CHAPTER- VII

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL IMPACT OF THE SATRAS IN SOUTH KAMRUP

1. Socio-Religious and Cultural impact :

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

   A. Religious impact :

   The main objectives of the Satra are to spread the religion, to initiate the disciples in the religion and to explain the main facts of the religion to disciples. The main duty of the Satra is to increase the standard and moral character of the disciples through the explanation the morality of the Bhakti cult. By following the Cāri-bastu (Four devotional truth), Guru, Dev.
Nam, Bhakat of Ekśaraṇa Nāma Dharma at the Satra, what have been practised in the ideal of both the Gurus, even today by dance, song, music, Bhāonā, Nāma-Prasaṅga, Ghoṣā-Kirtana are nowhere to be found in any religious institution of other states of India. The practice of the Nāma-Prasaṅga etc. in the harmony of the sounds of Khol-tāl is the rare example in the other religious sects of the world.¹ For the propagation of the Ekśaraṇa Nāma Dharma through the monotheistical ideal of eka deva eka seva, Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva has been opened the way of nine-folded Bhakti as follows:

śravaṇām kirtanaṁ viṣṇo smaranaṁ pāda sevanāṁ
arccanām vandanaṁ dāśyaṁ saṣya mātmāṁ vedanāṁ

The sravaṇa-kirtana was given the prime place by the Mahāpuṣa in the Bhakti Dharma. In this regard Dr. Nagen Saikia says that Mahāpuṣa Śaṅkaradeva along with the other Gurus established an unique institution like the Satra as the centre of spreading the Bhakti-cult. These Satras have been established as a centre of moral, spiritual, social and cultural teaching and exercise. It succeeded the first renaissance in the social life of Assam. Even in the mental and intellectual life of

¹ Bairaig, Parag Ch.: Satra Sanskriti Āru Sāmājik Dāyādbadhatā (Article) Satra Saurabh, p. 76.
Assamese people also influence in such a way that those who are outside the Satras turns into the jurisdiction of moral, social and cultural comprehensive value. That is why irrespective of cast, colour even creed the social, cultural and moral character of Assamese people are same.²

In the later part of the Neo-Vaisnava Dharma in Assam as well as in South Kamrup there resulted four Samhatis in the name of Brahma, Puruṣa, Kāla and Nikā. So many Satras have been grown up under each Samhatis in their own respective customs and rituals. Unlimited Nāmghars have been created in support of the each Satras. At least one Nāmghar was born in every village in Assam as well as in South Kamrup. According to an observational report there are more than 25 thousand Nāmghars in Assam in the support of each village at present. There are 216 revenue villages and a lot of non-revenue villages also in South Kamrup wherein each villages has their own Nāmghars. It is remarkable that some of the villages of South Kamrup have different Nāmghars in each Cuburi (Part) of a village.³ In this way the Satra have been succeeded to able to bring a revolutionary change in the Neo-Vaisnava religion. The

². Saikia, Dr. Nagen : Satraṇuṣṭhānar Prāsaṅgikatā : Satra Pradip, pp. 10 11
people of a village under one Nāmghar of one Satra and each Satra having remained in one Sarīhati or in the main Neo-vaiśṇava religion, on the one hand performed religious and cultural functions widely and deeply in discipline, and on the other hand expanded religious and social bindings firmly. Nobody can deny the saying which has been supposed to be believed that the influence of the Vaiṣṇava religion in South Kamrup today has been spread and expanded from the Satras. The religion that has been published by the Satras is seen reflected in every sphere of South Kamrup today. Today in each villages of South Kamrup at least one Nām-party (Group of devotional singers) viz., Nāmar Dal, Āyati Dal, Nāgārā Nām, Thiya Nām etc. is obtained. Even in city area also now a days the groups of the Āyati Nām Dal is beyond calculation. The uncountable names of institutions - establishments, schools- colleges, organisations, theatres - dramatizations, hospitals etc. of South Kamrup are kept in the Vaiṣṇavite traditions prove that the Satras play an important role on spreading and publishing the Neo-Vaiśṇavite religion. According to Dr. Hiren Gohain it is clear that the flow of the Assamese Vaiṣṇavite culture is survived and flourished only in support of the Satras.  

B. Social impact:

The Satras are the inseparable organs of Assamese social life. Its relation is unavoidable like a warp and woof of a woven cloth. Mahāpuruṣa Śrīmanta Ṣaṅkaradeva by an attempt to organise a new society and to bring forward the mass people to Bhāgavata Bhakti, forgetting the differential thought of caste, introduced the Satra culture through the Nāmghar. The Vaiṣṇavite disciple Sri Leela Mahanta says that the sole aim of Gurujanā (Ṣaṅkaradeva) was to organise a healthy systematic society by removing the dirty minds of mass people through the Satra culture. Like a holder, bearer, and an institution the Satras, keeping the Khol-tāl (drum and cymbal) in the bosom with Cāri-Nām (four items of devotional song), — Caidhya Prasāngas (14 items of prayer) had been running continuously for 550 years. The Satras are performing the activities without taking care for thankfulness or unpleasantness from any as a self-duty ceaselessly even today. Holding Nām-Kīrtana the whole, some celibacy Satras remained far away from today’s materialistic idealism (Bhogbāḍī). It is also a significant point.5

The Satras bear the sign of steady progressive social life. They have been playing an important role in the building up of

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

Satra is the supreme authority amongst the villagers in the field of social rules and regulations.7 Satras and Nāmghars are the prime centre of public and social works of villagers. Herein discussing about the various problems the villagers take decisions and process of executing, celebrate religious and social festivals etc. The Satras and Nāmghars are like the public court. If any person of a village involves in sin or commits social crime or any quarrel created amongst somebody under any circumstances,

the leading figures of the village organise *Mel* (tribunal) getting together in the Satra or Nāmghar. In the *Mel* these crimes are tried and punishment has been given in the act of offence and expiation in the sin by the ordinance. Both the complainant and accused parties have been compelled to obey this verdict. In the monarchical days from the king’s court also supported to this decision or verdict. Only the political offences have been justified by the king’s court. The ordinance of penalty that has been given to the offenders by the Satra or the Nāmghar and if the offenders do not abide by the same the offenders has been *eghariyā* (dwelling away from others) or *Ālāg* (ex-communicated) from the society. That means the offenders are not allowed to participate in any of the social or public performances and nobody is allowed to go home or accept the invitation of the offenders. Thus the Satra and the Nāmghar solve the disputes by justification amongst the villagers and on the other hand save the unity of the village also firmly.

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

To say about the Satra traditions the scholar Bapchandra Mahanta writes that all classes of people of society is not equally forward. That is why the chief aim of the Satras is to bring forward the people of the backward classes. From the another point of view the Satras also can be regarded as a training centre of social system. Both trainees and trainers of this are called in common language as Bhakat or Bhakta (devotee). Because of this training system of the Satras it is seen that the villagers of Assam are more educated than the villagers of the other states of India. They (Assamese villagers) know the stories of our Śāstras (holy books) well; most of them know the dances, songs, playing music, acting and vareities of cultural art. Besides these, they are consistent with ethics, doer of pious conduct, bearer of civility mild and gentle. This developed social standard of our

8. Mahanta, Sri Bapchandra: Jugantarat Šankaradeva, p. 222
society mainly grown up by the influence of the Satras, Nāmghars and the Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement. On the whole among the human society of Assam in the vains and fibres, in the fooding and sleeping, in sitting and standing, in inspiration an respiration in every sphere the influence of Satras are flowing in each people without their own knowledge.

In the systems of Satras and Nāmghars the democratic thinking have been playing an important role. Some deserving persons from the society were appointed as officials to perform the religious activities. In course of time these officials have been introduced as a common title in the Assamese society as well as South Kamrup. These titles obtained from the Satras and Nāmghars are being prevailed in Assamese society as follows:

: Adhikāry, Gāyan, Bāyan, Pujārī, Barpujārī, Bharālī, Pāthak, Bhakat, Medhi, Kākati, Lekhāru, Khātaniyār, Daloi, Bardaloi, Ojā, Daināpāli, Bhāgavati, Sutrādhār, Mahanta etc. Besides these above mentioned titles or portfolios, the actors and actresses of the Bāonā and in all respect the rule of appointment has been prevailing through democratic process. Irrespective of caste or creed, those persons who are expert or eligible than others in the villages given these portfolios. Through this system along with the growing up of the competitive sentiment the practice of art-
culture also being developed.

C. Cultural impact:

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

(i) Education: In the medieval period when the king’s courts were not interested in education then the Satras played the role as a centre of education. In the main Satras there are Vidyālaya, Tol or Catuspāṭhi under the scholars wherein students from different parts of Assam gathered to achieve the knowledge in various subjects. According to scholars only the Satra institutions were lighting the lamp of education and knowledge from the 16th century A.D. to the 19th century A.D. in Assam continuously. As for example we may point out to the Sanskrit Tol of the Bhāgavatīpārā Satra and primary School of the Chamarīyā Satra which are at South Kamrup has been running till today.

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

(ii) Literature: As a centre of practice of literature the contributions of the Satras are immeasurable. In the medieval period the Satras grew up as the main centre of practice of literature. In the field of song, drama and biographical literature it made remarkable contribution. Most of the Vaiṣṇava literature have been composed at the Satras. Staying at Satras the *Gurus* wrote the books in *Sāñci*-barks, cotton-leaves etc. To write the books necessary articles like written instruments (pen), ink, *Sāñci*-barks, cotton-leaves were made at the Satras. At the post-Śaṅkara age the writers got the chances of composing as well as copying through the Satras and Nāmghars. The *Carit Puthis* (Biographies) and the other religious manuscripts enriched the treasure of the Assamese literature. In each main Satras of Assam there are such a kind of uncountable books written in *Sāñci*-barks, cotton-leaves etc.. Only the Chamarīyā Satra possessed more than 200 (two hundred) such a kind of books (Manuscripts). On being destructed for so many reasons only the 47 (forty-seven) books

11. Bhakat, Dr. Dijendra Nath : *Satrar Śāmikṣātmak Itivrtya*, p. 11.
have been preserved there. More than five hundred such books have been preserved in the Krishna Kanta Handique Library of Gauhati University. More than such kind of 30 (thirty) books have been preserved at the Museum of Dakshin Kamrup Girls' College, Mirza. In this way there are uncountable such old manuscripts at various Satras, Nāmghars and individual families of South Kamrup.

Various kinds of religious books, *Arikiyā Nāṭ* (one act play) and the songs composed by Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva are not only in Assamese but in Indian literature also is an indescribable contribution. The Satras are the treasure-house of literature wherein the devotional flow (1375-1700 A.D.) of Indian literature has been connected with the Assamese literature. This unbrokable flow of literature carries the national integrify.

(iii) Drama and Dance : The dramatic art of Assam also has been flourished through the Satras. The *Gurus* themselves composed many songs and plays. They also arranged to perform the acting of the dramas composed for the common devotees and disciples to attract the devotion towards God. Śaṅkaradeva created the full-fledged *Arikiyā Bhāona* by assimilating the dance.

ojāpāli, acting etc. Though the Bhāonās were composed for the spreading of religion yet in course of time it becomes the carriers of mass education. The Bhāonās are considered as the altar of sermons of the Gurus, centre of practice of literature, field of exercise of dances, songs and musical instruments etc. Once through the Satras and Nāmghars the dramas and dancing art of Assam flourished in a particular way. Besides these the new Satrādhikāras had to compose dramas or Bhāonās before or after the ceremony of being a Satrādhikāra. In case of subsequent Satrādhikāras composition of dramas became compulsory.

The Satrīyā dance also which is developed through the basis of the Satras have been achieving the popularity and glory amongst all classes of audience from the beginning till today. The unique creation of songs, dances, dramas on the auspicious of Satras and Nāmghars are truely the most excellent contribution to the Assamese society. Hence, Dr. Birinchi Kumar Barua says that as the Mahāpuruṣa fulfil the Bhāonās through dance, song, acting etc. so he erected the foundation of Assamese national theatrical stage. No repetition is required about the contributions of the Nāmghars in social, religious and cultural life of Assamese. The Nāmghar is the Museum of national culture of Assam. It

also the national Raigālaya (stage). Nāmghar carries the welfare for Assamese Nation. Nāmghar is the Nation-theatre (Bhāonāghar) of Assam. In this nation-theatre all communities have the right of entry without any cost. For all, the poor and the rich there is the same seat of Kath-Kuhilā (a mat made of grass or cork). All the eligible persons from all caste may take part in the Bhāonā, may take part as Sutradhāra,* may dance as a dancer, may play Khol-Mṛdaṅga (a kind of drum) as a Bāyan (musician) etc.. Thus the Nation-theatre (Bhāonāghar) is preserving the social power of Assamese nation.\(^{15}\)

The Satriyā dance created by the Satra has been upgraded to Śāstriya dance. The Satriyā dance which obtained the standard of Śāstriya dance under the jurisdiction of all India Śāstriya dance is the glorious matter for Assam. The Khol and Bargit created by Saṅkaradeva becomes the flow of vitality of Assam as well as Assamese through the Satriyā culture. Moreover through the application of Khuti tāl (a kind of small cymbal) and Bhor tāl (a kind of big cymbal) the Satra supplies remarkable contributions to Assamese culture. The Satras become a kind of library as well as a national museum by collecting the various

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* The chief actor or interlocutor in the prelude to the drama and to each scene of an Aṣṭiya Nāt.

15. Barua, Dr. B. K., Namghar, Jatlya Nāṭāla, (Article)
articles along with the awakening of national sentiment.

(iv) Art-Practice: The Satras were the prime centre of high standard cottage industry, and art, craft and sculpture. The expert artisans got the chances to exhibit and practise of their variety of artistic works through the Satras and Nāmghars. The craftsmen depicted various beautiful flowers and statues on wood. The writers prepared the Sāncī barks from Sāncī tree to write or copy the Puthis (holy books). They used various colours by preparing from various trees - grasses, barks and leaves as well as Hengul-Hāitāl (vermilion-yellow arsenic). Through the Satras and Nāmghars the artisans like the craftsmen, the carpenters and bamboo workers, bell-metel workers, the leather workers etc. bestowed their deep devotion, complements and excellency to the Satras and Nāmghars by making their artistic works. The artisans of the villages sitting together at Nāmghars or Satras make necessary articles like wooden Śarāi (a tray with a stand), Thagi (a kind of wooden tray with one leg), Śīṁhāsana (a seat supported on legs made in the form of lion), statues of Garuḍa, Jaya-Vijaya, Hanumāna etc. for the Satras and Nāmghars. They also make necessary bows and arrows, gadā (an iron mace. club), Kīrīṭi (coronate), Mukut (crown) and wooden musks of Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarṇa, Kāliya-Sarpa, Narasiṁha etc. for the
Bhāonā. Once on the basis of the Satras and Nāmghars the cottage industry, the cloth industry, the clay industry, the bamboo industry etc. of Assam were born. Even today too that practice of artistic activities are prevailing more or less in all villages of Assam. In all those activities individual need, religion, commercial attitude were connected and it is being connected. The Satras caused the paintings also to flourish. The Vaiṣṇavite movement of Assam originated the custom of paintings in religious books. It is known that Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkaradeva did paintings himself. It is mentioned in the Carit Puthi that the Gurujanā (Śaṅkaradeva) depicted the picture of seventh heaven on the cotton leaves. It is also known that Śaṅkaradeva presented the Gunāmalā, the holy book to Mahārāja Naranārāyaṇa in a wooden box whereupon the picture of elephant was depicted. Again on Vṛndāvani Vastra, the depiction of the sports of Śrīkṛṣṇa of Vrindavana has been known from the Carit Puthi.

Uncountable depictions are found on the gates, doors and walls of various Satras of Assam. This tradition of depictions of pictures are also found in the Satras of South Kamrup. The depictions on wood, stone and the sculptures made of cement in the Satras viz., Chamarīyā Satra, Kaimārī Satra, Bhālukghāṭā

* A cloth on which figures depicting the sports of Śrīkṛṣṇa were made.
Satra, Bar Phulguri Satra, Saru Phulguri Satra, Šikarhāti Satra, Saru Herāmda Satra etc. of South Kamrup area carry the heritage of the paintings and sculptures. The pictures depicted in the Satras of South Kamrup plays an important role in originating a special characteristic of paintings.

(v) Festive Impact: Satras and Namghars are the main centre of the religious festivals. The villagers organise their festivals and ritual ceremonies in the Satras and Namghars. Besides the daily prayers the festivals like three Bihus (Rañālī, Bhogalī and Kañālī Bihu), the Janmāstomī (the birth anniversary of Lord Kṛṣṇa), the Doul-utsava, the Nandotsava (Piyāk Nām), Pāl Nām, Suwarī or Sari, Bar Sabāh, Rāj Sabhā, the anniversaries of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva, the anniversaries of the Gurus. Anniversaries of the Ātās, Rās Purñimā, Bhāonā etc. are observed by the villagers in the Satras and Namghars. These festivals have been creating the unity amongst the mass people. In addition to this on the auspicious of the Satras and Namghars the competitive games and sports have also been organised. In this sphere specially the competition of Nāo-Khel (boat-race) is remarkable. The boat-race competition held at the Chamariyā Satra and at Kukurmārā area have been uniting all irrespective of caste, creed and colour. This boat-race competition has been
establishing as a symbol of unity and integrity amongst various castes and tribes of Assam.

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

The women have been achieving high position and high dignity in the Vaiṣṇavite tradition of Assam form earliest time. It is seen from the study of the history of the Vaiṣṇavite culture that in making Satra culture and Vaiṣṇavite traditions the great several venerable women cast special contributions. Amongst them, Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva’s grand mother Khersutī Āī, wife Surjāvatī, Kālindī Āī, Āī Kanaklatā, wife of Chaturbhuj Thākur, Chandarī Dhāī, the explanator of the Gītātattva, Rādhikā Śāntī, Bhuvaneswarī, wife of Chilarāi, Bhānumatī wife of Mahārājā Naranārāyaṇa, Padmāpriyā, the daughter of Gopāladeva. Śāntā Āī, wife of Mathurā Dās Burhā Ātā etc. are specially remarkable.

The women have been playing the important role in the history of Satra of South Kamrup. In the Satra society of South Kamrup, the position of women are very high. The preacher and the first news-bearer of Vaiṣṇava culture in Dakṣiṇ-Kūl, the founder Satrādhikāra of Chamarīyā Satra Śrī Śrī Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā gave initiation at first only to his wife Candrāvatī in the Eksāraṇa Bhāgavatī Dharma. It is found in the Carit Puthi of Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā that by getting initiation from Mahāpuruṣa Mahāvadāvēva.
Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā came to the village Malacā and enchored his boat in the river bank. After enchoring the boat he was not interested to go his own home. Having known this information his (Ātā) wife Candrāvatī sent their son Gopāla to bring his (Gopāla) father home. But Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā refused to come home. Then Candrāvatī herself went near Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā who was staying at the bank of the river. At this Candrāvatī requested her husband to come to their own home. Then Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā says to Candrāvatī that Ātā was kept as a slave by someone for his previous debt. So he was unable to go home. On hearing this Candrāvatī says in laughing by salutation that she too becomes a slave from that day. She also requested to take her as a companion and not to leave her. Having heard these words Viṣṇu Ātā went home. Candrāvatī Ājī arranged newly after washing all the domestic utensils and the oven. After washing all the clothes she cleaned and wiped over the home. Having finished all the cleanliness works she remained in fasting the whole night. Next morning Candrāvatī got initiation under Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā. It is found in the Dakhin Kūliya Śrī Śrī Bar-Viṣṇu Ātār Carīt as -

\[
\text{moka dharuwāi pāi} / \\
\text{bandhā laila eka thāi} //130\]
ehise kāraṇe mai /
nejāo tāk cal tai //
śuni āi bole hāsi /
āmiyo bhailoho dāsī //131
layo moka saga kari /
najāibāhā pari hari //
ātāyo nāvaka eri /
grhaka gailanta lari //132
āyo pāchhe pāche jāi /
praveśilā grhe gai //
caru pātilāka dhari /
pelāilanta raṅga kari //133
vastrako bhijāi dila /
grha goṭa malachila //
āno karma jata āche /
sabe ḍura kari pāche //134
āi upābāsa dila /
harit śaraṇa laila //
ehimate kato dina /
āchā ātā raṅga mana //135

From the day of the initiation under Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā. Candrāvatī Āi assisted him as a companion for whole life. After getting initiation Candrāvatī Āi dedicated herself in the spreading of the Eksarana Bhāgavatī Dharma in Dakṣīṇ Kūl.

From those days in the field of Vaiṣṇava culture the women-society have been bestowing a remarkable contribution in South Kamrup. Therefore in South Kamrup the women-society have been receiving a special dignity. The women plays an important role in the Tīthis (anniversaries), festivals, Nām-Kīrtanas etc in every respects. The women related with the Satras perform Nām-Kīrtana (congregational prayer) daily in the morning and in the evening in the Satra. These women who perform Nām-kīrtanas are called Āi Sakal.*1 Since these Āi Sakal perform their Nām-kīrtanas sitting on the Kāthi or Varandah of the Satra so they are called Kāthir Āi Sakal. The Āi Sakal also have their own designations, duties and responsibilities. Everybody perform these duties and responsibilities sincerely. Nām-kīrtanas of women go on in the Nāmghars also. Almost every villages have at least one Nām-party relating with the Nāmghars. These Nām-parties have been identified as Āyatī-Dal (Āyatī = women who sings

*1. Āi = mother, a respectable mother-like woman - in Satra culture the women who perform Nām-Kīrtana are called Āi-Sakal (Sakal = all) respectfully or devotionally.
In some villages there are the prayer parties called *Nāgarā Nāmar Dal* \(^2\) of women (*Nāgarā* = drum). After all in every sphere of Satra culture of South Kamrup the women have been bestowing a remarkable contribution. So without women it is not possible to uphold the *Ekaśaraṇa Bhāgavati Dharma* in South Kamrup.

Another most important matter is the entry of women in the *Kīrtanghara* of the Satra. In most of the Satras the women are not allowed to enter in the *Kīrtanghar* of the Satra. But the most remarkable point is that except a few Satras the women can enter into the *Kīrtanghar* of the Satras of South Kamrup at all the time. Specially in the *Kīrtanghar* of Chamarīyā Satra, the prime Satra of *Dakṣin Kūl*, the women can enter freely. There is no any obstacle (bar) for women to enter into the *Kīrtanghar* of the Chamarīyā Satra. In this respect the Chamarīyā Satra is imitable for the other Satras of Assam. In present perspective, entering into the *Kīrtanghar* of a Satra of women is a very important matter. Because in the Barpeta Satra, a leading Satra of Assam the women are not allowed to enter into the *Kīrtanghar* of the Satra. Of course, a very few Satras which are established at South Kamrup by bringing the *šalā-banti* (lighting lamp)

\(^2\) The party of prayer in the name of God with a special kind of drum.
from Barpeta Satra have been forbidding for the women to enter into the Kirtanghar according to the tradition of the Barpeta Satra. As for example Šikārhāti Satra can be taken.

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

3. Influence on Tribal community of South Kamrup:

People of various tribal communities live in South Kamrup. Amongst these tribal communities Garo, Khāsî, Boro, Rabha, Hazang etc. are the main. In South Kamrup from the beginning of the Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement and the establishment of the Satras, the Satra culture began to influence over the tribal people of this area. The people of tribal communities have also been offering irreproachable contributions to the Satra culture of South Kamrup from the beginning wholeheartedly. The influence of Neo-Vaiṣṇavite faith began to run in South Kamrup from the 15th-16th century A.D. During that period the entire South Kamrup was ruled over by the tribal kings. It has been discussed about the rule of the tribal kings of South Kamrup in the previous chapter (Chapter-II). So, from this it has been proved that in the
beginning South Kamrup was mainly influential area of tribal communities.

The contributions of tribal people are unlimited in making the Satra culture uphold in South Kamrup. It has been assumed that at the beginning the sentiment of Vaiṣṇavite culture awakened amongst the tribal people in South Kamrup by Gāro Gobinda Ātā, the favourite disciple of Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkaradeva. It has already been discussed about Gāro Gobinda Ātā in details in the Chapter-III. It is known from the Carit Puthis of Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā that Mādhavadeva came to Mālacā himself at the time of the establishment of the Mālacā Satra. At that time uncountable visitors gathered at Mālacā to see Mādhavadeva. Amongst these uncountable visitors the people of Garo and Miri (Khasi), were large in nume. It is in the Carit of Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā -

\[ \text{Garo Miri deśa jata āche prajāgana} / \]

\[ \text{sabe gaila Mādhavaka dekhībāra mana} //^{17} \]

Again it is known from the Carit of Paḍhiyā Mādhava Ātā that Heremeswar, the king of Herāmda wanted to take initiation near Mādhavadeva.\(^{18}\) The matter of taking initiation of the king of Herāmda near Mādhavadeva proved that the influence of

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17. Das, Dr. N. & Adhikary, Sri N. K. (edi.): Dakhin Kūliyā Śrī Śrī Bar-Viṣṇu Ātār Carit, pp. 55-56.
Neo-Vaiṣṇavite religion had on the tribal people at that time.

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

* A kind of long skirt and sheet used by Assamese lady.
Today various Satrīyā cultures, viz. Satrīyā- Nrtya (dance), Bargīt, Khol, Tāl (cymbal) Nām-prasānga etc. are very popular amongst the tribal people. In the field of Satra-culture many tribals are further forward now. Even many of them obtaining acknowledgement as a scholar are servicing as a trainer also in Vaiṣṇavite songs, musical instruments and dances. The Vaiṣṇavite culture builds up the unity and integrity between the general and tribal people in South Kamrup. As a result of which the matrimonial relations also built-up amongst the various tribal and non-tribal people. The tribal people have also been taking the leading part in the various tithis, festivals etc. in various sides and been obtaining high positions also in the society. There is at least one Nāmghar in every tribal villages. On being popularised, the Nām-party, the Nāgarā Nāmar Dal etc. amongst the tribal women truly reminded the Vaiṣṇavite influence on tribal communities of South Kamrup.