CHAPTER VIII

(A) THE SATRA AND THE COMMUNITY

Hāṭi organisation:

People of Barpeta live in such a manner that houses of individual families are arranged along both sides of roads or paths. Each area consisting of narrow alleys and houses are called a hāṭis. The word hāṭi carries the same meaning as the Assamese words 'pārā', 'tolā', 'chuk' etc. which are synonymous with wards or hamlets.

Sets of cloisters for monks within the main enclosure of a satra have been known from the earliest times as hāṭi or bhakatar hāṭi. In that sense a hāṭi may also be understood as a row of houses attached to a religious institution or the residence of disciples. Such residences are described to be on the four sides of some satras when it is referred to cārihāṭi. Regarding the existence of the hāṭi system, S.N. Sarma writes "probably Sahkaradeva's satra consisted of a prayer hall and a few huts for devotees who preferred to remain in close proximity to him." They were accommodated

In Barpeta Satra all the four rows of huts are not found, instead, there are two such rows of huts within the satra compound, which are known as the Kewalīya hāti, the residences of the celibate monks. E.T. Dalton also noticed two such rows on the northern and southern sides of the prayer hall as early as in 1851. A picture of the cloistral life in the satra is found in Dalton's description which goes thus: "Long sheds, substantially built and enclosed, with front varandah by one double door to each. In these apartments the monks live, sometimes two together, sometimes one alone. They exercise considerable ingenuity in making their cells commodious ... . The cloisters and every place connected with the shostro are kept scrupulously clean and neat." 2

Mathurādās Burhā Atā, the first Satriya of Barpeta Satra is credited as the creator of the hāti system of residence of Barpeta. It is possible that he planned the hāti system

of residence of the householder devotees for which he arranged the houses along the roads in line with the cloisteral design within the satra compound. The three hātis that came up first were known as thul-hātis, these are Uttar hātī (the hātī on the north), Dakṣin hātī (the hātī on the south) and Na-hātī (the hātī formed newly and to the west of the satra). From these three hātis a number of hātis were formed in course of time and the number of such hātis has gone upto twenty two. They have all taken the shape of individual hamlets with compact living. Over and above being an individual hātī each thul-hātī has got a number of hātis with it. There are eleven hātis with thul-uttar hātī, six with Dakṣin hātī and five with Na-hātī. These individual hātis participate with the thul-hātis on certain occasions in a year such as in time of the grand show of nāma-kīrtana on the concluding day of Bahāg Bihu and also in paying karbhār in the event of Kīrtan festivals.

The names of the hātis of Barpeta are shown below. The hātī names are given on the basis of topography of the

Pathak, Barpeuteratrār līrhas, p. 35
place, direction from the satra and the function of the inhabitants to be performed in the satra etc.

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<th>Names of the hātis</th>
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<td>11. Joganiyār hāṭī</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Bhakatpāra, Rāyatpāra, Mājarpāra)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Uttar hāṭī or Bar hāṭī</td>
<td>Direction</td>
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<td>Function</td>
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<td>15. Mājar hāṭī</td>
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Names of hātis

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<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Basis of hāti names</th>
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<td>Gāyan hāti</td>
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<td>Palengdi hāti</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Āmbari hātī</td>
<td>Natural vegetation</td>
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</table>

Although the topography of the place has changed in the course of time, the old names of the hātis are still continuing. The present Bilartārī hātī is situated along the bank of a bil (marshy place), Galiyā hātī represents the old Galayā bil or Galayā jān, a tributary of the river Caulkhowa which flowed through this place. Phātā hātī bears the reminiscences of the ancestral man of the Ojā family, Nārāyanphata Ojāh. ¹ There has been certain renaming of some of the hātis. For example the old name of the present Raṅgpur hātī was palupāt-

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¹ This name seems to be a nikname given to him.

² Informant: Sri Arjun Ch. Das, retired teacher and literary pensoner of Barpeta. Data collected on 23.12.74 (Sri Das had already passed away).
The twenty two hātis or hamlets are not caste units as these are not formed on the basis of caste alone. People of different castes and creed live in the same hāti. These hātis may be considered as organised on the basis of division of labour, each hāti having its own share of works to be performed in the satra context.

An individual hāti has got its own organisation covering social, political as well as economic aspects. The relation of each hāti with the satra is analogous with the relation of each state with the parliament, taking each hāti as a state and the satra organisation as the parliament.

In each hāti there is a common meeting house for all the members of the hāti, known as hāitāghar, located in a central place. It is like a club house of the hāti. From time to time members of the hāti assemble in this house. The hāitāghar is generally a two-roofed Assam-type building with C.I. sheeted roofs. It is kept open without side walls but with wooden

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6. This house in Vrndāvan hāti is known as Ākhrār ghar. Probably some rehearsal on traditional satrīya dance of Barpeta Satra called ghosā-kirtana was held in this house. Informant: Śrī Umākānta Das, Vrndāvan hāti, data collected on 25.12.74. (He has already passed away).
railings. Together with other important matters trial of
certain disputes among the inhabitant of the hāṭī are conducted
by the elders in this house for the maintenance of the norms of
the society. In some of the hāṅgāghars such as those of Ḍṃbārī
hāṭī and Vṛndāvan hāṭī recitation of certain religious books
are held in the evening and some elderly men and women assemble
there to listen to it and also to take part in the religious
discourses which go on along with the recitation.

The Economic Aspects of the Hāṭī:

The economic organisation of the hāṭī was planned by
Mathurādās Burhā Ātā nearly four centuries ago and the people
of Barpeta are enjoying its good effects till now. He introduced
the system of giving shares (bhāg) to the members of the hāṭī
on payment of a definite fee and thereby raise a common fund.
At a time when nobody could imagine about the necessity and
usefulness of such a fund, Burhā Ātā planned it of his own. He
planned those things so that the collected money could be
transacted in a systematic way. Individual families of a parti-
cular hāṭī are benefitted because they can get loans from this
Persons taking loans from this fund also do not default as they believe that the money has got a sacred touch being collected from the bhakats of Barpeta Satra and that is why the fund is still functioning. The facilities which are now offered by the modern co-operative societies and banks are also available from such hāti funds of this satra which were introduced by Mathurādās Burhā Ātā not latter than the 16th century A.D. Co-operative Societies in our country were first introduced only in the early twentieth century.

Present sources of the hāti fund are:

(a) Tax realised from dasturi: At the time of marriage of each girl of the hāti a nominal amount is received from the groom side. This is called dasturi or traditional tax. Now-a-days this amount is paid by the bride's parents on behalf of the groom.

(b) Interest of the loan principal: The hāti fund realises interest from the loanees. The rate of interest for the loan

7. The rate of dasturi is Rs. 15.00 in Pāthak hāti and Rs. 12.00 in Vrindāvan hāti, but it was Rs. 5.00 only in the latter hāti few years back.
may vary from hāti to hāti and from time to time but it is generally similar to the rate charged by banks. (The rate of interest in Pāthak hāti is fixed at 12% per annum.)

(c) New shares: Another source of income of the hāti fund is from new shares. (Rs. 10.00 in Pāthak hāti and Rs. 50.00 in Vrndāvan hāti).

This hāti fund transacts approximately ten thousand rupees in a year.

Management of the fund:

The hāti fund is named after the name of a hāti. The fund of Pāthak hāti is known as Pāthak hāti fund. The fund is kept under the custody of three persons who are known as Majumdar (Cashier), Bharāli (store keeper) and the Sampādak (Secretary). In case of this hāti the persons in the above capacities are Śrī Biren Bhuyan, Śrī Gopi Das and Śrī Dīnabandhu Pāthak respectively. The office bearers are generally bonafide residents of the hāti and shareholders of the fund. One of the peculiarities of the hāti fund is that the cash of the fund is not deposited in a bank or post office but kept
in an iron-safe in the house of one of the office bearers. They keep three separate keys each with one of these three officials and in case of any handling of the cash all the three must be present. In the absence of any one, the other two cannot open the cash box.

In a hāti all the individual families may not have shares in that fund, as for example at Pāthak hāti fund there are only 93 shares though there are families more than that. There are 240 shares in Vrndāvanhāti fund. When a shareholder of a hāti dies his share may be inherited by paying Re. 1.00 only to the fund. When several sons of the deceased share-holder get separated, the father's share can be inherited by any one of them, generally the eldest one gets it by paying Re. 1.00.

Generally in every hāti a separate fund is maintained by the younger generation of that hāti which is known as 'Yuvak fund' of a particular hāti. At Pāthak hāti also there is a similar fund. The main aim of the fund is to sanction loan at a lower rate (6% per annum) of interest. The main source of the fund is collection of money given by groom who marries a
girl from the hātī. Anybody taking loan from this fund cannot repay the amount before one year is completed and he can do so only after paying the interest for the whole year. But in case of the other fund, repayment may be allowed even on the next day on humanitarian ground and without charging any interest for it.

Shares in the hātī fund may be forfeited for not paying the necessary fees (dasturi) payable at the time of marriage of a girl by the parents or guardians. Shares in the fund may also be forfeited for not paying off the outstanding loan and relevant interest. 8

Utilisation of the hātī fund:

People of Barpetā are benefitted by this fund to some extent. This fund is utilised for the purpose of welfare of the society particularly at the time of natural calamities such as epidemic, famine and so forth. In the year 1979 due

8. At Pāthak hātī there was a case of one's (a teacher) share being forfeited for not paying the loan (Rs. 100.00) taken by his father nearly ten years ago.
to famine condition when the price of rice went much higher
a sum of Rs. 2000.00 only had been spent from the pāṭhak hāṭī
fund for the purchase of rice which were distributed among the
needy families of that hāṭī. Now and then on the occasion of
the Māgh Bihu fish is purchased and distributed among the
families of the hāṭī. Fire woods are also purchased in time
of Māgh Bihu spending money from the fund, which are burnt at
road side. There was a time when financial help was also given
to the meritorious students of the hāṭī. The main function of
the hāṭī fund is to offer help to any member of the hāṭī to
tide over any unforeseen circumstances or to discharge such
moral duties as marriage, performance of death rites etc. Loans
are granted for various purposes. In a list of 15 loanees at
pāṭhak hāṭī in a year (1980-81) the various purposes are seen
for which loans were sanctioned. In nine cases loans were given
to petty businessmen where the maximum amount was Rs. 1750.00
only. The other purposes were treatment of ailment, purchase
of books for poor students and other household purposes.
Anybody seeking a loan from the hātī fund should have a share in the fund. A non-shareholder or an outsider to the hātī may also apply through a suitable local guarantor for it, but he may get consideration only if the fund permits. In that case also a higher rate of interest may be charged. To get a loan from the hātī fund one is to mortgage gold ornaments of approximately equal value to the loan amount. The practice with the hātī fund is that the mortgaged ornaments of different loanees are kept in separate packets in the iron-safe where money is generally kept. It is said that individual money lenders who used to keep gold ornaments sometimes personally used such ornaments and tried to deceive poor loanees with an imitated piece of ornaments of less valuable metals at the time of recovery of the loan. In the annual meeting of the hātī fund which is held in the hāitā ghar in the first week of Baisākh (15th to 20th April) interests for loans are to be paid. Another practice is that the individual loanees are to show the amount to the committee in the meeting thereby implying that the particular loanee is in a position to repay the amount.
Habitation pattern in a hāti:

Residences are very much compact in a hāti. Sometimes individual houses are constructed in such a manner that the roofs of one house touch those of the other forming a row, one single wall separating two families. Two such rows of houses are arranged on two sides of a lane facing each other. Such a long open space between two rows of houses also serves as common courtyard. Due to such compact living the atmosphere in the hāti becomes noisy with occasional quarrel and ill-will of the co-inhabitants. Atmospheres also become unhygienic in some hātis due to inadequate sanitary system for want of sufficient space. In the census report of 1901 it is reported, ..." a large number of persons persist in living huddled together, in defiance of all the laws of sanitation, and resist with surprising pertinacity all efforts to improve their condition. They are a peculiarly bigoted people and are strongly opposed to vaccination ... "

9. District Gazetteer, Kamrup, 1905
The most common dwelling house in a ḥāṭī is a two-roofed Assam-typed house with thatched roof. Such a row of thatched houses are occasionally interspersed with houses of C.I. Sheeted roofs. New types of R.C.C. buildings and houses with wide, flat and low roofs have come up in the areas outside the ḥāṭīs, where people are seen coming for new residences. Due to dearth of residential space people originally living in the ḥāṭīs prefer to shift their residence to such areas where they can construct their houses in a spacious plot of land. It is now a general tendency of the people to shift their residences towards the town from the villages for various amenities. Generally people living in joint families prefer to have new establishments for their own families. Due to such tendencies of the people, new localities have grown up on the outskirts of the township. Some such new residential areas are given new ḥāṭī names such as Pascim ḥāṭī (the ḥāṭī on the west), Pāṭhār ḥāṭī (ḥāṭī near the paddy field) and other names such as Jyotinagar, Gandhinagar etc. People having new establishments on these localities also maintain their allegiance to the ḥāṭīs where they originally lived.
Pattern of inter-community relations at Barpeta:

Mathurādāsa Burhā Ātā organised the society and the satra of Barpeta in which the services of the people are drawn towards the satra irrespective of caste and other affiliations. In its management also the responsibilities were distributed among the various lineages and the wider community of devotees (the Samuha bhakat). It was only after the rules of management was framed that the satra came to be managed by a Managing Committee of elected representatives. But it is a fact that the satra is still maintaining its cohesive influence and the affiliation to it even after these four centuries.

In the township of Barpeta some facets of inter-community relations are found. Some of the community constellations at Barpeta may be noted as (a) caste, (b) neighbourhood communities residing on various lanes called hātis, (c) the celibate devotees living inside the satra compound and leading an intensely devotional life, (d) the various lineages associated with the satra as traditional functionaries, (e) the wider community of devotees.
Caste is one of the facets of Barpeta society. Among the various caste groups of Barpeta including the professional castes, the Keot and the Kalita are the two equally dominant castes. The Brahmins occupy an important position in satra circle. The post of satrīyā is held by a Brahmin since early time.

The neighbourhood communities residing in different hātis form individual units in the social system. The celibate devotees form a distinctly religious group of people. They are treated as indispensable in the satra circle and as a section of people most needed by the society.

There are a number of lineages associated with the traditional activities of the satra from early times. They are called as Baṅgarā. There is also a wider group, the community of devotees (Samūha bhakat) who maintain an overall supervision on the varied activities of the satra.

Social relations of these various groups can be observed in two different spheres — religious and secular. Inter-community relations in the religious sphere is noticed through
the participation of these groups in the round of activities in the **satra** -- daily as well as in times of festivals and in case of management. Services of the Hindu population of Barpeta are drawn towards the **satra** for its day to-day activities, management and also in time of the festivals. Services of people on caste considerations also are drawn from professional caste groups in the time of festivals.

Daily religious activities in the form of prayer services are held with the participation of the celibate devotees and the men of various lineages. Other devotees of Barpeta also join the prayer services. Management of the secular affairs of the **satra** are conducted by the Managing committee formed by the elected representatives. Though at the time of election of the members and the Secretary of the committee such considerations as believers and non-believers in the role of Brahmins in the rituals and the rival caste feeling of Keot and Kalita come in, yet in other times they function in the interest of the committee.
Payment of necessary religious dues is also a channel of participation. Devotees of Barpeta Satra, irrespective of any caste, are to pay annual subscription (in the form of a definite amount of unboiled rice and a little cash) to the satra. This is known as gurukar or tax to one's religious preceptor twice in a year. These are due in time of Deul festival and once in any of the three Kirtan festivals. The various families of traditional functionaries of the satra play active roles on these occasions. Community relations are observable during the activities of the Kirtan festivals. Devotees from all categories take equal seats on the floor of the Kirtanghar. They take prasāda prepared on the same vessel. Other lines of participation are through the hātīs as units. Three particular hātīs take active part by way of presentation of karbhār to the satra at the time of Kirtan festivals. All the devotees of the satra also receive little bits of the offerings with due reverence.

Pattern of inter-community relations through participation along caste lines are also noticed at the time of the festivals. This is particularly so during the Deul festival, the biggest
festival of Barpeta Satra. The caste groups whose services are drawn are the Hīrās, Kumārs, Banīyās, Kaibartas etc. The Hīrās are potters, who make pots by hand. They are to supply earthen pots to the satra which are distributed among the guests as cooking vessels together with Sidhās. The Kumārs are also potters who make various pots with the help of wheels. They are to supply definite number of earthen pots specially the oil burners necessary during the year. Banīyās are the goldsmiths who make gold and silver ornaments. Now-a-days most of these people have abandoned their traditional work and taken up some other occupations. Their services are requisitioned to cleanse the gold ornaments of the deity before the Deul festival. The Kaibartas used to supply definite quantity of fish to the satra on the occasion of the Deul festival which were distributed among the guests. By supplying the definite quota of fish the Kaibartas earned the voting rights in satra elections. These people whose services are drawn towards the satra are honoured with arecanuts and betel leaves after the festival. Great social significance is attached to such an honour and is regarded as more prestigious than the money value of their services.
Inter-community relations can also be noticed in the secular sphere at Barpeta. The above mentioned Hindu communities and also the Muslims come to social interactions in a number of social situations such as membership in school committees, sports associations, cultural organisations, clubs etc. Such committees and associations function without any reference to caste affiliations of the members though at the time of selection of the main office bearers of the committees or at the time of any appointment the caste rivalry between Keot and Kalita comes in, the question of affiliation to the dominant group is considered. Similar rigidity in matters of caste is noticed while negotiating marriage between the two caste groups of Keot and Kalita.9

In the economic sphere the people of Barpeta maintain definite links with the immigrant Muslim communities. These are the people who migrated from erstwhile East Pakistan

9. A case of inter-caste marriage took place on 2.12.87 in the house of Sri Mohan Nath, my next door neighbour, Sri Haren Das, an employee of Howly Basic Training Centre was in love with Sakuntala Majumdar of his own haji. But Sri Naresh Lal Majumdar, who is a Kalita by caste refused to give his daughter in marriage to a boy, Keot by caste. Sri Tarani Das, father of the boy, on the other hand, was adamant to take home his daughter-in-law only after performing the marriage rites, although the marriage was already registered. Ultimately Sri Mohan Nath, a friend of Sri Tarani Das acted as father of the girl and gave her in marriage in his own house.
and present Bangladesh and settled in Assam. Economically they are very hard hit people. The Municipal area of Barpeta town is surrounded on all sides by villages of immigrant Muslims. Such villages are stretching continuously from a distance of 1 Km on the northern and western side of the town. People of Barpeta are dependent on the services of these people who serve as milkmen, vegetable suppliers, fishermen, daily labour and share-crop cultivators etc. They are consumer of the product as well as labour of the immigrant Muslim community.

On any festival day or otherwise when the Muslim people do not come, the people of Barpeta face much difficulties in their daily life. Most families have to go without milk, vegetable supply in the market becomes scarce, supply of fish in the market is less, the number of rickshaw pullers at Barpeta comes down causing much difficulty. Though there is a sense of hostility and difference between the immigrant population and the local people of Barpeta town when considered institutionally, otherwise there is amity and friendship between the two neighbouring groups. But in day to day dealings the
people of Barpeta are very rude and harsh to this community. It is also noticed that the local tongue of Barpeta is acquired by these people which is a necessity for their daily life.

(B) THE VARIOUS CRAFTS OF BARPETĀ : THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE SATRA.

Barpeta is a place where a number of crafts are concentrated. Almost all of them maintain some articulation with the satra institution. It may be recorded that some of these craftmen were established in Barpeta in the seventeenth century for the purpose of temple service by king Viranārāyana (1627-1632 A.D.) of Cooch Behar. The king endowed the Barpeta Satra with 18 families of pāiks for various petty works of the establishment which included such artisans as blacksmiths, potters and players of drums, pipes and cymbals.¹⁰ Decendants of these men are continuing their services even to day. In the course of time some other crafts were also established at Barpeta. The ecology of the place was favourable for such a

¹⁰ Mahanta, J : Mathurādās Burhā Ṛtār Jībānī Carit, p.105
concentration. The _satra_ institution situated at Barpeta also helped in flourishing the crafts. The various festivals held in the _satra_ attracted visitors from the neighbouring villages. The timings of the festivals are such that those visitors coming to Barpeta could place order for certain things to take delivery when they revisit the place at the time of subsequent festivals.

The specialised crafts once flourished at Barpeta and the artisans could show their proficiency. But now they are somehow maintaining the tradition. These small industries are pottery, blacksmithy, goldsmithy, fireworks, ivory works etc. Such crafts could not stand the competition with modern industries.

With the development of communication facilities various sophisticated goods have been supplied at the doorstep. Thus as a result of industrialisation and modernisation we are losing not only the specialised small industries which have got link with the economic base of the society but also the specialities in art forms having relations with our cultural identities.
Pottery carried by the Hirā people of Barpeta is an important cottage industry. It is one of the oldest crafts of this locality. The Hirās are recognized as a scheduled caste of Assam. They are one of the two castes which traditionally have been manufacturing pottery in Assam, the other being the Kumār.

There are nearly three hundred and fifty Hirā families at Barpeta and its adjoining areas consisting of Sundarīdiyā, Bāmunā, Budarutup. Like other crafts of Barpeta this is also on the verge of extinction. Still then the engaged families are somehow maintaining their livelihood by selling their finished products and are upholding the tradition. It is pertinent to note that the economic condition of those families engaged in the traditional occupation is not sound. The peculiarity with the Hirā potters is that the main portion of the work consisting of preparing the raw material, giving shape to various vessels and burning are done by the females. However the menfolk help their counterpart by collecting the raw materials
and fuel such as dried water hyacinth, dried cow dung cakes and reeds from the jungle. For burning, unlike the Kumār they do not use any furnace, but simply pile the pots in an open space with the fuels in layers between. The male members sell the finished products in the neighbouring bazars. Some of the traders in earthen wares collect such vessels in the winter season to be taken to the distant villages with the help of big boats. Through a barter system such traders collect paddy and other agricultural products from there. In this way with the help of each other the potter and the traders are struggling for existence. The items of this industry consist of pitcher (kalah), curd vessels (pāilā), cooking vessels (caru), offering plate (molā) and many others.

The Hirās as a professional caste are articulated to the satra and they are to supply a definite quota of earthen pots during Deul festival.

Another potter caste of Barpeta are the Kumārs. They also make pots, but with the help of wheels. The pots made by the Kumārs differ from those of the Hirās. Kumārs make such pots
as oil burners (caki), handled pots for offering scent powder (dhūnādanī) often with perforated designs, water pots (ghat) used in pūjās etc. Over and above supplying these earthen pots they have got their stipulated duties in the satra. An important item which the Kumārs make is the earthen rings for wells. Ring wells are comparatively cheaper and durable, which lasts several hundred years. It is popular at Barpeta area. The Kumārs are to take by shoulder the āsana in which Deul Govinda, the deity of the colour festival, moves in a procession. Of course, they are joined by many others on the way and in fact there is a great rush of people to take Deul Govinda by one's shoulder.

Goldsmithy:

The people associated with goldsmithy are called Baniyās at Barpeta as in some other parts of Assam. There are nearly 200 families of this caste at Barpeta who mainly live in Ghorāmārā hāti, Vrndāvan hāti and Na-hāti. The Baniyās of Barpeta showed their excellence in this craft and gained applause in various places of Assam in making a number of gold and silver ornaments. Of these keru (earring), hār
(chain), khāru (bangles), dhol-māduli (drum shaped neck ornament) made of gold or silver are worthmentioning.

Due to soaring price of gold and keen competition with the Bengali Godsmiths in production of ornaments the craft of goldsmithy is suffering and gradually shrinking. Barring a very few hands in this traditional craft all others have abandoned. It is on the verge of extinction. There are twenty five establishments of goldsmithy in the market area of Barpeta which are all owned by Bengalis.

These goldsmiths take order for certain items such as keru (ear ring) but they get these done for them by Baniyā workers of Barpeta. One Śrī Niranjan Das of Ghorāmārā hāṭī is the expert in this line who can make such ornaments and it is also said that from pure unmixed gold only such type of ornaments can be made.

The Baniyās are also associated with annual performances of the satra. They are to cleanse the gold ornaments of Deul Govinda, the deity of Deul festival and Kalīyā Thākur. Their service is recognised by honouring them with arecanuts and betel
leaves at the end of the festival.

**Blacksmithy:**

The once famous blacksmith industry of Barpeta also is now somehow surviving and confined only to a very limited hands. Although there are nearly three hundred Kamār (blacksmith) families in Barpeta, only about 10 workshops are maintaining the tradition. Like other small industries this industry is also facing scarcity of raw materials. The price of raw materials have gone twenty times higher than it was thirty years ago. They do not get the coal for burning the furnaces. Charcoal is also not easily available due to scarcity of timber. There was a time when articles made by local blacksmiths of Barpeta had a good market. They could sell sufficient quantity of their articles in front of the Kirtanghar during Deul festival and Kirtan festival. The gigantic lamp stands (bargachā) kept inside the Kirtanghar which can accommodate a thousand oil burners, occasionally lighted, are the examples of excellent craftsmanship of the Kamārs of Barpeta. Such lamp stands of various sizes are sent to different religious
centres, outside the state and to various museums of Assam from Barpeta.

Due to low demand and higher cost some of the famous blacksmiths such as Ghanashyam Das, Nauram Das, Narayan Ch. Das have been compelled to switch over to the production of different iron materials for the motor body workshops and various house building accessories.

The association of the blacksmiths with the satra as a professional group can be seen at the time of Deul festival. Each Kamār family is to supply one knife to the satra during the festival. In return each family gets 10 areca nuts and 4 bundles of betel leaves.

Statistics of the above mentioned three cottage industries associated with Barpeta Satra may give some idea regarding their present condition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Kumār &amp; Hirā (Potters)</th>
<th>Baniyā (Goldsmiths)</th>
<th>Kamār (Blacksmiths)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. No. of surveyed families</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Population</td>
<td>2226</td>
<td>1073</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Male</td>
<td>1116</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Female</td>
<td>1110</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Kumār &amp; Hirā (Potters)</td>
<td>Baniyā (Goldsmiths)</td>
<td>Kamār (Blacksmiths)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No. of students</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Boys</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Girls</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of literacy</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Families related to the industry</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Families giving up the craft</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. No. of persons related to the craft</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. No. of persons taking other jobs</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. No. of apprentices</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey report of the Planning Forum, Department of Economics, M.C. College, Barpeta

Fireworks industry:

The craft of making fireworks (pyrotechnics) developed at Barpeta as a cottage industry and somehow it is continuing till now. On ceremonial occasions at Barpeta, fireworks are essential. On the day of marriage ceremony it is treated
as customary for a groom party to pay a visit to the Kirtanghar on way to the bride's house. A show of fire works is held in front of the Kirtanghar. When more than one groom parties meet there on a particular day some sort of competition of fire works is held there. On the gate of the bride's house also the groom party is received with immense show of fire works. Similarly, on the occasion of the festival of colour a grand show of fire works is a routine activity on the first day of the festival.

Persons connected with this cottage industry claim that the craft is nearly hundred and fifty years old. It is said that beginners of this craft learnt from a few Chinese carpenters. Sri Manoranjan Pathak, who is considered as an expert of this handicraft told that his father late Agati Pathak was in this line from 1910. Late Pathak learnt the technique from one Behari Muslim. There were a few families connected with this industry during forties of this century. In the course of time this industry is confined only to three families.

Manoranjan Pathak said that he visited almost every place of Assam and most of the neighbouring provinces including Nepal in this connection. Some such occasions of his successful
performance were the inauguration of the State of Meghalaya at Shillong in 1970, Silver Jubilee Celebration of Assam Agricultural University, Silver Jubilee Celebration of ONGC at Nazira and so on. Over and above he gets order of fire works on the occasion of Rāsajātrā at Howli, Hanumānjayanti at Guwahati, Independence day celebration at Nehru Stadium, Guwahati. In 1986 he arranged a grand show in connection with the Republic Day Celebration at Nehru Stadium. His annual performances also include the Deul festival at Barpeta Satra.

Looking inside his workshop I have seen various articles kept ready for making varieties of fire works, e.g., rings and models made from split bamboos, thin strips of iron, earthen bottles collected from Hāra potters, brown packing papers, coloured papers, cotton threads etc. He showed me a packing box full of charcoal of a variety of plum tree. He also named such necessary ingredients as juice taken from sheaths of plantain trees and water used in Hookā, a local device of tobacco smoking. In that room I saw other utensils such as mortar and pestle, peddled grinder and low wide wooden stool for mixing various powders. Other than these he makes use of certain other
things as ingredients for his craft such as sulphur, saltpetre, caste iron powder, alluminium powder, potas, gunpowder etc. some of which he managed to procure through licence and others from some agents. In this connection it was reported that the manufacturing licence of this industry was seized by the Deputy Commissioner, Kamrup district in 1981, during the time of Assam Movement led by All Assam Students' Union. His two sons even his wife and old mother were also busy with various works of the handicraft. The industry of Sri Pathak manufactures the following items of fire works, viz. (1) Tārābāji (which goes up after firing), (2) Motār gach (burns very bright), (3) Phool jāri (flower pot), (4) Catowal bāji (rotates on a wheel), (5) Rangin motār gach (burns in bright colours), (6) Āsmān golā (burns with a big sound), (7) Sign board (in which various writings, symbols etc. could be shown).

On query Sri Pathak said that he received one Government grant of rupees one thousand only for his industry in 1980. Regarding market facilities he pointed out that during winter season of the year when marriages were held in the locality he could make profit for the whole year ranging from six to
ten thousand rupees. Śrī Pāṭhak was desirous of handing down the technique to other local youths but practical experience showed that they give up after working for a few days. He is confident that his sons would be able to continue the tradition after him. He is sure that this industry would survive.

This craft is also associated with the satra. On the first day of Dēul festival a show of fire works is held in the satra compound. For this performance payment is made in cash (Rs. 600.00 is paid from the satra).

Ivory works:

Among all the indigenous specialised crafts of Bārpetā ivory works is worthmentioning. Articles of ivory made at Bārpetā are representing Assam for nearly hundred and fifty years. Such products have been able to gain admiration not only in Assam but also in the whole of north east India. The then Prime Minister of India Late Jawaharlal Nehru was much impressed at the perfection of an ivory made walking stick when he was presented with. He expressed satisfaction and
remarked that it was much too beautiful to be used. He requested the State Government to take necessary steps for the bright future of the craft.

Sources of information are very much limited as to how and when this craft originated and became famous at Barpetā. Persons related with this craft can name one Ātmārām Mistri as the man associated with the ivory works. This was probably in the early part of the nineteenth century. He was said to be a resident of Galiyā hāti of Barpetā whose primary occupation was petty business and only in leisure time he used to work on ivory, persons trained by this man are still functioning as the bearers of the tradition down to the present time, though his own descendants have accepted other professions.

The name of another person who learnt the art from Ātmārām should also be mentioned. He was late Rādhānath Das. He was also a petty businessman. While he went out for business by boat he could collect tusk in the jungles. He carved various images on wood depicting stories from the religious texts which can still be seen on the walls of the
Kirtanghar and the adjoining house. Examples of his skilled hands can also be seen in the silver plates fixed above the door frame of the main entrance of the Kirtanghar. Artist Radhanath Das produced among other things the decorated altars or thrones of wood to be placed in various Vaishnavite satras and namghars of Assam. After the death of Radhanath Das his son Jagannath Das also accepted the profession since 1925 and could establish himself as a skilled artist. At present Sri Sailendra Kumār Das is running the Radhanath Ivory works since 1968 after the death of his father.

The present state of this traditional craft is very much disquieting as only two ivory craft centres are found today as against five such stalls only a few years back. The present stalls are the Radhanath Ivory Works and the Bhāgawatī Ivory Works owned by Sri Triken Bāyan. The articles of ivory produced in these centres include various idols and carved models of rhino, birds, flowers etc. Other similar articles are also made from buffalo horns. They also produce varieties of ornaments such as finger rings, ear-rings, neck-laces, bracelets and so forth. Ivory made hair comb is an important article
with great demand as because it is believed to have some medicinal value against hair falling. Śrī Bāyan is an expert in this line and could show his excellency in producing art objects. In the Republic Day parade in New Delhi (1985) the Assam Tableau showing the Assamese Nāmghar and the Āsana was adjudged the best. It was worked out by Śrī Triken Bayan.

It is not at all encouraging to note that the craft of ivory works is in the process of dying. Śrī Sailendra Kr. Das of Rādhānath Ivory Works while giving an impression of the present condition told me that the craft had not only shrunked but also changed its form. Because they were compelled to change their profession from ivory works to wood-work for want of raw materials.

There was a time when the ivory works had not to depend on any source for the supply of the raw materials. At that time the State Government did not impose any control over the material. They also could collect the tusk from the jungles. Elephants were also kept by rich families of Assam as a symbol of dignity and the tusks got from domestic elephants also could fulfil the better part of the necessities
of the local artists. The British administrators also realising the importance of this traditional art introduced the system of issuing permits for raw materials to the artisans of this handicraft. After independence the ivory workers of Barpeta have to suffer a lot due to the imposition of ban in respect of the supply of the raw material. It is hoped that a change in the procedure would ease the situation.

Apart from these specialised crafts, there are some other caste-based occupations such as those of the Kaibartas. The Kaibartas form a scheduled caste community of Assam. Their primary occupation is fishing. But the Kaibartas of Barpeta are found to have taken to purchase and sell of the fishes in the market itself and also from other sources. Their primary occupation of fishing is gradually being taken over by the immigrant Muslims as in other spheres.

The Kaibartas take a prominent role on the economy and day-to-day life of the people of this satra town. There are nearly six hundred Kaibarta families, concentrated in Bhakatpara, Rayotpara, two adjoining pockets within the Municipal area of Barpeta.
The Kaibartas of Barpeta were also associated with the satra activities through their profession. They were to supply a definite quantity of fish to the satra at the time of Deul festival. They are treated as share-holders even without paying the annual fees in the form of rice and cash. But the practice is not in vogue now due to economic reasons.

During mid thirties of this century there were objections that the Kaibartas were not supplying the required quantity of fish to the satra or were paying much less than the stipulated quantity. Late Kameswar Das was appointed Commissioner to enquire into the matter. After hearing the contentions from the side of the Kaibartas and the satra authorities the quota of fish was fixed by him to be nearly seven and half quintols for the two occasions such as Deul festival and Madhavadeva's Kirtan festival. The annual requirement of fish, according to past estimate was more than 24 quintols. The practice has since been discontinued.

There is another caste group at Barpeta whose occupation was dealing in lime and are known as Mukhis. With this
traditional occupation they are related with the satra. People of this caste group are to do the white washing in the satra, before the Deul festival. But now though their old profession has been changed in the course of time, still then they have maintained the traditional link with the satra.

Though these indigenous and traditional crafts and caste based occupations have suffered a lot nevertheless they maintained relations with the satra. Their pattern of association may be shown below.

Association of the crafts and caste-based occupation with the satra.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crafts/Caste-based occupation</th>
<th>Pattern of Association</th>
<th>Occasion</th>
<th>Payment/Reward/Honour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Potters</td>
<td>Offer various earthen pots</td>
<td>Deul festival</td>
<td>Honoured with arecanuts and betel leaves at the close of the festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Goldsmiths</td>
<td>Cleanse the gold ornaments of the deity</td>
<td>- do -</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Blacksmiths</td>
<td>Offer knives for using in the satra</td>
<td>- do -</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fire works</td>
<td>Arrange a show of fire works</td>
<td>- do -</td>
<td>Paid in cash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Kaibartas</td>
<td>Supply definite quota of fish, but the practice has been discontinued</td>
<td>- do -</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mukhis</td>
<td>White washing the walls of the satra</td>
<td>- do -</td>
<td>Honoured after the festival</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(C) CULTURAL IMPACT OF THE BARPETĀ SATRA

Most of the Vaiṣṇavite satras of Assam are functioning as the repositories of culture and learning with special reference to Vaiṣṇavite lore and religion. The Barpetā Satra being the luminating centre of the Bhakti movement during the last four centuries of its existence has emerged as a centre of culture. The cultural items that have taken shape and performed within the satra circle and outside the sacred presinects of it emanated mainly from the devotional principles. Some such items are also used as part of daily prayer service in the satra.

Various audio-visual performing art forms are prevalent at Barpetā district which have come into being due to the impact of the art forms of the satra such as Bargīt, Halīr gīt, Nāo khelar gīt, Thiya nām or Vīrnām, Ojāpāli, Ghoṣā-Kīrtan and so forth.

**Bargīt**:

For the propagation of Īksāraṇa nāmadharma, besides composing various dramas and poetic works Śaṅkaradeva and
Madhavadeva also composed certain songs in the style of classical songs. This genre of songs is called *Bargītas*.

Tradition goes that Śaṅkaradeva composed 240 such *gītas*, but these songs were burnt by wild fire. Then he asked Madhavadeva to compose some such songs. At the behest of his spiritual Guru, Madhavadeva composed 181 such songs. 11 Although neither Śaṅkaradeva nor Madhavadeva attributed the epithet *Bargīta* to this genre of devotional songs, nonetheless the epithet has been attributed to these songs by their followers subsequently. The devotional songs composed by Śaṅkaradeva and Madhavadeva and set by classical *Rāga* and *tāla*, sung in various *satras* are only called *Bargītas*. With the growth and spread of the *satra* system, the popularity of *Bargītas* increased considerably and became a regular practice with *satras* to begin the daily and occasional devotional services by singing a *Bargīta*.

At Barpeta certain families have been traditionally associated with the religious activities of the *satra*. They sing

Bargit in the satra in the context of nāma-prasāngā or on the occasion of various festivals. Bargits are sung to the accompaniment of khol and tāl along with dance movements.

The Sūtradhār family is traditionally known for singing of Bargit. Dayāl Ch. Sūtradhār who came up from this family was the first Assamese whose Bargit was broadcast through All India Radio, Calcutta in 1943. Similarly he was a regular artist of Bargit of the All India Radio, Guwahati since 1948 till 1974. Besides he sang Bargits in Calcutta, Madras, Jaipur etc. He was the key person in making Bargit a popular item through mass media. In 1954, Guwahati Radio Station took a novel plan of producing records of Bargit by the popular Assamese artists and there also Dayāl Ch. Sūtradhār gave proper coachings. Dedicating his whole life towards the cultivation and popularity of Bargit he died in 1978. There are other personalities of Barpeta such as Hari Gāyan, Nārāyan Ch. Gāyan, Puroṣottam Das and others who are associated with the culture of Bargit.

There are at present nearly twenty cultural organisations at Barpeta including the Government sponsored Cultural Centre.
(established in 1986) which are imparting training in various Satriya music with special reference to Bargīt.

**Halīr gīt:**

This genre of song is enjoying significant status at Barpeta. These songs are based mostly on the works of Śaṅkara-deva, mainly Kīrtanāhośa. Halī songs narrate Kṛṣṇa's playing of halī with the gopas and gopīs. The people of Barpeta regard the halī festival with utmost reverence. They get engrossed in merrymaking while they sing these songs to the accompaniment of kholi and tāls. At the advent of this festival, groups of people practise these songs at various places such as clubs and hāitāghar. They participate in batches by singing and dancing as well as throwing coloured powder while the deity moves in a procession. As Deul Govinda, the central deity of the festival remains in the shedan various groups of people sing halīr gīt till late night to their heart's content in the open space in front of the Kīrtanghar.
Nao khelar gīt:

Rivers are the sources of life of the people of Assam. Boats have also been the constant companions of the riverine people specially in the summer season, as the means of local transport, in trade, visits to distant places and also warfare, hunting and fishing.

Barpeta being a low lying area as such boat is essential for the people of this area and it has occupied the position of sport specially for the young ones. Similarly in other riverine areas of Assam such as Suwālkuchi on the bank of the Brahmaputra river, Mājuli, the river island of the Brahmaputra and also in Hājo area of Kamrup district boat race competitions are arranged as an important pastime in the summer season when the rivers are in spate. In other places of India also such competitions are found as in Kerala.

Though the antiquity of the boat race is not definitely known, this much is true that from the Vaiṣṇavite epoch it came out as a festive sport. There is the story that the principal gurus of the neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement of Assam were
constantly on the move from one place to another place and
on such occasions boats were the only means of conveyance.
During the Ahom rule there were separate contingent in the
army of naval force who fought from boats. There is the
famous episode in Assam history of Ahom force fighting with
the Mughal Army at Sarighat near Guwahati (1671 A.D.). At
the end of the contest the Mughal general Rām Singh had to
admit the valour and skill of the Ahoms: "Every Assamese
soldier is expert in rowing boats, in shooting arrows, in
digging trenches and in wielding guns and cannon."¹²

It is one of the characteristics of the Vaisnavite reli-
gion to draw people's attention by arranging rituals and
festivals and making games and sports. Boat race competitions
arranged on the sheet of water flowing beside the Kirtanghar
at the time of the celebration of Kirtan festival of Barpeta
Satra are the added attractions on these occasions. It is a
happy coincidence that the anniversaries of the gurus fall
in the summer month of Bhādra, when the rivers are in spate

and the competitions held in the swelled water. This particu­lar sport is prevalent at Barpetā for several hundred years and has merged into the cultural pattern of the place. In some other places again such as at Hājo competitions mark the occasions of the worship of the snake goddess Manasā.

The traditional folk songs associated with the boat race competitions enhance the attraction of the race. Probably such songs were composed orally to suit the interest of the audience and for that purpose certain comic songs were also added in the course of time. There are also such songs which are sung by the winning party aiming at the defeated party.

The making of boats used in the competitions have certain special features. Boats made for such purposes (khelnao) are made longer and spindle-shaped to be swift moving. The owner of these boats with the same sportive mind decorate their boats with carving of floral designs and of peacock (mayūra- pankhi) on the body of the boat which are again beautified with various colours. There were carpenters (sūtārs) adapt in making such boats with elegant designs. The name of one late Dharam Rām Sūtradhār (1872-1952 A.D.) is referred to
in this connection. He was himself a good rower, an artisan and one who patronised this cultural trait. He used to entertain the winning rowers and on defeat he swiftly began to correct any defect in making the boat that very night itself. Keeping of such a boat was never a source of income instead it was considered a symbol of dignity and aristocracy and for this purpose only the owner of a boat used to maintain a number of rowers. Boat race competitions were sometimes held with a bet. There are stories of a losing owner destroying his boat with an axe. These acts show the competitive spirit of the people.

But it is a matter of concern (for the people of Barpetā in particular) that this kind of cultural trait is disappearing for want of farsightedness of the people of Barpetā. The sheet of water of the river Cāulkhowā which was once flowing beside the Kīrtanghar and used as the venue for boat race was converted into a tank by the satra authority in 1985. Similarly the other tributary (called Marānādī), another venue for this

sport was blocked by embankments. Boat race also acted as a symbol of unity and integration as people of neighbouring immigrant Muslim villages also joined.

There is still possibility of re-introducing this boat race with the initiative of the satra authority and various cultural organisations of Barpeta in the nearly one Km. long Maranadi. There are reports to the effect that some amateur clubs of culturally conscious young boys and the Department of Sports, Government of Assam have taken initiative in this respect and submitted an elaborate scheme (1987) to the Sports Authority of India.

Thiyanam or Yirnâm:

It is a particular form of congregational prayer song of Barpeta Satra. Generally a troupe (called Nâm-dal) consists of twenty to forty male members including boys. One person called nãmlagowâ pathak (one who sets the refrain of the song) leads the chorus standing in front. He sets the refrain

14. There are Thiyanam troupes consisting of female participants only such as those of Râyatpâra, within Barpeta.
and ghosā, singing loudly with the movements of hands which the whole assembly repeats with oneness of voice as far as possible. All the participants join the chorus in standing position and hence is called thiyanām. The leader or pāthak goes on reciting the padas, each two lines of the verses, being alternated by the singing of the ghosā. This particular recital generally narrates the glory of lord Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu. This congregational song is performed to the accompaniment of kettle drum (nāgārā), cymbal (bhortāl, having nearly 2 ft. diameter) and clapping of hands with the movement of bodies. Thiyanām recitals are held in the Kīrtanghar on the occasions of various festivals, in the private homes and also while arranged in public places for the wellbeing of the inhabitants of the locality, in which several such troupes also are invited.

A grand show of such recital is arranged at the gate of the Kīrtanghar on the 6th day of the month of pahāg to mark the

15. Kindly see Chapter VI.

16. Temporary altars are erected on the eastern end of the pandal by raising 6 inches and four young plantain trees planted on the four corners of the raised platform nearly 3 ft. square. A sacred book written by Šaṅkaradeva or Māḍhavadeva keeping on a raised decorated try is placed on the altar.
conclusion of the seven day celebration of Bihu. On this occasion thiyanām troupes of all the hātis of Barpeta take part in three different altars.

Various cultural organisations of Barpeta impart training in thiyanām to young boys. It is the common experience at Barpeta that generally in winter evenings the sound of drums of thiyanām is heard from a distance.

Ghośā-kīrtan:

It is a form of choral song and a form of group dance. There is a leader or initiator known as Ojā and seven or eight assistants known as pālis. They all dress white, dhuti or lower garment, a chādar or wrapper on the body and head dress or pāguri. Ghośā-kīrtana is performed in front of the āsana inside the Kīrtanghar during the Kīrtan festivals and also in front of the Matha on the occasions of Bihu festivals. The theme of the ghośā-kīrtana is entirely based on the works of both Saṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva. At performance of the ghośā-kīrtana the performers sing songs in the sitting and standing positions in the shape of U facing the āsana.
main singer of this art form (ōjā) begins performance by
beating of big cymbals by either hand. Then two Bargīts
are sung as maṅgalācarana and it follows actual Kīrtana,
i.e., singing. The participants sing songs with appropriate
dance movements.

It is said that the tradition of ghoṣā-kīrtana was
started by Śaṅkaradeva while he was at Dhuwāhāta Belguri.
The tradition entered into Barpeta satra through Mādhavadeva.
Special significance is attached to the ghoṣā-kīrtana at
Barpeta Satra.

Ojāpālī:

The ojāpālī chorus or the vyāh ojā is also another
important performing art form of the satra. This particular
form of choral song is related to the daily services in the
satra and also performed in times of festivals. The Ojā
family of Barpeta is traditionally associated with the satra
to perform this art form.
An Ojāpāli troupe traditionally consists of Ojā and Pālis. There is one ojā and more than nineteen pālis in a troupe. The leader of the troupe is called ojā and the assistants are known as pālis. The chief assistant of the ojā is called dāināpāli. They all dress in white long sleeved shirts, white silken or cotton lower garment (dhuti) and turbans on the heads. The ojā instead of the ordinary shirt wear a long flowing garment and a pair of silver bangle on the wrists. The ojā does not play any kind of musical instrument. But on the other hand each pāli plays on a pair of khuti tāls (small cymbals) with either hand. Like other forms of ojāpāli the Vyāha ojāpāli of Barpeta Satra is a triple symphony of gīta (song), nṛtya (dance) and abhinaya (acting).

Other than these influences on the performing art forms, there are some other conceivable influences of the satra in day to day life of the people of Barpeta. Barpeta is a non-peasant society and the people are mostly business minded, yet some sort of religious influence of the satra is noticeable in their business establishments also. They like to keep
photographs of the asana (throne or main altar of the Kirtanghar) or drawings of the matha in glass frames.

The influence of the satra on the bus owners of Barpeta is perceptible. They generally name their buses with such names of god as Narayana, Padmapani, Sri Krsna, Keśava, Cawāl Kṛṣṇa and so forth. Similarly other names are Śaṅkar Śaranaṃ (at the feet of Śaṅkaradeva). Satra structures mainly the matha are drawn inside the bus on the front side. Verses from the sacred books are also written inside the body of the buses. Religious influences are also significant in any cultural festivals even if held outside the satra precincts. Devotional songs and dances appear to be major items of any cultural show held at Barpeta even in colleges and schools or in any public places.