

CHAPTER –I

INTRODUCTION

Assam is a state which is situated in the North East India. The states of this region are culturally known as “seven sisters”, in which Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalay and Assam. The mighty river Brahmaputra and the Barak are flowing through this state. The state of Assam is culturally and naturally most attractive and beautiful.

In ancient time the state was known as Prāgjyotiṣpur. Here “prag” means former or eastern and “jyotiṣ” means star, astrology, shining, i.e. city of eastern astrology.¹ In Austric formation, “Prāgjyotiṣpur” means a wide hilly terrain.² After that when Narakāśura became the king then the land was changed to Kāmrūpa, related the name with the goddess Kāmākhya.³ Again some other historians said that Kāmrūpa the land where ‘Kāmdeva’ the ‘God of Love’ reborned. There is no doubt that the same country was called Prāgjyotiṣ in earlier time and Kāmrūpa in later times.⁴ The unity of Kingdoms of Kāmrūpa was lost at the time of Joypāla (AD 1120-1138) of Pāl dynasty, so many petty kingdoms grew up. The Morān, The Barāhi, The Kalitās and the kingdoms of Kamatā, the small holdings of the *Bhūyān* were reigned accordingly.⁵ The Ahom who established their kingdom in 1228 A.D was a very powerful dynasty, who reigned for 600 years. So in the extreme west was situated the kingdom of

1. Gait, E (Reprint 2006) *A History of Assam*: P.15.

2. Barua, B.K (3rd ed 2011) *A Cultural History of Assam*: P.13.

3. Ibid: 13.

4. Barua, K.L (1966) *Early History of Kamrupa*: P.1.

5. Rajguru, Sarbeswar (1989) *Medieval Assamese Society*: P 48.

Kamatā, which later on came to be known as Coch Behar when it came under the domination of the Koch King a powerful and cultured Kingdom.⁶ At the time of Śaṅkaradeva (1449-1568) there were many small independent states. The Chutias ruled over the eastern part and Kachāris ruled on the south east.⁷

The modern name ‘Asam’ connected with Āhoms. In dictionary meaning Asam is “not even”, ‘having no equal’ or “dissimilar”.⁸

Nagaon is one of the famous districts of Assam from cultural and historical point of view. Famous Assamese poet Mādhava Kaṇḍali who wrote the Assamese Rāmāyaṇa was born in Nagaon. This is the birth place of many famous poets, writers, artists, educationists and social reformers; from ancient, medieval and modern period. British government established Nowgong (Nagaon) as district Headquarter in 1939, June.⁹ Earlier the district was known as Nowgong and later changed into Nagaon in which ‘Na’ - means new and ‘gaon’ means village. The mighty river Brahmaputra flows along the northern border and its tributaries the Kapili and Kolong are flowing through Nagaon. There are three civil subdivisions of Nagaon, Hojai and Kaliabor. But now Hojai is a separate district. National highway 36 and 37 run through this district. (Map Nagaon District).

As per Census 2011, the average literacy rate of the district was 72.37 per cent, out of which, male and female percentage were 76.51 per cent and 68.07 per cent respectively. The literacy rate for urban areas was 87.23 per cent, which was much

6. Barua, B.K.B (2009) *Śaṅkaradeva Vaiṣṇava Saint of Assam* : P 2.

7. Ibid: 2

8. Deka, Pranavjyoti (2011) *Student’s Own Bilingual Dictionary*: P. 47.

9. Assam Gazeetters, Vol V, Nowgong 1905.

higher than the literacy rate in the rural areas which was 69.96 per cent. The literacy rate of Assam in urban areas for males and females stood at 91.81 per cent and 79.85 per cent as against 75.40 per cent in rural areas respectively. Average literacy rate in Assam for rural and urban areas were 69.34 per cent and 88.47 per cent respectively.

As per official census 2011 of Nagaon district, total population of Nagaon district is 2,823,768, and religion rate – Hindu 43.39 per cent, Muslim 53.36 per cent, Christian 0.95 per cent, Sikh 0.11 per cent, Buddhist 0.04 per cent, Jain 0.04 per cent, Others 0.00 per cent, Not Available 0.11 per cent respectively.

1.1 Śaṅkaradeva

The great Assamese leader of *Bhakti* movement, Vaiṣṇavite saint Śaṅkaradeva, who was a social reformer was born at Alipukhuri in Bardowā of Nowgong district of Assam in 1449. He reformed and integrated the Assamese society with the help of *Eka-Śaraṇa-Nāma-Dharma* and various performing art and visual art by establishing many institutions which are based on value education. He started his journey of reformation from Bardowā, which was his birth place.

1.2 Bardowā Thān

Bardowā is situated in the Nagaon District at a distance of 15.42 Km. towards North West from Nagaon town and 140Km from Dispur (Guwahati) the capital city of Assam.

Bardowā is the birth place of great Assamese Vaiṣṇava leader and reformer Śaṅkaradeva (1449-1568). The king of Kamatā, Durlabha Nārāyaṇa gave settlement to

Rajdhar the ancestor of Śaṅkaradeva on the bank of the Ṭambuāni stream of Bardowā.¹⁰

Bardowā remained resourceful and prosperous till 1516 A.D up to Śaṅkaradeva and his family and friends left Bardowā to save themselves from the atrocities of Kachāri.¹¹ After that Āi-Kanaklatā, the grand-daughter-in-law of Śaṅkaradeva and Damodorātā the adopted son and nephew of Caturbhuja Ṭhākur rediscovered Bardowā *Thān* in the year 1656.¹² When Śaṅkaradeva stayed at Bardowā he contributed to moral, social, religious, aesthetic and environmental development of Assam in many ways. His successors also followed his ideology and diffused his philosophy and ideology to develop and unite the Assamese society. Bardowā is the first place where Śaṅkaradeva established the *Kīrttanghar/Devagrha* and gave the same status to the low caste people, with other.¹³ Śaṅkaradeva used simple language in his writings for women and illiterate people, used various media to inculcate value education and above all enriched Assamese people and brought about all together a unifying and glorifying vitality to this part of the great *Bhārāt Varsha* (India).¹⁴

This is the place where Śaṅkaradeva enacted his first play *Cihnayātrā*, a pantomime to motivate the people towards his philosophy. At present Bardowā *Thān* has two *sattras* one founded by Dāmodar Ātā, i.e Narowā *sattra* and other founded by

10 . *Rukminiharan Kavya* , V. 529.

11. Barpujari, H.K (2007) *The Contemporary History of Assam* Vol .III.P 232.

12. Kalita, N, Āi Kanaklatā, Bora ,K (ed) *Bardowā Smritigrantha*, 2015. P 113.

13. Lekharu,U (1952) *Kathāguru Carit*. P 40

14 . Neog, M (1967) *Śaṅkaradeva*.P 60.

Anantaram Ātā the youngest grandson of Śaṅkaradeva, i.e Śālguri *sattrā*.¹⁵ There are many relics and monuments i.e *padaśilā* (foot print) *Silikhatree* (terminalia citrine), *Daul Mandir*, Śantijan etc. which keep alive Śaṅkaradeva's memory.

1.3 Value Education

The term 'value' comes from the Latin word, "Valere" which means 'to be worth'. Literally, value means something that has a price and is precious or worthwhile.¹⁶ The term value stand for "intrinsic worth" ,whatever is actually liked, prized, esteemed, desired, approved or enjoyed by anyone, is valuable. The entire scope of values may be classified into two types – one the eternal, absolute or root value and two the temporal or routine values. Moral and spiritual values are root values, which take us out of ourselves and inspire us to be good and to do well to others. The mundane values or routine values include contextual values – social, cultural, economic etc.¹⁷

Value means the personality traits the possession of which makes an individual useful, admirable and respectable. All values are acquired only after the birth of the child. Values like truthfulness, sincerity, non-violence, fraternity, equality, love, sacrifice, service etc. can be considered as universal and permanent value. Value based education was implicitly interwoven with the teachings in *Gurukuls* in the *vedic* era

15. Mahanta, H.K(2015) *Bardowā Be cons*". P 64

16. Verma, Yogindar (2007) *Education in Human Values for Human Excellence*: P.78.

17. Ruhela, S.P (1986) *Human Values and Education*: P .157.

and formed an integral part of Indian education system. Values are the cultural norms of the society in which individual is brought up.¹⁸

Śaṅkaradeva and his followers introduced those values by innovated some types of institutions by which one can integrate the illiterate and common people. He and his followers established the *Thān and Sattrā* and introduced both external and internal value education. The philosophers of great tradition from Plato to Hegel have been greatly concerned with values, though they had not used that term “Value education”. Like them Śaṅkaradeva also did not use the term “ value education “ in his institution , but in action it really dealt with value such as spiritual, health, moral, psychological, social and aesthetic etc. Main features of value education according to Śaṅkaradeva philosophy-

Equality and spirituality were the important things which were to be maintained in devotional matters by the *Vaiṣṇavites* of the *Sattras* of Assam.¹⁹

According to Vaiṣṇavism ideology-

brāhmaṇara cāṇḍālara nibicāri kula
dātāta corata yena dṛṣṭi eka tula
nicata sādḥuta yār bhaila eakjñāna
*tāhākese paṇḍita bulaya sarbajana*²⁰

‘One who makes no difference between *Brāhmaṇ* and *Cāṇḍāl*, and keeps equal view and he is said to be the wise by all.’

18. Chitkara, M.G (2003) *Education and Human Values*, Prefacen.

19. Rajguru, S, *Medieval Assamese Society*, P. 274.

20. *Kīrttanghoṣā, Sree Kṛṣṇar Vaikuntha Prayān*. V. 1821

Honesty is the best policy for *Vaiṣṇava* culture. Vaiṣṇavism laid stress on honest living both ends and means. In *Kathāguru Carita* it is clearly mentioned that how Mādhav (Moral's son) and Dāmodar suffer for their immoral actions done for livelihood.²¹

A healthy person is a valuable asset for a society. Śaṅkaradeva gave more emphasis on the matter of personal cleanliness both inward and outward. In *Sattrā* institution there prevailed hygienic food (*Prasāda*) with hygienic distribution, physical exercise (*Nṛitya*, Clapping) for physical and mental development.

According to them –

devara durlabh ihena janamaka

vyathakarā kona kāme

gr̥hate thākiyā harika smariyā

mokṣa sādhe hari nāme/²²

(The human birth is hard to get, so do not become a failure and remember the God for salvation)

Aesthetic value provides pleasure and happiness to the individual, Therefore *Thān* and *Sattrā* organized activities such as Dance, Drama, *Bhāonā-Sabāh* (*Āṅkiyā nāt*) music (*Bargīt*) various Dances, *Nāmprasaṅga*, *Phākuā* (*Daul*) *Utsav*, *Rāsa Utsav*, *Tithi* of *Sattrādhikār* and *Gurus* etc. which have great aesthetic and social value.

Love of humanity, universal brotherhood, sincerity, honesty, attitude, non-violence are some constituents of the healthy social life. Śaṅkaradeva and his

21. Lekharu, U, *Kathāguru Carit*, P. 118-119.

22. *Kīrttanghoṣā – Ajamil Upakhyana*, V. 214.

followers inculcated the social values by introduced various lyrics and dramas etc.

Thān and *sattrā* institution followed them.e.g-

samasta bhūtata byāpi āchu mai hari
sabāko mānibā tumi viṣṇu buddhi kari//²³

(I am present in all creatures, therefore you respect all as Viṣṇu)

Non-formal education is a notable feature of *Sattrā* institution where mass education starts from the floor of *Nāmghar* and teach ethical and positive values to the people which is useful in their day to day life.

1.4 Statement of the problem

Generally common people regarded *Thān* and *Sattrā* as religious institutions, because these institutions are related with religious sentiments and beliefs of the mass people and propagate the Vaiṣṇavism. This is the primary aim of the *Thān* and *Sattrā*, Secondary aim of these institutions are to develop the society with various educational and cultural activities.²⁴ Education is an ever widening and dynamic concept. Meaning of education depends on the cultural pattern and social condition of society. Vaiṣṇava movement of medieval Assamsese society and Śaṅkaradeva's education system which was related with human values developed the socio-cultural pattern of Assam society.

Śaṅkaradeva and his followers established *Thān* and *Sattrā* to propagate the religion i.e *Eka-Śaraṇa-Nāma-Dharma* and inculcate value education to reform and reconstruct the society. Every *Thān* and *sattrā* has a *Kīrttanghar* or *Devagṛha* which help to develop equality, work-culture, moral, spiritual, religious, social and hygienic

23. *Kīrttanghoṣā'*, *Sree kṛṣṇa Vaikunthaprayan*, V. 1820.

24. Goswami, K.N *The Sattrā Institutions of Assam*, Tamuly, B.N (ed) *The Blessed Iland*, 2013 .P 237.

value, through *Nāmprasaṅga* (chanting the name of God) *Aṅkiyā nāṭ* or *Bhāonā* (drama) *Borgīt* (Lyrics) *Śaraṇa* and *Bhajana* (initiation) *Japa* (meditation) *Yoga* (exercise) *nāc* or *nṛtya* (dance) etc.

Bardowā is the first place where Śaṅkaradeva established the first Kirtanghar. Instituion established by Śaṅkaradeva is known as *Thān*, *Kīrttanghar* or *Devagrha*. After Śaṅkaradeva institutions established by his followers are known as *sattrā*. Śaṅkaradeva started his journey of literature and other activities from Bardowā that was his birth place. Here Śaṅkaradeva stayed for 67 years and contributed in many ways and inculcated value education through these ways. Bardowā *Thān* maintains unity among the various caste and creed. *Thān* and *sattrā* followed the principle of Śaṅkaradeva i.e –

*jāti ajātika nābācanta bhagavante*²⁵

“There is no difference in the eye of God”

So the researcher tries to focus on the “**Contribution of *Thān* and *Sattrā* to the Value Education of Assam: With Special Reference to Bardowā *Thān*.**”

1.5 Significance of the Study

Education is an important aspect to develop and integrate the society. *Thān* and *Sattrā* are mainly the religious institutions of Assam, yet these institutions contributed to reform and reconstruct the society. There had been a large number of studies held on *sattrā*, *Thān*, *Vaiṣṇavas* and Śaṅkaradeva. But value education of *Thān* and *Sattrā* had not been made study scientifically and systematically and almost remained

25. *Bhāgavat* X, V. 1239

untouched. To develop the society value education is an important means. So the researcher has made an attempt to fill up the gap and tried to focus on the various values introduced by *Thān and sattra with special reference to Bardowā Thān*.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

There are many *Thān and Sattras* of Assam. These *Thān and Sattras* have contributed in different fields of Assamese society and so this study tried to give a short description about the contribution of *Thān and Sattras* to the value education of Assam. To study the all *Thāns and Sattras* within the limited period of time was not easy from all sides. So Bardowā *Thān* of Nagaon District the birth place of Śaṅkaradeva and his first established *Kīrttanghar* of the state of Assam was selected as the area of the study with special reference. Survey period of the study was 2016 January to 2017 December. Both the villages of Bardowā *Thān* viz. Saruhisā and Borhisā covered the area of the study. Sample of the study was 200 households, and age above 18 years. Researcher also visited various people and interacted with them to collect necessary data to fulfill the objectives. Researcher also visited Āi-Kanaklatā *Thān*, Barpetā *Sattra*, *sundaridiyā Sattra*, *Pātbouṣī Thān* and *Pātbouṣī Sattra*, Ganakushi *Thān*, Gangmou *Thān*, Nikamul *Sattra*, Samguri *Sattra* Kaliabar, Karatipar Nasattra, Gharmorā *Sattra*, Lakhimpur, Narowā Bālisatra, Kamalābāri *Sattra* for collection of related data to meet the objectives.

1.7 Objectives of the study

Objectives of the studies were-

1. To find out the objectives behind establishment of *Thān and Sattra*.

2. To find out the contributions of *Thān and Sattrā* to the value education of Assam.
3. To find out the contributions of Bardowā *Thān* to the value education.
4. To find out the impact of Bardowā *Thān* on the socio-cultural upliftment of the People of Bardowā.

1.8 Research Questions of the study

The research questions of the studies were-

1. Was there any objective behind establishment of *Thān and Sattrā*?
2. What are the contributions of *Thān and Sattras* to the value education?
3. What are the contributions of Bardowā *Thān* to the value education?
5. Is there any impact of Bardowā *Thān* on the socio-cultural upliftment of the People of Bardowā?

1.9 Conceptual Framework

Thān: The word *Thān* derived from the Sanskrit word *Sthān* which means “place”, residence, position or site.²⁶ There are various types of *Thān*, for example *Śiva Sthān*, *Mahāmāyā Thān*, etc. But it has a special meaning among the *Vaiṣṇava* of Assam as a religious and admirable place where *Vaiṣṇava Gurus* were related. According to ‘Hemkosh’ *Abhidhan Thān* means place or residence, a seat of religious head of the *Vaiṣṇavas*, a place of worship or a place of worship established at the cremation ground of a religious man for the memorial.²⁷ Therefore, the places where principal apostles of Assamese *Vaiṣṇavism* worked and died and where some of their

26. Apte, Vamon Shivam (2002) *The Students English- Sanskrit Dictionary*: P 344

27. Barua, H.Ch (7th ed 1989) *Hemkosh* : P. 482.

relics have been preserved are called *Thān*. In *Kāla samhati*, the places of cremation of religious heads are also called *Thān* or agni *Thān* by the disciples.²⁸

(*Kāla samhati* : A section of *sattrā*, owes for its origin to the Gopal Ātā of Bhavānipurīā)

Bardowā is the first *Thān* founded by Śaṅkaradeva in 1509.²⁹ This *Thān* had all major features of *sattrā*. Puruṣuttam Thakur wrote-

“*cāriphāle chārihāti mahābhaktagaṇa/*

caidhaya prasaṅga kāre nāmar kīrttan//

(The fourteen prayer was regularly held in the *Kīrttanghar*, where four *Hātīs* are there, (residence of *Bhakat*)³⁰

According to Rāmcharan Thākur’s *Gurucharit* the first *Thān* was established by Śaṅkaradeva at his twenty years, i.e. in the year 1468.

viṅśati vatsar yebe tān huyā āche/

śaṅkara gocara karilā loke pace//

(At the age of twenty the people said Śaṅkaradeva)

śaṅkare kīrttanaghar sājibāka lailā/

*bhthi bāndhibāka lāgi samasta āchilā//*³¹

(Śaṅkara built the *Kīrttanghar* and all came to built the abode)

From the writings of Lakshminath Bezbaroa, Śaṅkaradeva built the *Kīrttanghar* in the year 1468 when he was twenty.³²

Śaṅkaradeva said that

28. Sarma; S.N (Reprint 2016) *The Neo Vaiṣṇava movement & sattrā institution of Assam*:P 101.

29. Lekharu (ed 1952) *Katha Guru Carit* : P 34.

30. Mahanta,H.D (2015) *Bardowā Beacon* :P10-11),(Neog, M (2003) *Guru carit kathā* P 21.

31. Thakur, Ramcharan (25th edt 2015) *Guru Charit* , V. 1606, V. 1616.

32. Bezbaroa, L (New ed. 2010) *Sri Śaṅkaradeva and Sri Mādhavadeva*: P 28.

tumāra caraṇa cinti

*jāthāte bhakata thāke sehi puṇya sehi tīrtha shāna/*³³

(The place where devotees meditate the God's feet is the piety and holy place)

From above discussion it is found that the institution established by Śaṅkaradeva was known as *Thān*, *Kīrtanghar* or *Devagrha*. After that the institutions established by some of his followers were known as *sattra*.³⁴

During the time of Śaṅkaradeva Bardowā, Pātbāusī, Gangmou, Belguri etc. were known as *Thān*.³⁵ The word *Thān* (sacred place) also used to be applied to a *sattra* as it is done by Bhusan in case of Caturbhujā's visnupur *sattra*. The compound *Thān sattra* could also be substituted for *Thān* or *sattra*.³⁶

Sattra: The *sattra* is the most notable and outstanding character of Vaiṣṇavism in Assam. Śaṅkaradeva's Vaiṣṇava movement aimed at teaching the people about simple ways of living equality in the field of religion practicing non- violence and discarding sacrifice of birds, animals and human beings in the name of religion was largely the prevailing practice of that time.³⁷ Vaiṣṇava leader Śaṅkaradeva as a social reformer, philosopher and educationist tried to develop the communal harmony to strengthen the Assamese society with various methods and institutions. Though these institutions are now known as *sattra*, but Śaṅkaradeva did not established any *sattra*.³⁸

The term '*sattra*' is a Sanskrit word used in the sense of an alms house or charitable institutions and secondly in the sense of a sacrificial session. The

33. *Kīrttanghoṣā*, vedstuti 1668.

34. Barkakati, S.K (2007) *Purnanga Kathaguru Charit* :P 76.

35. Bhooayan, P (2007) *Netar Doctrine of Jagat Guru Shree Manta Śaṅkaradeva*: P 75.

36. Neog, M (1998) *Sankaradeva and His Time*: P.312.

37. Nath, D. (2007) *Sattra Society and Culture*: P 7

38. Borbarua , Hiteswar (ed2018) *Ahomar din* : P 558

etymological meaning of the word ‘*sattra*’ is a sitting or an association (sad + tra), ‘sad’ means good and ‘tra’ means liberate.³⁹

In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* it has been stated that during the course of a sacrificial session at the forest of Nimiṣā, suta Ugraśvavā explained the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* to the assembly of sages.⁴⁰

Bhaṭṭadeva, one of the eminent scholars and preceptors defines a *sattra* in the following lines:-

*yatra caranti saddarman kevala bhāgavat –priyāh,
navadhā bhāgavad bhaktih pratyaham yatra vartate,
tat-satram uttamaṁ kṣetraṁ vaiṣṇavaḥ sura-vanditam
tātsastha- vaiṣṇavaḥ sarve harināma parayaṇaḥ*

The place where the God’s favourite staunch devotees perform their religious and nine fold devotional duties to God, is the supreme place *Sattra*, highly admired by the *Vaiṣṇavas* and the God’s there live the *Vaiṣṇavas* the lover of *Harināma*.⁴¹

In Śaṅkaradeva’s time the daily sitting of the monks and disciples as used to attend them, where held in the open or under the shade of tress.⁴² The word *Sattra* was possibly applied in Assam Vaiṣṇavism to mean an assembly of devotees where discussed about Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.

*sattra grha sajāilanta
rāmrāi mahā raṅga-mane;*

39. Sarma, S.N (2016) *The Neo-vaiṣṇavite Movement and the sattra Institution of Assam*: P 103

40. Ibid :P 103.

41. Rajguru, S (1988) *Medieval Assamese Society*, P 268.

42. Neog, M (1998) *Śaṅkaradeva and His Times*: P 312.

“Rāmray very gradly built a *sattrā* gṛha (house for the meeting of *bhakatas*)”⁴³

“The *Sattrā* is a unique religious institution of Assam which gives religious food to the thousands today and keeps the masses within one religious brotherhood.”⁴⁴

According to “Hemkosh Abhidhan” “*Sattrā*” is a religious institution of Assam a monastery.⁴⁵

A full fledged *Sattrā*, that is one with a *nām-ghar*, a *moṇikūṭ*, and *hātīs* is also envised as having been built each at Gāngmau, at Dhuwāhāt and at Chunpora. A regular *sattrā* probably had to be built at Pātbāuṣī in the days of Mādhava and Dāmodara.⁴⁶ According to Bishnuram Medhi, he gave us universal religion, culture, music, dance and drama and a well-knit democratic social institution of *sattrā* through which he preached his religious tenets. In these *sattras* people of all classes and castes whether devotees, disciples, followers or sympathizers meet together and perform social and religious functions.⁴⁷

In the *Vaiṣṇavite* culture of Assam *Thāns* and *Sattras* are the religious places where *bhakatas* and their *Gurus* practiced and preached their religious faith and cultivate their culture. The main aim of these institutions is to integrate the scattered people into one society marked with equality, uniform social codes and unique cultural components.

43. Ibid: P. 311.

44. Rajkhowa, Benudhar (ed 1923) *Sri Sri Śaṅkaradeva's Gunmala* : Introduction.

45. Borua, Hem Ch (7th edn 1989) *Hemkosh* : 934.

46. Neog, M (1998) *Śaṅkaradeva and His Times*: P 313.

47. Neog, D (2nd ed 1998) *Jagat Guru Sankaradew* : P IX.

There were many *Thāns and Sattras* founded by the Vaiṣṇavas at various places of the state. According to Hiteswar Barbarua, there were total two hundred and fifty *sattras*.⁴⁸ The total number of *Sattras* in Assam is nearly six hundred at present.⁴⁹

There are total four hundred seven (407) *Sattras* in the list of S.N.Sarma.⁵⁰

There were six hundred *Thān and Sattras* found in the *Pabitra Assam*.⁵¹ There are total seven hundred and fifty *Sattras* found in the *Sattra jyoti*.⁵² There are many small or big, new or old *Sattras* in Assam.

Structure of *Thān and Sattra*: An Assamese Vaiṣṇava *Thān and Sattra* proper consists of a square enclosure wall, varying according or gateways called *karāpāt* and containing four rows of huts (*hātī*) or long houses and the central temple, composite of shrine called *Maṇikūṭ* or *Bhājghar* and an assembly hall.⁵³ The eastern row is bigger than others, because *sattrādhikār* and other principal office bearers stay there.

The arrangement of *Sattras* can be compared with Buddhist monasteries or vihāras with the provision of the Monk dwellings. But these are not same as *Sattras* of Assam.⁵⁴ It is however to be noted that the Vaiṣṇava establishments of Assam are generally called *Sattras* and not maths.

The main structure of *Sattras* can be divided into four parts: *Nāmghar*, *Maṇikūṭ*, *Hātī* and *Bāṭcorā*.

48. Borbarua, H.Ahmar *Din* (Reprint 2018): P 553-571.

49. Devogswami, K.N “The satra institution of Assam” Tamuli, D.N (ed 2015) *Blessed I land*: P.238.

50. Sarma, S.N (Reprint2016) *The Satra Institution of Assam*: P 216-227.

51. Neog, M (2nd ed 1968) *Pabitra Assam* :P 117-162.

52. Goswami, I. “Aitijyandinta Nagaon and sattra” Goswami, G.kt. (ed 2005) *sattrajyoti* :P28)

53. Neog, M (1998) *Śaṅkaradeva and His Times* :309

54. Sarma, S.N (2016) *The Neo-Vaisnavite Movement and the Sattra Institute of Assam*: P 100.

Nāmghar or Kīrttanghar: The central institute within a *Sattrā* is the prayer-hall known as *nām-ghar*, *kīrttanghar* or *devagr̥ha*.⁵⁵ The *Nāmghar* serves the purpose of a prayer hall as well as hall for religious meetings and discussion and also a stage for dramatic performance and a venue of village panchayats. *Nāmghar* is open for all castes and creed. *Kīrttanghar* is the precious gift of Śaṅkaradeva to the Assamese people. Mādhavadeva advised his followers to build the house with various colours and creepers and joy-vijay in the front gate of house which was known as Rangialghar or ranggriha.⁵⁶

Maṇikūṭ: In the *Maṇikūṭ* the idol of the deity or sacred scripture is kept which can be said as *Sanctum sanctorum*.⁵⁷ It is adjacent to the eastern end of the *Nāmghar*. All the valuable things, jewels and sacred idol are kept here. Literally *Maṇikūṭ* means jewels house.

A separate house adjacent to the *Maṇikūṭ* is known as *padaśilā* where the footwear or foot print of early saints are kept.⁵⁸ In Bardowā there kept the foot print of Śaṅkaradeva in a stone.

Hāṭi: Sets of cloisters for monks within the main enclosure of a *Sattrā* and outside this enclosure for married clerics are known from the earliest times as *hāṭi* or *bhakatar hāṭi* (rooms for monks)⁵⁹

55 . Neog, M (1998) *Śaṅkaradeva and His Time*, P,314

56. Neog, M, “A classic works of the stttra Tradition” Tamuli, D.N. (Ed. 2013) *Blessed Iland*: P.229.

57. Sarma, S.N (2016) *The Neo-Vaisnavite Movement and the Sattrā Institute of Assam*: P 100.

58. Ibid :P 100.

59. Neog , M (1998) *Śaṅkaradeva and His Times* :P 324

Bāṭcorā or karāpāṭ: The entrance leading to the interior of a *Sattrā* is usually marked by a small open house known as *Bāṭcorā* or *karāpāṭ*. Distinguished guests are first received here and then escorted to the *Sattrā*. Minors *Sattras* have only *Nāmghar* and *Maṇikūṭ*, no *hāṭīs* are there.⁶⁰

Parties of Sattrā : Each *Sattrā* is consisted of four principal parties. These are -

1. *Adhikār* or *Sattrīyā*, that is the head of the *Sattrā*.
2. *Dekā adhikār*, that is the junior *adhikār*. In the absent of *adhikār* *dekā adhikār* performs the duties.
3. *Bhakats*, that is the clerical devotees residing within the walls of the *Sattrā*.
4. Lay devotees or disciples live in villages or towns and leading house hold life is known as *śiṣyas*.⁶¹

Types of Sattras : There are five types of *Sattras*. These are --

1. The *adhikār* and clerical devotees live within the *Sattrā* and lead a celibate life i.e. *Udasin Sattrā*.
2. The *adhikār* and the devotees lead married life, i.e. *Grhastī Sattrā*.
3. There is also a third type of *Sattrā* where the *Adhikār* only leads celibate life.⁶²
4. The fourth type is admixture of the first and second type.
5. There is another type of *Sattras* in western Assam known as *satsaṅgī math* which is popularly known as *sacang*.⁶³

60. Sarma, S.N (2016) *The neo-Vaiṣṇavite Movement and the Sattrā Institution of Assam* :P 101.

61. Ibid: P 102.

62. Rajguru, S (1988) *Medieval Assamese Society* :P 68.

63. Sarma, S.N (2016) *The Sattrā Institution of Assam*: P 115

Samhati: After the death of Śaṅkaradeva Vaiṣṇavism order got divided into four divisions which is known as *saṁhati*. The main religious principles are not so different among them, only extend rules and some ideological differences are found among them.⁶⁴

These four groups are-

1. *Brahma Saṁhati* (founded by Dāmodardeva and Harideva) The most important *Brahma Saṁhati Sattras* are– Kuruwābāhi, Auniātī, Dakṣiṇpāt, Garmūr, Vyāskuchi etc.
2. *Kāla saṁhati* (founded by Gopaldeva) *Kāl Saṁhati Sattras* are Bar yadumaṇi, Dihing, Māyāmora, Kathpar etc.
3. *Puruṣa saṁhati* (founded by successor of Śaṅkaradeva) –some main *Sattras* of *Puruṣa saṁhati* are – Narowā, Śalguri, Kowamora, Samaguri, Bālisattra etc.
4. *Nikā saṁhati* (founded by Mādhavadeva) some *Nikā saṁhati Sattras* are – Barpetā, Kamalābarī, Sundarīdiyā etc.⁶⁵

Location of Sattra: Usually *Sattras* were established on the bank of the Brahmaputra or its tributaries, because at that time water was the main way of transport and communication. The fertility of land and availability of fish and water was another factor of site selection. The nature and attitude of local people were also taken into consideration while selecting a site for *Sattra*.⁶⁶ e.g. Śaṅkaradeva left Dhuwahat a

64. Deva Goswami (2014) *Sattra Sanskritir Ruprekha* :P 1

65. Neog, M (1998) *Śaṅkaradeva and His Time* P.153-154.

66. Sarma, S.N (2016) *The neo-vaiṣṇavite Movement and the Sattra Institution of Assam* : P 100

place under Āhom kingdom because of their brutality and Bardowā for the brutality of Kachāri.⁶⁷

Śaṅkaradeva and his family members and devotees left kapala for unhygienic condition.⁶⁸

Functions of *Thān* and *Sattras*: Functions of *Thān* and *Sattras* has been classified into two categories –

1. Primarily they are to propagate the *vaiṣṇava* faith to initiate disciple to provide ethic devotional codes and rules of conduct for neophytes and to hold daily and occasional services.
2. The secondary functions of the *Sattras* are to see that good social relation is maintained among fraternity, to develop the spirit of co-operation to provide adequate facilities for the dissemination of ancient and traditional learning, including the cultivation of art and craft. Educational and cultural activities fall within the second category.⁶⁹

67. Sarma, S.N “vaiṣṇavism” Borpujari, H.K (3rd ed) *The Comprehensive History of Assam* (2007), Vol III P.232-233

68 . Borkakaty, S.K (2015) *Srimanta Śaṅkaradeva a Multifaceted Genius* :P 23

69. Devagoswami, K.N “The Sattras Institutions of Assam” Tamuly, B.N (ed) *The Blessed I land* 2013: P 237