CHAPTER - IV
CHAPTER-IV

RELIGIOUS CONDITION

In the Medieval period the political condition of Assam was unstable. The political instability helped to bring about a chaotic condition in the religious sphere also. The majority of the people belonged to non-Aryan tribes having distinct manners, customs and religious beliefs. *Vaishnavism* and *Saivism* occupy a permanent place in the religious history of the village Garigaon. Muslims are also take part a important rule in this area.

1. **Vaisnavism:**

The *Kalika Purana* mentions as many as four incarnations of *Vishnu* being worshipped in different places of Assam. Two of these are identified with two centres of *Vishnu* worship in this area. One of this is *Vishnu;* worship as *Vâsudevâ* in the place Garigaon. The *Kalika Purana* devotes a full chapter (Chapter 81) to the description of vâsudevâ worship. “More than one king patronised the worship of *Vâsudevâ* and Brahmins were endowed with land grants for learning and devotion to the god vâsudevâ” 29

In the “Vasudevā Gohāi ghar”, vāsudevā is worship with the help of the Assamese translation of the Ramayana by Mādhavākāndāli, the court poet of the Kāchāri king Māhmāṇikyā of the 14th century A.D.

“Another type of Vaishnavism, a kind of esoteric Vaishnavism came into existence, which was practised in the Sācāngs. Sācāng institution was similar to the sāṭrā institution.30

In this village there is a one of the oldest Namghār (Sācāng), which has acrosed more than about 353 years and it is related to vāisnāvite faith. It is quite remarkable how Sankaradeva’s Eka-Sarana faith concentrated on the dāysā aspect of devotion to god, which conceived of man’s relationship to god as that of a faithful slave to his master. In the Sācāng, “It consists a prayer hall where an idol of Rādhā and Krishnā united together in love was preserved and worshipped. This was secret sect and known as Purnādhābiyā or Bārkhelīyā community. The devotees, who followes the sect were called Purnādhābiyā or Bārkhelīyā bhākātās meaning devotees who hold to the complete one or belonging to the great sect.31

The devotees of this sect belonged to operationally to the people of Koch, kāivārtas, and Jāloī Keots. The esoteric practices were widely

30. Das P.C : The Blessed land, 1999, p. 34.
practiced in the Sācāṅg. Sexoyogic elements and the five makaras, viz; the elements of women, wine, meat, muraba and fish were considered as specific means of sādhānā or āuster practice of the devotees.

2. Saivism:

The worship of Shiva was prevalent in Assam from ancient times. Shiva was the tutelary god of ancient kings of Kāmrūpā from the fifth to the 12th centuries. The Kālikā purāṇā and the yogini-tāntrā have mentioned several places scared to god Shiva and there still exist many Shiva temples in Kamrup district. Some of which have been in existence at least since the time of the composition of the Kālikā Purāṇā. The Shiva temple at west Jalukbari, which is called the Lānkeśhwar Dhām is famous from ancient times. Many devotees are going to worshipped at this temple from the village Garigaon. Kāleshwar Dhām, which is situated at the present Guahati University area, is one of the most important temples of Shiva. Shiva is worshipped in this temple as a Kāliā Gohāin form. The images of Shiva and Pārvāti are installed in this temple. Both the temples are situated surrounding the village Garigaon. Therefore, Many Hindu peoples of this area are being impact with Sāivism. The Hindu people of this area practised a form of Primitive Sāivism where the worship was carried out by sacrifice of Buffaloes, Goats, Pigeons, Ducks and Cocks and by the offering of rice and milk.
3. Saktism:

"Saktism is the worship of Sakti or the female principle, the primary factor in creation and reproduction of the universe." Sakti, generally as the spouse of Shivā, is worshipped in her different forms, of which Devi Durgā and Kāli are the best known.

One of the most important devotees, Zanti Ram, of this area, is follower of the Saktism cult, who is worshipped Devi and Kāli forms. He is also the devotee of the Kāmākhyā temples. In this temple Sakti was worshipped according to tantrics rites and sacrifices. Many Hindu People of this area, the worship is carried out by sacrifice of Goat, Pigeons, Ducks and Cocks etc. to the Kāmākhyā temples. But Saktism is not more spreadable amongst the Hindu people of this area. It is said that Kāli, rare in other places of this area, is a household deity in Garigaon(balapara, A ward). In this temple the Kāli form is worship with the sacrifice of Goat which is also relating to the Kāmākhyā temple. Probably the Saktism is rare due to affect of the neo-vaishnavite movement led by Sānkārdevā, which had influence on every section of the population of Garigaon.

4. Islam:

"Islam means generally peace. There is no god except Allah and Muhammad is Allah’s Messenger". It requires Muslims to believe his

32. Das P.C : The Blessed Land, 1999, p. 36.
angels, his sacred book *Quārān* and his messengers. All the prophets from Adam to Muhammad, and all the sacred books revealed to them, are regarded as the religious heritage of Islam. Muhammad is the last prophet of the Islam. All the Muslims of the world are the follower of the last prophet Muhammad’s. It is generally believed that Islam came to Assam in the 13th century and during the Ahom-Mughal conflict. In the Muslim society of this area, there is a tomb of Sufi Saint named Jalaluddin Tabrezi who was came with his disciples to propagate Islam in the present Garigaon. One of the unique disciples of Ajan Pir named Jonab Mahammad Taibullah came to the present Garigaon to propagate Islam. The Muslims are prayed five times in the Mosque. The Muslims of Garigaon fall into two classes – Māriā and Gāriā. Both Māriā and Gāriā are assembled in the Mosque to pray Allah. They also attend the weekly prayer at noon on Friday.

**Namghar or Gohai ghar of the village:**

a)  *Burhā Nāmghār* :

Basudeva Namghar, popularly known as Burha Nanghar is the oldest known religious institution is the *Pāglāpārā* of this locality. Which religious institution set up for preaching the religious teachings of *Sānkārdeva*. “It is believed to have been established about 355 years ago. It is also evident from the name of the Namghar that it was set up long
back. It is believed that one Bhākāt named Mukul Das found a manuscript written by Sānkārdevā in the river Brahmaputra near the present day Nāmghār". 33

The Bhākāt then established a Nāmghār in his own house with the manuscript on the Thāpānā. Of course, it is not clear whether the Ek-Sārānānām Dhārmā preached by Sānkārdevā became prevalent in the locality after the setting up of the Nāmghār. It has been mentioned by elderly people of the village that there lived one Gāriā Māhāntā who preached Ek-Sārānā religion in the village.

Table No. -3. The name of the Bhakat:

1. Late - Garia Mahanata
2. Late – Pirthu Bhakat.
3. Late – Anandi Mandal.
4. Late – Murar Gharia Mahanta.
5. Late – Gedo Bhakat
6. Late – Anandhua Bhakat
7. Late – Bhogiram Bhakat
8. Late – Sukuram Bhakat
After the death of these above mentioning Bhākāts, a Bhākāt named Jaliram Mahanta was maintaining the Sāsāng or the Nāmghār, who is coming from the Sāṭrā at Khudrā dāḍhi near Hāzo. His disciples were the, viz-

Table no. 4

1. Late – AkkadahBhakat.
2. Late – Gedoram Bhakat.
3. Late – Purnaram.
4. Late – Ramsing.
5. Late – Razani.
6. Late – Ravi Das.
7. Late – Uma Das.
8. Sri.- Suren Das

Presently Suren Das the son of late Umakanta Das is working as the Bhākāt. The Nāmghār has relations with a Sāṭrā at Khudrā Dāḍhi near Hāzo. There are three Puthi of Sāshipāt, viz; one Muthā Sāstrā, the second one is Gotā Bhāg and a third one is Tāttā Sāstrā

b) Shayam Rai Gohain Ghar:

"It is established on about 1500 A.D. In 1928 A.D., during the ruling time of the British, it is reestablished with modern pattern. It
consist a prayer hall where an idol of *Shāyām Sundār Krishnā* was preserved and worshipped. This religious institution set up for preaching the religious teachings of Sānkārdevā. Some people opinion that – “It was setup for preaching the religious teachings of Dāmodār devā”. But in the present situation, the *EK Sārānā nāmdhārmā* preached by Sānkārdevā became prevalent in the locality of the setting up of the *Gohāin Ghār*.

The Medhi’s of the *Gohāin Ghār* are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table No: 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Late Sonaram Patowari</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Late Nowaram Patowari</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Late Gahin Patowari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Late Prabin Ch. Patowari</td>
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</tbody>
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c) **Dargah and Mosque of this area:**

*Dargah of Jalaluddin Tabrezi*: Sufi Saint Jalaluddin Tabrezi visited Kamrupa in the 13th century A.D. At first the Sufi Saint Tabrezi settled in *Hāzo* and from this place he came with his disciples to

propagate Islam in the present Garigaon. People believed that Tabrezi was buried at Garigaon and there is a tomb in Fākirpārā of the village, which has been identified with that of Tabrezi. It was identified by the disciple of Azan Pir which name was Jonab Muhammad Taibullah in about 14th century A.D. Taibullah had came to propagate Islam in the area with the direction of another Sufi Pir, named Ajan Pir. The disciples of Tabrezi who stayed in the area are called Maria. It is believed that 200 (two hundred) Bighas of land was given by the Ahom king Rajeswar Singha in the name of Dārgāh as a presentation in the honour of great Sufi Saint Jalaluddin Tabrezi. The historical record was lost at unavoidable circumstances. The tomb has been playing a vital role. Sufi saint preached the spiritual teaching between the people of both Hindu and Muslim communities. In the time of the great Vāisnāvā saint Sānkārdevā, people of the both religion accepted and followed the message of religion and social values. Both the Muslim and Hindu people assemble together in the Mājār (tomb) of the great Sufi Saint Tabrezi and pray for the welfare and prosperity of their families and the village. The Muslims of this area celebrate 'URUS Mubārāk' in the month of Feb-March (Fālgun – Chāitrā). It is celebrated in the memory of the great Sufi Saint Hazarat Jalaluddin Tabrezi.
Table No – 6

List of the Mosques:

1. Mosque of *Fencypara*.
2. Mosque of *Fakirpara* or old Mosque.
3. Mosque of *Pahlanpara*.
4. Mosque of *Nadir Kash*.
5. Mosque of *Darul-ulum*.
6. Mosque of *Aortal*.
7. Mosque of *Bidyanagar*.
8. Mosque of *Medhipara*.

Educational institute in the Modern period:

During the British period a primary school is established in about 1890 A.D. which name is 4th no Garigaon primary school.

Table No – 7

Name of the School/Institution in the area:

1. Garigaon M.E. Madrasa
2. Balak Muktab
3. *Bezpara* Prathamik Vidalaya
4. Garigaon Balika Muktab School
5. Jalukbari Girls High School
6. Jalukbari H.S. School
7. 4 No.Garigaon Balak Parthamik Vidalaya
8. 4No.Garigaon Balika Parthamik Vidalaya
9. Garigaon Därul-Ulum Madrasa.
Ending:

With the consolidation of British rule in Assam, like many other parts of the state, the socio-cultural pattern of Garigaon underwent certain radical changes. Before the advent of the British in her land of the people of Garigaon were entitled to settle in the revenue free land basically in Fākirpārā of the Tomb of Jalaluddin Tabrezi endowed by the Ahom king. In November 10, 1852, the British government introduced the revenue system in the Mājār (tomb) land except for the residential areas in the village.

The Muslims of the area celebrate both the Idd festivals, viz; Idd-ul-Fitre and Iddu-Zuhā. The main slogan of this festival is love and peace. Before, the Idd-ul-Fitre, during the Rāmjān month, the ninth in the Muslim calendar, they neither eat nor drink from dawn to sunset. In the second festival, Iddu-Zuhā, they sacrifice animal like Bull in the name of ‘Āllāh’. Every body who possesses the means makes the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their life. But as Allen observes, they have, however, been to some extent affected by the customs of their Hindu neighbour. A typical Muslim marriage has almost the same rites as Hindu marriage.

Besides these two Idd festivals, the Muslims of this area also celebrate ‘Urus’ ‘Mubārāk’ in the month of Feb-March (Fālgun-
It is celebrated in the memory of the great Sufi Saint Hazarat Jalaluddin Tabrezi. Hindu people of the village make offering to the great Muslim saint with the Muslim devotees.

Due to the affect of the Sufi Saint Jalaluddin Tabrezi, many Muslims of this village Garigaon are the followers of ‘Sufisim’. Sufisim people have pray to ‘āllāh’ with meditation and they observe Zikir in the Mājūr of Jalaluddin Tabrezi and individual households.

**Popular Religion.**

1. **Ai Bhagawati or Sitala Devi:**

   Sitala Devi is the Goddess of small pox. Generally she is called Āi or Sitālā. Amongst the Muslim society of Garigaon she is called Āi (Pox). When a man or a woman has suffered from small pox, chicken pox, people worship Āi Bhagawati. Relating to the worship of Sitala Devi, songs are sung by the groups of woman with cut any musical instruments. Woman folk of the locality in white dress assemble in the house of the patient. An Altar (Thāpānā) in the name of the deity is raised in a corner of the courtyard. In this Thāpānā, they arranged, red flowers. White flowers, bananas, orange and another fruits, rice and notably they arranged water of gold, silver etc. to bathing the patient. After bathing the patient they are distributed ‘Bhog’ to the children in the honour of Āi Bhāgāwāti. This is done after seven days. The most important feature in
the worship of the Goddess is that she is worshipped by all people without regard to any caste and religious faith at the time of epidemics.

2. **Magic and Black magic:**

There are magic and black magic spread in the village Garigaon. “Magical practice is also performed to cure certain simple disease. People believe that some persons sometimes voluntarily or involuntarily injure others especially children by looking at him. Such eyeing is guarded by mild spitting on the face of the child. Moreover, for the cure of this type of disease some seeds and chilies are rooted over the head of the patient and after wards thrown in to fire. In case of acute suffering *Ojās* (the spell knower) are called who cure the illness through spells and *pānijārā* (magic water). Spells are used to remove snake venom and spirit possession. Brushing the body of the patient with twigs of certain plants, such as, *Bihlāngāni* (Skt. Visalanghini) and *Dhekiā* (Fern) during recitation of spell is a common feature of this practice”. 35

Black magic is also spread belief in the Garigaon area. “*Ojās* are believed to employee a variety of techniques. Sometimes the *Ojās* or some other evil sprits, some times they achieve their ends by the malevolent use of food. They introduced some charmed objects or foreign body, such as human hair, a bit of animal snew into the victim by mixing

it with his food. Its consequent disease is dreaded and it is believed that this multiples and fills the entire stomach of the victim. It is also believed that various harms can be wrought upon and intended victim by using a ban or an invisible arrow of charms of spells. Marriage parties, particularly the bride, bridegroom and their relatives are supposed to be open to the danger of the evil spells and charms of ban.\textsuperscript{36}

3. Ambuvāci festival or Amati:

\textit{Ambuvāci} or \textit{Amāti} begins on the seventh \textit{Asādhā} (June) and continues for four days. The time, supposed to be the menstrual period of the mother earth, is considered a period of ceremonial defilement. Therefore, some activities connected with the earth, like ploughing the earth, sowing seeds and digging a land, are strictly prohibited. Moreover, all other religious rites, except the annual \textit{srādhā} and \textit{ekādāsivrātā} are also forbidden. Generally a \textit{brāhmācāri} and a widow observe the \textit{āmbuvāci-vrātā} abstaining from taking cooked meal during the period. The person who has lost his parent or parents also observes the \textit{āmbuvāci-vrātā} usually in the first year after death. The Hindu People of the village take \textit{bokācāul}, curd and Fruits, which are procured beforehand and preserved in such a way so that there is no direct connection between the earth and these articles during the period of defilement. Before the

advent of *ambuvāci* all cloths and garments except those, which are absolutely necessary, are kept separately and nobody touches them during this period. It is believed that such pieces of cloth possess magic-power. People use them as amulets for keeping off the evils and receiving other beneficial effects.

At the end of the ambuvāci period people wash their cloths, utensils, furniture and other household materials; cleanse their floors and courtyards and replace the broom which is considered very impure. They then take bath, put on cloths kept out of touch during these days.

The Hindu people of this area consider a menstruation women to be ceremonially defiled and forbid her to touch anything during the period of defilement, i.e., for three or four days. On the same analogy the *āmbuvāci* days (four in number) are considered the days of defilement of the Mother earth.

The internal meaning of the *Ambuvāci* or *Āmāti* is – the goddess *Kāmākhyā* or *Bhāgāvāti* is to be ready to meansturation and generally the Goddess *Bhāgāvāti* has effected by meansturation in the finishing of the year, (Aāhār). Generally the women of the world faced the meansturation problems in every month. The *Shākti* devotees are believes that the meansturation blood is pure and it safeguard from every illness etc. So, we may called it is a womens festival. In the first day of meanstuation,
the door of the Kāmākhyā temple is to be closed till the fourth day. From the 1st day, the womens and the widows are to exercise fast for four days in response of their Goddess Kāmākhyā or Bhāgāwāti. And they are sleeping in a single mat on the floor. The widows and the womens are not allowed to enter in to the Kitchen room within the four days. Moreover, they are not allowed to cook. Being this they take fruits to eat. In the fourth day or Nibriti of the festival the womens are going to the Nāmghār to pray God on behalf of her families wishes. The Shāktee devotees of this area are going to Kāmākhyā temple to sacrifice goat, pigeon etc. in the name of the Goddess Kāmākhyā or Bhāgāwāti. Moreover, many Hindu peoples of this area are going to Kāmākhyā temple for pray to the Goddess Bhāgāwāti without take sacrifices articles because, many of them are the follower of the EK-Sārānā-nāmā dhārmā. In this occasion, Deodhāni dance is celebrated at the temple of the Goddess Kāmākhyā. Sri Janti Ram is one of the Deodhā of the village Garigaon. He performs Deodhāni dance at the temple of Kāmākhyā.

Taboos related the Ambuvāci Festival:

1. Within the four days, No body can exercise their works with a hoe on the land, which they believed it as the Goddess Bhāgāwāti (Land).
2. The women and the widows are not allowed to enter into the kitchen room.

3. Within the four days the women and the widows are not allowed to cooking food.

4. Within the four days the women and the widows are not allowed to take foods.

5. Within the four days sexual intercourse are not allowed in the response of the Goddess Bhāgāwati or Kāmākhyā.

6. Within the four days the women and the widows are allowed to sleep in a single mat on the floor instead of wooden bed.37

Srimati Giribala Das, Sex: Female, Age: 53 Years, Village: Dehan Gari gaon