

Significant Contributions of the Satra Institution of Assam: An Analytical Study

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[Satra is a socio-religious and cultural institution, developed in medieval period which refer to the the Neo Vaishnavite monastery in Assam. It impacts on religion, literature, fine arts and social life of Assam. Srimanta Sankardeva, a Vaishavite scholar, who profounded the Neo-Vaishnavism in Assam developed this Satra institution towards the end of the 15th century AD. Sankardeva took various measures to reform and unite the contemporary Assamese society and also to spread and expand the Neo-Vaishnavite religion. Before Sankardeva, there was absence of unity in every sphere of society in Assam. Under the patronage of Satra institution the process of assimilating the non-Hindus to the Hindu fold started with new spirit. Satra plays a vital role in the life of the people of Assam as well as in the formation of Assamese society. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyse the establishment, contribution and function of satra institution of Assam and also its impact on Assamese society.]

Satra is a socio-religious and cultural institutional centre, mainly associated with the Ekasarana Naama Dharama tradition of Neo-Vaishnavism in the state of Assam. Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva and his chief disciple Sri Sri Madhabdeva along with the other disciple like Harideva and Damodardev established the Satra institution to fulfil the cultural needs of the people of the region. It is a heritage institution of Neo-Vaishnavite movement of the state. The word 'Satra' originates in the Bhagavata Purana and other Veda. In Sanskrit term 'sattra' means an assembly of devotees. This word 'Satra' comes from the two words 'Sat' means 'truth' and 'tra' means relief. Though Satra is a religious institution but it is not only a platform of religious

purpose but also a multi-dimensional institute. Because Satra worked for various field as centers of religious learning, residential school, cultural promoting and others. The first Satra was established by Srimanta Sankardeva at his birth place Bordowa in about 1494 AD. After that Madhabdeva, Damodardeva, Harideva, Gopaldeva took great initiative to expand this institute. The main emphasis of the Neo-Vaishnavite movement was on bhakti or devotion. As the movement evolved new institution of Satra and Namghar which began to serve not only as the instrument spreading the faith but also helped to sustain to stabilize Neo-Vaishnavism by making it a part and parcel of Assamese social and cultural life. The Satra Institution in Assam has produced deep impact on the socio religious and socio-economic life of the state. The Cultural Nationalism was brought

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Hati: Hati means rows or set of the residence area for the Bhakat. Centering round the Manikuta and Nanghar exist four rows of residential huts intended for clerical devotees. These four rows of huts are known as Chari-Hati. The word Hati is derived from Sanskrit Hata meaning a market or fair. To each devotee is allotted a hut consisting of one or more rooms according to his status and need. The Bhakats who live under the rule and regulation of Satras, is supervised by Satradhikar.

Contribution of Satra: There are so many contributions of Neo-Vaishnavite movement in Assam as Satra is the main institution around which all religious and cultural activities move.

Literature: The Satra institution can be called the birth place of Assamese literature. Sankaradeva and his chief disciple composed a good number of songs (Borgeet), dramas (Ankiya Nat), verse narratives and other types of literatures and other type of work describing the teaching of Neo-Vaishnavism. Sankaradeva wrote the 25 sections of the Kiritana ghosha and Madhavadeva wrote the Namghosa, the two most sacred text of Neo-Vaishnavism. Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva each composed six one-act plays in the Brajabuli language. Sankaradeva's dramas are Rukmini-Harana, Parijat-Harana, Ram-vijaya while Madhavadeva are Chor-dhara, Pimparguchua, Arjuna-bhanjana, Bhujana-vihara. The Satra institution gave birth to a new branch of literature in the form of Caritra-Puthis or biographical works. These religious biographies are of two types: (i) Satra-Vansavali (ii) Katha-Gurucarita. Another important contribution of the Satra institution is the prose literature such as Bardowa-Kathacarita, Santa-samprada and Sat-Sampradaya-Katha.

Songs and dance: Sankaradeva composed 34 devotional songs, later known as Borgeeta, Madhavadeva complementing them with 157 of his composition. Both of them wrote a number of songs called Bhatima (panegyrics) in praise of the worshipful Lord. The next class of songs is the Anker Geet. These are the songs of dramas. Another important song is the Nam-kiratara which is accompanied by the use of musical instruments like—Khol, Mridanga, Nagara and Bar Tai (cymbal).

Satra have developed a school of classical dance in Assam popularly known as Satriya-nao. Satriya Nritya is one among the eight principal classical Indian dance tradition. Of the several types of classical dances prevalent in Satras are Sutra-dhara nritya, Natuwa-nao, Rasa-nritya, Krishna nritya.

Bhaona: Bhaona is a form of drama created by Sankaradeva. One act plays written Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva and other Vaishnava poets are enacted through the medium of this Bhaona performance. The Bhaona is normally performed at common prayer hall both in the Satras and in the village Namghars. The Bhaona has some special characteristics like the plays,

dialogues, costumes, ornaments, entry and foot-steps of the characters which differentiate it from other plays. 'Chinyayatra' was the first Ankiya Nat of Sankaradeva. 'Patni Prasad', 'Parijat Haran', 'Kaliya Daman', 'Keli Gopal', 'Rukmini Haran', and 'Ram Vijay' are his six Ankiya Nats. All these Ankiya Nats were written in Brajavali language. Bhaona was used by Sankaradeva as vehicle to propagate Neo-Vaishnavism in Assam the growth and popularity of Bhaona gave birth to a class of artisans who specialised in the art of preparing costume, decorations and accessories of the performance.

Besides the crafts connected with Bhaona, there are a few more craft artisans who devoted to themselves in preparing of miniature images of deities, thrones and seats (asana) of ivory, beautifully decorated and painted with various designs. The class of people who devoted themselves to this type of works known as Khanikar.

Educational: Both the Satra institution and the Namghar were a centre of learning and education. In medieval period, all the important Satra institution used to maintain educational institutions like Tols and Pathshalas to impart education, which were run by the reputed scholars. The Satras imparted both formal and informal education. It imparted formal education through the Tols or Cetuspathis maintained by some affluent Satras. In these institutions, students were imparted on religious scriptures and lore, grammar, law, music, dance, craft etc. The Satras enriched the Assamese society with songs, dramas and dances.

Social Harmony: Another notable contribution of Satra is its works towards the upliftment of the socially backward classes and bordering communities of Assam by including in the Neo-Vaishnavite religion through the process of 'Saran'. Because Neo-Vaishnavite movement taught equality of all human beings and accepted disciple from amongst the all tribesmen of Ahom, Chutiya, Koclis, Mising, Kachari, Garo, Bhutia, Kaivarta and Bania etc. and all these tribes are brought into the fold of Neo-Vaishnavism and placed them all in equal footing.

The Satra institution created social harmony and oneness and gave a free and open platform to people for assembling together without any barrier of caste, creed and religion. The Satra institution has created a new outlook to the Assamese society through the upliftment of the backward classes and minimization of caste distinction.

Conclusion

In the light of the above discussion, it can be concluded that the special feature of Assamese Neo-Vaishnavism is the Satra Institution which influence on the religious, social, culture, education and economic life of the people of Assam and helped in the unity of Assamese society. It gives new literature, developed a new kind of Philosophy and introduced and popularize a new type art and music in the form of 'Borgeets' (a kind of devotional song) and drama which is called, 'Ankiya

forward to the indigenous people with the help of Satra institution and Namghar which has a major role to play in the preservation and development of the indigenous culture of the region.

Satra: The most distinguished characteristics of Neo-Vaishnavism in Assam was Satra institution through which the movement was initiated and propagated. Sankardeva is said to have established the first Satra at Bordowa, his birth place. There are three types of Satras in Assam i.e. Mahapurushia or Sankar-Madhab Satra, Damodaria Satra (the Satras that founded by Damodar Deva) and Harideva Satra (founded by Harideva). Each Satra comprises three principal parties namely - Satradhikara (head of the Satra), Deka-Adhikara, Bhakata (deputy head of the Satra), Bhakat (clerical devotees residing within the walls of the Satra) and Sisya (lay devotees).

Satradhikara: The head of a Satra is popularly known as 'Satradhikar' and popularly called Gosain or Mahanta, who is the religious head and spiritual guide of the flock under his care. He was usually a life-long celibate. The formal initiation ceremony 'sarana' and the confirmatory Bhajana are conducted under his direct supervision.

Deka Satradhikara: Next to Satradhikara in power and prestige is Deka Satradhikara who usually becomes the head after the demise of the Satradhikara. When the Satradhikara remains absent or goes out on a tour the Deka Satradhikara performs the duties of the head.

Bhakata: The term Bhakata means any devotee but in the context of Satra this term is applied to those devotees who either household ecclesiastical office of the Satra or lead life of a celibate within the Satra campus. So the Bhakat lived under the guidance of the Satradhikar and the celibates were properly trained or educated for monastic life. Celibate devotees were known as Kewalia Bhakat.

Sisya: Lay devotees or disciple of a Satra are called Sisya. They generally live in scattered villages and towns or Hatis, leading the life of house-holder.

For efficient management of the Satra, several functionaries are appointed. Among other important functionaries were the Bhagawati, who recited the Bhagawata, the Pathak, who read the religious text, the Deori, who distributed the Mah-Prasad (sacred offerings consisting of pulses, uncooked rice and fruits) after the congregational prayer, the Bharali or the store-keeper, the Sravani or hearers who listened to the daily recitations and expositions of the scriptures, the Gayan or singers and Bayan or players of musical instruments. Income of the Satra consists of two sources - (i) Land granted by the king (ii) Religious tithes contributed by the disciple. There are different types of congregational services introduced in the Satras which continue from morning till the early hours of night. The whole programme is called Naam-Prasanga (singing of prayers

with musical instruments in Satras). These congregational service are group into three categories - (i) Morning Prayer Service (ii) Afternoon Prayer Service (iii) Evening Prayer Service.

The Namghar: The centre of the activities of a Satra is the Namghar. The name itself signifies its role of a prayer hall for the word 'Naam' means prayer and 'Ghar' means house so the Namghar is also known as the House of Prayers. Namghar were introduced in Assam by great saint Sankardeva to practice Naam (devotional song) and Bhakti of God (devotion). In 1503, Sankardeva constructed the first Namghar at Bordowa in Nagaon district. The Namghar was the centre of the religious life of the village people of Assam which promoted its intellectual and cultural activities. Here congregational chanting of prayers on all important occasions, religious activities, discussions and recitations of Bhagavata Purana and community prayers were held, festivals were celebrated, greater problems of life, philosophy and religion were discussed and debated. The Namghar served as a stage for dramatic performance known as Ankiya Nat or Bhaona and different art forms such Satriya dance and Borgets which attract the common mass to familiar and identify with the philosophy of the Neo-Vaishnavism. Namghar has been serving as a forum of not only for religious but also for venue of socio-cultural activities of the community such as village prayer hall, a cultural centre, a village court and a village parliament etc. Namghar fulfilled the ideal of Sankardeva of an equal society, where people from different sections irrespective of caste, creed, tribe and community will be able to sit together for prayer of God, dine and any other purpose. Existence of a Namghar is noticed in every village of Assam.

Manikuta: The actual shrine where the idol of the deity or sacred scripture is kept, is called Manikuta also known as 'Bhajghar'. It is a smaller structure than the Namghar and generally attached to the latter adjoining the eastern end. In addition to the idol and sacred scripture, all the precious things dedicated to the deity are kept in the Manikuta. It is the 'Sactum-Sanctorum' of entire establishment and all valuables and jewels of the Satra including the sacred idol are kept and preserved here, it is called Manikuta, literally the house of jewels.

In a separate house adjacent to the Manikuta, relics of the early reformers are being preserved in some Satras. It is commonly known as Pada-Sila-Ghar, because it usually contains foot-impressions or foot-wears of some early saints or religious head. In this area and a certain limit lay devotees are not allowed in.

Batchara: The entrance leading to the interior of a Satra is known as Batchara or Karapat, which is usually marked by a small gate and functions as the gate-house. The word Batchara means two words 'Bat' means path or road and 'Chara' means small house like gate. Distinguished guests are received at that place.

Nat', or 'Bhaona' (a kind of theatrical performance) and 'Satriya Dance' a mode of conveying the principle of 'Ek-Sarana-Nama-Dharama' based on the devotion to one single God 'Lord Krishna'. It is noteworthy that the performance of Bhaona gives birth to a class of artisans who are specialized in the art of preparing masks, costumes and effigies. One unique feature of Satra Institution is that it is democratically managed where rules and regulations are framed for management of Satra. Along with the religious aspect, Satra Institution tremendously influenced and made immense contribution to the social and cultural life of the Assamese society. Detachment from material pleasure and attainment of salvation are the hallmarks of Satra Institution. In the Neo-Vaisnavite religion propagated by Sankardeva and his disciple, there is no distinction among people on the basis of caste and creed. Sankardeva brought the greatest social reform by giving social recognition of the common man without making any distinction among them. Neo-Vaishnavism is the most liberal, tolerant and simplest way of attaining God and it is found as economically more viable, which may be termed as religion of common masses. There was no any concept of caste, class and racial distinction. The main principle of the Neo-Vaishnavism is that irrespective of their caste, class, race could attain spiritual excellence through simple devotion and faith in one supreme God. People from all castes and tribes were accepted as disciple. The philosophy of the movement was the

enlightenment of the human conscience through universal love. He embraced into his fold people of all denomination: the Misings, the Garos, the Bhutias, the Mikirs, the Kayastha, the Kachari, the Chutiya, the Kaivartya, the Koch, the Ahom and also people of other faith like Chandasai, a Muslim which encompassed the social, cultural and religious spheres of Assamese society. Communal harmony and universal brotherhood, contribution towards the classical dance and cultural activities are the unique feature of the Satra.

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Effectiveness of Metacognitive Scaffolding on Learning Outcomes for Force and Motion in Physical Science at the Secondary Level

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[Metacognitive scaffolding is an important strategy used to help learners bridge their learning gaps with deeper understandings. In this study, a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design was adopted to examine the effectiveness of metacognitive scaffolding on the learning outcomes of the force and motion unit in physical science for ninth-grade students in an Indian context. One hundred and seven (107) students from two government-sponsored schools chosen using the purposive sampling technique in the city of Kolkata were sampled. There were 55 students in the experimental group and 52 students in the control group that were randomly selected as intact class members. Only the experimental group of pupils received treatment via metacognitive scaffolding. To obtain data, the researcher developed a criteria test with a reliability coefficient of 0.78 and a validity of 0.88. In SPSS, an independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) were used to analyse the data. The results demonstrated that the students who received treatment acquired a deeper understanding of the concepts of force and motion than the others.]

Meaningful learning with a deeper understanding of scientific concepts helps learners in novel situations in today's world. Previous research findings established that scaffolding is extremely important in the acquisition of a greater degree of meaningful learning (Ye et al., 2020; Cook et al., 2018).

The scaffolding approach assists students in enhancing knowledge, experience, and new skills (Azevedo et al., 2005). The key role of scaffolding is to prompt pupils in a conducive learning atmosphere (Horz et al., 2009). Effective prompts mould the attention of learners to important concepts that they have missed, facilitate learning gaps, and assist them in thinking scientifically (Ge and Land, 2003). It also enhances skills for solving the situation-based problems of their daily lives (Rhee, 2007).

Metacognition refers to higher-order thinking that helps learners self-regulate their learning process (Molenaar

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