building for the memory of *Satī Rādhikā* on the bank of the Śāntijān. Every year there is celebrated the *Satī Rādhikā Utsava* in the full moon of the month of *Bohāg*. Both social and spiritual values are related with this function, by which one can feel the meaning of equalitarianism.

5.9 Bardowā as a Tourist Place

Thān and *Sattras* have always been the life line of Assamese culture and heritage. The *Sattras* of Assam are spiritual institutions and they are the home for promoting the art, culture and history of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva, who was a great Saint, philosopher and writer of Assam.⁹⁰

All religious places of the world along with birth places of various religious Propagator have been declared as world heritage places and built as tourist places. e.g. birth place of Jesus Crist-Jerujalam, Ramkrishna Paramhansa's Dakhineswar, Kolkata etc. As the birth place of Śaṅkaradeva the *Vaiṣṇava Guru* and preacher of *Eka-Śarana-Nāma-Dharma*, Bardowā is also a holy tourist place which has calm and quite environment with *Nāmkīrttana* (prayer) like an *Āśhram* of Ancient saint.

89. *Kirtanghoṣā: Srikrisnar Vaikunṭha Prayan.V.* 182.

90. Dr. Rajib Ch Dev. Goswami "A rich legacy" *Assam Tribune*. April 23, 2016.

The *Vaiṣṇava Thāns* and *sattras of Assam* are the sites for tourist interest. There is found a unique lifestyle in every *Thān* and *Sattra*. Various *Thān* and *sattras* of Assam e.g – Pātbousi, Madhupur, Daksinpat, Kuruābāhī, Gharmur etc. have their own costumes and manners though they follow the Vaiṣṇavism. Like other *Thān and sattras* Bardowā *Thān* also follow the traditional life style which was found in the time of Śaṅkaradeva. The *Hātī Bhakata* (Residential devotee) of this *Thān* have their own rules and regulations. They wear clean white *dhūti*, *cādar* (wrapper) and a *gāmosā* (Assamese towel) Every residential *Bhakat* must took *śaraṇ* from their *Guru* and some of them are - *Mālā Vastu lowā Bhakat* (Rosary Devotee)

Their sweet and calm behavior attracted the tourist. *Hātī Bhakats* are the valuable human resource of the *Thān* and *sattras*. *Hātīs* (residence) of *Bhakats* are on the bank of the *Hātī Pukhuri* (pond).

5.9.1 The Environment of *Bardowā Thān*

The Environment of *Bardowā Thān* is very attractive with valuable trees. These are

(1) *Patisonḍā* (*Acacia calachu*) tree which was related with Śaṅkaradeva's *cihnayātrā*.

*Patisonḍa ak biksha āse bhayānaka*⁹¹

(A big *Patisonḍa* tree is there)

(2) *Śilikhā* tree (*terminalia citrine*), The tree where Śaṅkaradeva sit under it when he wrote various scriptures. the fruits of the *Silikha* used to make ink to write on the *Sāchipāt*'s bark.

91. Ramcharan Thakur, *Guru carit*.V. 1484.

pachime silikhā bṛkṣha hāliyā āchaya

tāhāte āuji guru pustaka likhaya//⁹²

(On the western side there was a *Śilikhā* tree where the Guru wrote the scriptures)

Now there grow a new branch from that original one.

(3) *Sānchi tree* (Aquilaria Agalloca) the bark of the tree was used to write various manuscripts.

(4) *Vaṭatree* (Ficus religiosa) The tree related with the name of Bardowā.

(5) *Neem tree* (Azadirachta indica)

(6) *Age old Mangotree* (Mangifera Indica)

(7) *Bilambi tenga* (fruits like caramobola) etc.

Various birds both local and migratory are also found in the campus of *Bardowā Thān*. Mainly from the month of Decembar to February many migratory birds come to Akasī Gaṅgā of Bardowā and make it fascinating. (Source: field study)

Bardowā Thān is a distinct compound with *Karāpāt*, *Sobhāghar*, *Kīrttanghar*, *Padaśilā*, *Musium*, *Doul Mandir* etc. with waterbodies related with the time of Śaṅkaradeva.

The tourist, devotees and research scholars have come to this holy place to fulfill their curiosity and enjoy *Daul Utsav*, *Pāl-Nām*, and *Guru Tithis* etc. *Bardowā*

92. "Bardowa Prasasti.

Thān is a place which is related with social, religious, cultural and spiritual life of the Assamese people.

5.9.2 The important resources of the Bardowā *Thāṇa*

Toraṇa (Arch gate) There are three *Toraṇas* (arch gate) with the *stambha citra* (pillar art) of *Gāyan–Bāyan* and *Satriyā* culture welcoming tourists and other visitors and devotees to *Bardowā Thān* on the national highway 37 at Khutikatia, Dimaroguri and one at Haiborgaon in the Nagaon Town. There is another gate just on the entrance of the *Bardowā Thān*. The art of these gates have great religious, spiritual and aesthetic value.

5.9.3 *Karāpāt* or *Bāṭchorā* (gate house)

The entrance leading to the interior of a *sattrā* is known as *Karāpāt*.⁹³

Karāpāt has no walls. There are three *Karāpāts*, one is on the east side, one is on the west side and other new *Karāpāt* is in front of the *Kīrttanghar*.

The *Karāpāt* of the east side is designed a great *Jāpi* (wicker hat), which is near the *Narowā Sāṭtradhikār's* house.

The *Karāpāt* on the west side is an artistic with aesthetic and spiritual value. There are two *Magars* Or *Makers* top of the *Karāpāt* and two sets of lion, elephant and tortoise in front of it. *Magara* or *Makera* is a figure of an imaginary animal resembling a fish and having a trunk like that of an elephant.⁹⁴ The main gate of *Sattrā /Thānor Nāmghar* of Assamese Vaiṣṇava culture *Magara* is used as a symbol of unity and integrity. The symmetrical form of the door ways, with the *Mokara motifs*, instills in

93. Sarma, S.N (2016) *The satra institute of Assam* : P 101.

94. Hemkosh Abhidhen :780:781.

the devotees mind a kind of exalted stability and an unknown eagerness not for fulfilling her or his selfish interest, but for an accumulating a kind of peace which is not one's own , but universal.⁹⁵

There are two birds with two “Makaras” who partaking the *Amṛta rosa* (divine fruit) of wisdom.⁹⁶ Such type of symbolic pillar also found at Stanford University, U.S.A.

There are also other figures and *Gosai Kāpor* on the pillar. It motivated the people towards the *Bardowā Thān* with Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy of New-Vaiṣṇavism.

5.9.4 Kīrttanghar

There are two big lions (Nām siṃgha) in front of the famous *Bardowā Kīrttanghar*, which was built by *Camaguri Sattradhikār Rudrakanta Goswami* in 1955 and established in the year 1968.

Inside the *Kīrttanghar* there are two *Siṃhāsanas* with seven steps and an *Āmohighar* on the top of the *Siṃhāsana*.

The *Siṃhāsanas* are kept on the east side of the *Kīrttanghar*, known as *Maṇikuṭ*: (treasure house) There are nine doors symbol of nine types of *bhakti* (devotion), seven steps of *Siṃhāsanas* denotes the *sapta vaikunṭhas* (seven heaven). There are total 28 wooden tortoises, elephants and lions in the four sides of the *Siṃhāsana* or *Guru Āsana*.

95. Medhi, Siddharta: *Myth of the Makara*, Assam Tribune :2016 Feb 20.

96. Neog,M (reprint 2005) Sankaradeva's (cover page).

Here the elephant is the symbol of Sin and the Lion is the symbol of power that is *nāmasimha*. The Nam Simha discarded the sin of the people. (Source- *Punyabrata Goswami, Nikamul Sattrā*).

On the top there is *Āmahighar* where kept the *Bhāgavata*, *Kīrttana* or *Guṇamālā*. *Simhāsana* is covered with beautiful *Gosāi Kāpor* (cloth of God) where there are shining with the flower of gold or silver offered by devotees. Above the *Simhāsanas* there is a beautiful frilly shade which is known as *Candratāp* (canopy) Śaṅkaradeva kept *Uddava Sambād* in the *Thāpāna* or *Āsana* when he initiated his Guru and others.⁹⁷

Inside the *Kīrttanghar* there are other valuable assests such as- 25(twenty five) *khol*s, wooden *Garunda Pakhī* and *Hanumān*, light stand, *Akhaḍḍa pradīpa* (continuous tilling light) *Tāl* (cymbals) *Śārai* (offering tray), Iron Box (where devotees offeres) etc. Brass metal door is another valuable artistic assest of the *Thān* which was offered by Āhom King Kamaleswar Singha (source: Jogesh Atai). For the devotees there was always kept the *Kath* (Mat) inside the *Kīrttanghar*. To Maintain dresscode is compulsory inside the *Kīrttanghar* for male-*dhūti*, *Panjābī/Cādar* and for female *Mekhelā-chadar*. Tourist also followed this dress code inside the *Kīrttanghar*.

5.9.5 *Padaśilā* (foot print stone of Śaṅkaradeva)

The word *Padaśilā* derived from the two words *Pada* means “foot” and *Śilā* means stone. There are two *Padaśilā* of Śaṅkaradeva kept in the two houses *Uttar* and *Dakṣin*. Śaṅkaradeva kept his feet on these two stones when he wrote the scriptures. When Śaṅkaradeva and his friends and families escaped from Bardowā for atrocities

97. Lekharu, U (1952), *Kathā Guru Carit*, P.37.

of Kachari then he kept these *Padaśilās* under the ground. When Āi Kanaklatā came to Bardowā in searched of her grand-father-in law abode at the time Āhom Barphukan Tansu Kowar's wife dreamt a dream about this *Padaśilā*.

pāśe phukan bh ārjya rajajīe
śunā yena kahilanta
sapnate tāhānke āsiya āpuni
*śaṅkare dekhā dilanta.*⁹⁸

(Śaṅkaradeva said about his *Padaśilā* to the wife of Tansu Phukan in the dream)

After that Āi Kanaklatā found the exact place of the *Padaśilā* from the dream of Phukan's wife and excavated the *Padaśilā* beneath the ground. In 1971 both *Sattrā* of Bardowā Thān the Narowā and Śālguri established the foundation stone of the *Padaśilā* house one in Māghi Pūrṇimā (fullmoon of the month of Māgh) and other in the Daul Pūrṇimā. The art inside the *Padaśilā* house has great aesthetic and spiritual values.

Some spiritual and religious activities of Thān e.g. Śāraṇa, Bhajana, etc. initiated in the *Padaśilā* house, by Narowā and Śālguri *Sattrā*. Evening and morning *Prasaṅgas* are also held in *Padaśilā* house.

Inside the *Dakṣiṇ Padaśilā* there are six disciples of Viṣṇu and Rāma painted honourary by artist Nirmal Ch Mahanta.⁹⁹ These are – (1) Uddhava (2) Vidvra (3) Maitreya (4) Jamabavanta (5) Vibhīṣaṇa and (6) Hanumān. On the wall there are found the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu. (Source- field study)

98. Muktiār, Ramakāntā, *Āi Kanaklata Charitra*: V. 51.

99. Bora, K. (ed 2015) *Bardowa smṛti-grantha* : P 193.

Inside the northern (uttar) *Padaśilā* house there are found the 12(twelve) great Vaiṣṇavas of the twelve posts. These are -

(1) *Brahmā* (2) *Manu* (3) *Hara* (4) *Kapila* (5) *Kumara* (6) *Śuka* (7) *Bhīṣma* (8) *Bāli* (9) *Yama* (10) *Janaka* (11) *Bhīṣma* (12) *Prahlāda*.

All these art and relics motivate the tourists and devotees come from far and wide.

5.9.6 *Naivedya Gṛha* (votive house)

Naivedya gṛha is the store house of various things offered by devotees. There is a belief that to offer salt in this *Bardowā Thān* fulfilled the wishes of devotees. It is found that there was also a system of store house at the time of Śaṅkaradeva.¹⁰⁰

5.9.7 *Patnād* (well)

Near the uttar *Padaśilā* (Northern foot stone) a well is preserved from where Śaṅkaradeva used water, when he stayed at Bardowā.

5.9.8 *Daul Mandir*

Daul Mandir is situated on the southern side of the *Kīrttanghar*. There Śaṅkaradeva established a Viṣṇu idole. *Daul Utsava* was held in that Mandir. Śaṅkaradev's first drama *Cihna yātrā* was staged at the present site of *Daul Mandira*, which was built by his disciples as high stage as per his direction.¹⁰¹ Now there are two idols of Lord Kṛṣṇa – one is *Vamśī Bādan* (Kṛṣṇa with flute) and other is *Laruā Gopāla* (Kṛṣṇa with ladoo) i.e the Śiṣhu Kṛṣṇa (Child Kṛṣṇa) There is also a *Naivedya Gṛha* (votive house). The environment of *Daul Mandira* is very beautiful. Near the

100. Lekharu, U (ed 1952) *Katha Guru Carit* : P. 302.

101. Mahanta, H (2015) *Bardowā Becon* : P 5.

Mandira there is a pond of Lotus (*Padum Pukhurī*) This pond is also known as *Saṅjivanī Pukhurī*. A children park is also there.

5.10.9 *Tambuanī jān, Śanti jān and Śatī Rādhikā memorial*

It is said that when Lord Kṛṣṇa went to Dwarka then he took, a rest at Bardowā. At that time his wife Rukmiṇī's *temi* (lime pot) fell on the water. After that the name of the water body was known as *Ṭembuanī jān*. In the *Rukmiṇī Haraṇa kāvya* there is found the name of *Ṭembnanī-*

ṭembnāni bandhe *baisālā prabandhe*
bardowā nāme grāma
durlav nārāyene *yāk bahu māne*
*dila devidās nāma/*¹⁰²

(*Tembuanī jān* is in the Bardowā village where the name of King Durlava Narayana is related)

Once upon a time the flood of *Tembnanī* destroyed the cultivation of Bardowā. Śaṅkaradeva said that to embake a dum there need achaste women. Bardowā was the pioneer of social development and upliftment of the backwards or downtrodden communities. Many backward caste people received honourable place at Śaṅkaradeva's impartiality. *Satī Rādhikā* was also a lower caste woman. But for her purity of mind she became a famous lady and established a place in the society. She brought the water in a *pala* (Fishing basket) and help to embek the *Ṭambuni*. This was an example of equality which helps to reform the society and now which is in our Indian constitution about equality. According to Śaṅkaradeva –

102. *Rukmiṇī Haraṇa Kāvya*, V 529.

siṭo cāṇḍalaka garistha māni

*yāra jibhāgre thāke hari bāni//*¹⁰³

(Man who chant the name of God, and then he became respectable, though he is a lower caste or chandala)

In 1962 when Binowā Bhāve came to Bardowā then he established the foundation Stone of Satī Rādhikā Smriti Soudh. (Sati Radhika Memorial)

5.9.10 Ākāśhī Gaṅgā

Bardowā faced drought at the time of Śaṅkaradeva. Śaṅkaradeva advised the people of Bardowā to chant name of God for water. At that night there was raining cats and dog and blooming the lotus and scarcity of water was going on.

girisit kari āsi parilek jal,

*śabda śuni sarvaloke bhailante vikal//*¹⁰⁴

(“Water was flowing with a large sound and people got astonished to hear this sound”) After that this water body was known as *Ākāśī Gaṅgā*. Because people believed that for the blessing of God water poured from the sky. Migratory bird has come to the *Ākāśī Gaṅgā* in the season and it became the place an extremely beautiful place.

5.9.11 Pāt sila

When Āi Kanklatā came to Bardowā then she brought the (foot print stone) which is known as *pātśilā* of her husband Caturbhuj Ṭhākura¹⁰⁵ with her. In 1992, 5th

103. *Kīrttan ghoṣā, Pāṣaṇḍa Marddana*. V. 111.

104. Rāmcharan Thākura, *Guru carit*, V. 1794.

105. Roy chaudhury, Bhupendra (2017) *Bardowar Thanar Itihas* : P 120.

July this patsila founded in a new building near *Ākāsī Gaṅgā*. There always held two *prasaṅgas* in morning and evening there.

5.9.12 *Rabhāghar* (Auditorium)

There are two *Rabhāghars* for two *Sattras*- *Narowā* and *Śalguri*. The function related with sattriya culture are held in these *Rabhāghar* –e.g Bhaonā, Sattriya function and at the time of *Daul Utsav* the *Daul Govinda* (Idole of Kṛṣṇa) stay here for some time , to perform the ritual.

5.9.13 *Nāṭghar* (Stage)

Nāṭghar is in the western side of the *Kīrttanghar*. *Nāṭghar* was built in the year 1968. There held meeting, *Bhāonā* etc. Devotee who has come to visit the *Bardowā Thān* take rest in this house.¹⁰⁶

5.9.14 *Sabhāghar* (Seminar Hall)

Sabhāghar was built near the entrance of the *Thān* in 1968. Various seminars, meetings, religious conferences etc. held in this house.

5.9.15 *Hāṭī Pukhurī*

Hāṭī pukhurī and *Hāṭī* of the Bhakat

chāriphāle charihati mahābhaktaḡana

*choudhya prasaṅga kare nāmar kirttan*¹⁰⁷

Every *Thān* and *Sattra* has four sides where their devotees reside. On the eastern side of the *Kīrttanghar* there is found the *Hāṭī Pukhurī* with *Hāṭī* of the

106. Rajkhowa, Gajen(2014) *Bardowā Thānār Citraputhi* : P. 27

107. *ThanVarnanar Git*

Residential devotees. The devotees of *Thān* maintain the traditional customs of the *Thān*. They follow the *chaidhya prasāṅgas* regularly. There was a *dhekī ghar* (Morter House) where they grind the rice to offer the laddoo to the *Kīrttanghar*. (Source: field study).

5.9.16 Mahendra Kandali Sanskrit Ṭol

Śaṅkaradeva received education at Mahendra Kandali's tole at the age of 12 and wrote his first poem *Kartala Kamla* and since that day his pen was never stop.¹⁰⁸ So at Bardowā near the *Doul Mandir* there established a Sanskrit tole on the name of Mahendra Kandali, the *Guru* of Śaṅkaradeva in the year 1977.

5.9.17 Āi Khersūtī Sangskriti Mancha (Cultural Stage)

There is a big cultural stage on the bank of the *Ākāsī Gaṅgā* in the name of the cultured lady, the grand mother of Śaṅkaradeva for whom Śaṅkaradeva became a well educated multifaced genius of the world. Khersūtī gave moral and spiritual education to Śaṅkaradeva and gave examples of their cultured and noble forefathers to inspir him.

āmār vaṁśat apaṇḍita nāi ,

*toi murkha hoba khuisane?*¹⁰⁹

(There was no uneducated person in our family. Are you going to be a fool?

108. Lekharu, U (1952) *Katha Guru Carit* : P 27.

109. Lekharu U,(1952), *Katha Guru Carit* :P. 25.

5.9.18 Library and Seminer Hall

In the year 2013 there established a full furnished library near the *Kīrttanghar*. There kept some valuable books with *Sānchi patar puthi*. Seminer Hall is used for various purposes and religious discussions about the *Thān*.

5.9.19 *Naimiṣā Kṣetra*

Another important tourist point of the *Bardowā Thān* is the *Naimiṣā kṣetra*. It is near the *Ākāśī Gaṅgā* Gate. Sage *Ugrashrawa* explained the *Bhāgavata* in the *Naimiṣa Aranya* with other sages. In this place this type of art i.e. sage *Ugrashrawā* and other Hermits are exhibited. In the year 2002 *Nagaon Sut Sanmilan* established it and handed over to the *Thān* management committee of *Bardowā Thān* 2003.

5.9.20 Tourist Lodges

There are total ten tourist lodges for both male and female in the names of various *Vaiṣṇava Gurus*. These are-

(i) *Āi Kankalatā Bhawan*, (ii) *Damoder Ātā Bhawan*, (iii) *Ramākānta Muktiar Ātai Bhawan*, (iv) *Mahila Yatri Niwās*, (v) *Six tourist guest house near Ākāśī Gaṅgā*.

5.9.21 *Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Gavesanā Pratisthān*

In 1978 a *Vaiṣṇava* university was established near *Bardowā Thān*. But for some technical difficulties the decision was changed and established a research centre. There are various valuable religious books and other books, *Sachipāt* manuscripts, ancestral objects such as *Dolā* (palanquin), *Bor Jāpi* (large wickers hat) etc. These are kept very systematically and the librarian of this pratisthān Upen Saikia (also a *bāyan*) is very informative person. Some important scriptures on Sacpat are –

Sanskrit Bhāgavata of Śrīdhara Swāmi, Śrīdhara Kandali's book, Gopāl Āta's *Janmayātrā Nāṭ* etc.

5.9.22 Bardowā Kṣudra Saṃgrāhalay (Mini Museum)

Every *Thān* and *Sattras* have their own museum to preserve the various ancestral things of *Vaiṣṇava* culture. In *Bardowā Thān* there established a museum in the year 1973 of *Daul Purnimā*. There are preserved various things e.g – *Phalli Citra* (wall picture) *satmbha citra* (pillar art) idole of the various god, wooden statue, *Charia* (Tub) and many other things related with agriculture and day to day life. From these things and art, one can know about the rich culture of *Vaiṣṇava Thān* and *sattras*.

5.9.23 Administrative Building

There is an administrative building which is known as *Batadravā Thān Paricalanā Samiti*. The Official activities are done here. There is preserved a *mukhā* (Mask) inside this house.

5.10 Committees of Bardowā Thān

In 1949 the 500th birth anniversary of Śaṅkaradeva was held at *Bardowā Thān* with the effort of *Sattrā Sangha* and other pious and cultured persons of Assam and many other well wishers of Bardowa *Than* came to participate this anniversary . A resolution was passed in that meeting about the amalgamation of *Bardowā Thān* as a socio- cultural and religious centre of Assam, where *Narowā* and *Śalguri* has performed their duties in their own *Nāmghar*. But this was not success. So after that

Harinarayan Dutta Borua stayed at Bardowā to solve the problem.¹¹⁰ For his optimistic attempt the *Sattradhikars* of Narowā and *Śalguri* agreed to that resolution.

On 16/01/55 there formed a committee to develop the *Bardowā Thān*, named as *Batadrowā Smṛti samrakṣaṇa somiti*. The members of the committee were-

(1) Mahendra Mohan Choudhuri – President (President of Pradesh Cong. Committee)

(2) (a) Bimala Kanta Bora (MLA) Vice President

(b) Haladhar Bhuyan Vice President

(3) Ram Nath Sarma -Secretary. (Other members were also present in this committee)

After that government of Assam sectioned Rs. 25000/- to the development of *Bardowā Thān*. On 08/07/55 there was held a meeting and planed to develop the *Thān* and also accepted eight (8) resolutions for that, and received donation from the Assamese people to develop the *Thān*.

A petition was also published for donation from the Assamese people to preserve the memory of *Bardowā Thān*. Many M.L.A, M.P and prominent personalities at that time were the member of that committee. Some of them were-

(1) Kuladhar Chaliha (Speaker of Assembly), (2) Debakanta Baruah (M.P), (3) Puspallata Das (M.P), (4) Padma Kumari Gohain (President of Dibrugarh District), (5) Siba Prasad Sarma (Mongoldoi), (6) Mahendra Bora (Lakhimpur).

All members of the *Batadravā smṛti samrakṣaṇa commiti* were also included in it. For the hard work and good wish of the people of Assam Bardowā gotun on 11/10/58. After that the old committee handed over the charge to the new committee

110. Bora,K (ed 2005) *Bardowā Smritigrantha* : P 49.

named by *Śrī Śrī Batadravā Thān Paricalonā committee*. The members of the committee were-

- (1) Purna Chandra Dev Goswami (*Sattradhikar Narowā Sattra*)
- (2) Bhava Chandra Deva Mahanta (*Sattradhikar Śalguri Sattra*)
- (3) Kush Deva Adhikari (Secretary) and other general members of the commiti.

Again for some internal controversy the development of *Thān* became stagnant. So after six (6) years again another committee was formed with Joint Secretary ies-

- (1) *Bimaleswar Kalita*, (2) *Mahesh Ch. Deva Goswami*.

In 1968, 2nd August a new committee was formed with 39 members and changed the rules and regulations of the former committees.

President – Narowā *Sattradhikar*

Vice-President – Salguri *Sattradhikar*

Secretary/Treasurer – Kamal Ch. Bora.

The committee maintained and developed the following subjects with other religious festivals. These are-

- (1) To repair the roads and other valuable assests of the *Thān*, (2) Boundary wall, gate, (3) Palnam, (4) DouL Yatra and shop and market stall for DouL Yatra and other festivals, (5) Supply of the offering materials to the Kirtanghar, (6) Fund, (7) To develop Akashiganga, (8) Electricity, Water Supply, (9) Other Festivals.¹¹¹

111. Bora, K (2005). *Bardowā Smtigrantha* P:138-188.

5.11 *Hāṭī Bhakat of Bardowā Thān*

(Residential devotees of Bardowā Thān)

For management of *Thāns and Sattras* and to preserve and diffuse the vaiṣṇava culture there are some residential functionaries in some *Thāns and sattras* which are known as *Hāṭī Bhakat* (residential devotee). In *Thāns and Sattras* of Assam *Hāṭī Bhakats* are addressed as *Ātai*. *Ātai* means, according to Hemkosh Abhidhan, “A religious devotee”¹¹²

Religious works are distributed according to their seniority and sincerity. Seats are also allotted for them within the *Kīrttanghar* according to their functions. Devotees who came to visit the *Thān* should always respect the *Hāṭī Bhakat*. It is a belief that wishes of devotees are fulfilled if *Hāṭī Bhakat* blesses them. (Source – Jogesh Atai)

(2) To manage the different works and functions there are required many men power. Only *Hāṭī Bhakat* cannot controlled alone the works inside the *Thān* campus. So there are some persons associated with some duties and performed these duties according to their responsibilities. Some responsibilities are fixed on some devotees. Following persons are looked after the day to day works of the *Thān*. (Apdx)

Executive member of the *Batdravā Thān Parichalana committee-*

- (1) Sjt Paramananda Dev Mahanta –President (*Sattrādhikār Śālaguri sattra*)
- (2) Sjt Debananda Deva Goswami – Vice President (*Sattrādhikār Narowā Sattra*)
- (3) Sjt Harendra Deva Mahnta – Executive President, (4) Sjt Brajen Kakoty - General Secretary, (5) Sjt Dilip Kr Bora – Treasurer, (6) Sjt Jatin Borua - Asst Secretary, (7)

112. *Hemkosh* :88.

Sjt Debabrata Mahanta – Reserve Seat, (8) Sjt Subhas Ch Khataniar – Reserve Seat
(source: Jatin Borua)

There were other 84 (Eighty four) general members of the *Batadravā Thān* parichalana committee to maintain the various functions and works of the *Thān* smoothly. The *Bardowā Thān* was registered under the societies Act.XXI of 1860 No.2 of 1965/66.¹¹³

President and Secretary of the *Batadravā Thān* parichalana committee from 1958 onwards- (Apdx)

5.12 *Gāyan* (Singer) *Bāyan* (Instrumental player) and *Sutradhāra* (Director and Narrator or anchor Man) Bardowā.

To Perform *Añkīyā Nāṭ*, *Bhāonā*, *Jhumurā* or other performing arts there is an orchestra Party in every *Thān* and *Satrra* or *Nāmghar* of a Village. In both *Sattras* of *Bardowā Thān* there are also *Gāyan*, *Bāyan* and *Sūtradhāra* which were also found in the time of Śaṅkaradeva.

ketekhā rāmak *bāyan sikhailanta*

āru pāli sātjan

natuā pāchatī *samnite āti*

karilā yātrā subhan/(1460)¹¹⁴

(Ketekhā and Rāma were trained as *Bāyan* with Seven assistants and five dancers arranged to performed the *yatrā*)

113. Source -*Bardowa Smritigrantha* : 279.

114. Ramcharan Thakur, *Gurucarit*, V. 1460.

In *Bardowā Thān* there were five (5) main *Gāyans* and Seven *Duhariās* (assistents) *gāyan*, five Main *Bāyans*, Sixteen (16) *Duhariās* (assistents) *Bāyans*, four (4) *Sūtradhāras* in the *Śālaguri Sattrā*.

In the *Narowā Sattrā* there were two (2) main *Gāyan*, four (4) *Duhariā* (assistents) *Gāyan* and five (5) main *Bāyan*, and fourteen (14) *duharia* (assistents) *Bāyan* and three (3) *Sutradhāra*.

Dambarudhar *Gāyan* and Upen ch. Kalita *Bāyan* of *Śālguri Sattrā* and Hemaram *Bāyan* of *Narowā Sattrā* have trained the young generation without any fees. Learner offered a *bhojani* (Eatable objects) to their *Guru* with bettlenut. (source: Upen Ch Kalita: *Borbāyan*)

From age of five years one boy can learn the *khol* and *Gīt* (song), The novice also participate in the *Prasaṅga* which was held at evening. To participate in the *Prasaṅga* one can eat only vagitarian food.

A group of trainees under Upen ch. Kalita Bayan from both *Narowā* and *Śālguri Sattrā* is given in the Apdx.

The trainees maintain dress code at the time of training is *dhuti* and *chādar*. (source : Sanjib Bora)

They performed their performance in various occasions on various stages. (Photo)

5.13 Sources of Fund

To meet the various expenditure of the *Thān* a huge amount was necessary. For maintenance of the *Bardowā Thān* and observed the various festivals, funds are collected from the following sources, in cash or in kinds.

1. Annual membership fees from the members and the life member fees.

2. Donation offered by various persons and organizations.
3. Contributions offered by the devotees and tourists to the *Kīrttanghar* two *Padaśilās*, *Doul Mandir* etc. These are pulses, salt, Dhup, Ghee, oil, fruits, rice, money and other materials such as *Gamoshā*, *Sarai*, Fan, gold or silver material etc.
4. Revenue received from the temporary stalls in the festivals e.g- *Doul Utsava* , *Pālnām* etc.
5. Revenue received from permanent stalls and canteen, e.g- Book Stall, Tea –Stall, handicraft etc.
6. Annual *Gurukar* (Tax/ Tithe) from the *Sishyas* (apostle) of both *sattrā Narowā* and *Śālguri*.
7. Government grant in aid. (sometimes)
8. Rent from guest houses.
9. Fees from picnic party on the bank of Akāshigangā.

5.14 Institution and Organisation Name Related with Śāṅkaradeva

In the hounour of Śāṅkaradeva a number of institutions and organizations are established. Some of these are-

- (1) Batadravā Śāṅkaradeva Mahavidyalay; Bardowā
- (2) Āi Kanaklatā Sattriyā School; Bardowā
- (3) Mahendra Kondoli *Ṭol*; Bardowā
- (4) Śrīmanta Śāṅkaradeva *Gavesanā Pratisthān*; Bardowā
- (5) Śāṅkaradeva *Mancha*; Bardowā

There are various institutions established in the name of Śaṅkaradeva in different places of India-

- (1) Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva University of Health and Medical Science
(Guwahati) (Medical College University)
- (2) Mahapurush Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Viswavidyalay (Nagaon)
- (3) Śaṅkaradeva Śishu Niketan (A Sangathan under which many schools
all over Assam)
- (4) Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Kalakṣetra , (Guwahati)
- (5) Śaṅkaradeva Junior College (Nagaon)
- (6) Śaṅkaradeva Batā (A award offered to distinguished persons as culture
and literacy contributions.
- (7) Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Mission (Nagaon –Head Quarter)
- (8) Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Chair (Punjab and other Universities)
- (9) Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Sangha (a cultural and religious organization)
- (10) Srimanta Sankaradeva Marg (New Delhi)
- (11) Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Bhawan (A Guest house with Assamese
culture, Near JNU, Delhi)
- (12) Mahapurush Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva *kalakristri Gavesana Kendra*
(Jorhat)

There are some Assamese organizations and *Nāmghars* on the name of Śaṅkaradeva on U.S.A, U.K. Australia etc.

There is also website in the name of Śaṅkaradeva-

(1) [http://www.atribnte to sankaradeva.org](http://www.atribnte.to.sankaradeva.org)

Bardowā *Thān* is one of the major *Thāns* of Assam, originated to Śaṅkaradeva the preacher of *Eka-Saraṇa Nam dharma* and follower of new Vaiṣṇavism. There are two *sattras* Narowā and Salguri belongs to *purush Saṁhati*, the subsect organized by Śaṅkaradeva's grand son Purusottam Thakur. In 1516 Sankaradeva and his friends and families escaped to other places for outraged of Kachari and Bardowā became deserted. In 1656 Āi Kanaklatā, the grand daughter-in-law of Śaṅkaradeva¹¹⁵ and Damodar Ata adopted son and nephew of Caturbhujā Thākur rediscovered Bardowa after 140 years. After that for the patronage of Ahom King and help of other local people Bardowā became a famous place for Assamese and *Vaiṣṇava* culture.

Śaṅkaradeva was the pioneer of social development and upliftment of the backward society of Assam. For Śaṅkaradeva, many of the depressed communities received honourable place in the society. Sati Rādhikā and her husband Purnānanda was the first example of it.¹¹⁶ Śaṅkaradeva established first *kīrttanghar* at Bardowā and afterwards he established *Kīrttanghar* or *Nāmghar* where he stayed at. He was the innovator of first Assamese Pantomime *Cihnayātrā*;¹¹⁷ where he recognized the dignity of labour in many ways. Śaṅkaradeva wanted to educate the mass people. So he translated and transcreated many Sanskrit literature into simple language and gave hygienic, moral, spiritual value through these works. Śaṅkaradeva's reformes have great impact on the present *Bardowā Thān* and the people of Bardowā and the whole

115. Sarma, S.N (2016) *The Noe-vaiṣṇeva Movement and Sattre Insilution of Assam* P: 92.

116. Lekharu U(ed1952) *Katha Guru Carit*, P:40

117. (ibid P: 36)

Assamese society. The people of *Bardowā Thān* are calm and quite and liberal in many ways. Now Bardowā is become a world famous socio-religious centre and a pious and heritage place of Assam and Assamese people.