Vaiśṇavism has assumed a special place in the religious tradition of Assam. Vaiśṇavism was prevalent in ancient Assam prior to Śaṅkaradeva. At that time Viṣṇu was worshipped in the form of Vaṣuđeva. "The Baraganga Rock inscription of Mahabhuti Varman (554 A.D.) which refers to the king as Parama-Bhagavata is the earliest recorded evidence of the existence of Vaisnavism."\(^1\) The Kalika-Purāṇa mentions five manifestations of Vasudeva which are more important. "There is mention of Varaha, Narasimha, Jamadagnya, Rama, Dasarathi Rama in copper inscriptions of Kāmarūpa. The name of the Brahmins who received landed property through the inscriptions were Kesav, Janardan, Madhava and Madhusudana etc."\(^2\) The sculpture of the age of copper plate inscriptions give the evidence of the existence of Vaiśṇavism. "Two images were discovered on the Golaghat-Dimapur road. One of them is an image of Visnu which is now preserved in the museum of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti."\(^3\)

Kasinath Dikshit writes regarding this image to be of ninth century. "The Ananta-Sayi Visnu of Aswakranta is a piece of sculpture of very high merit. It belongs probably to the tenth or eleventh century."\(^4\) Similarly many Viṣṇu images have been recovered from the Davaka area of Nagaon. Maheswar Neog opines that all these idols

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are of the same period. Hence we can presume the existence of Viṣṇu temples and the worship of Viṣṇu since the ancient times.

Sarikaradeva was the founder of Assam Vaiṣṇavism. It influenced the social life of Assam on a large scale. Consequently satra and nāmgharas were established in urban and rural areas of Assam. Satra and nāmgharas are the two major contributions of Sarikaradeva. Besides them a special Vaiṣṇava institution came up known as the Satsangi satra or Sasang. Thus the Vaiṣṇava institution have exercised their influence in the religious and cultural life of Assam. In the words of Maheswar Neog, “the Vaisnava Renaissance thus reached out to all fields of culture and developed life in Assam, enriched them, and brought about altogether a unifying and glorifying vitality to this part of the great Bharat-Varsha.”

There are many temples, nāmgharas and satras of the orders of Sarikaradeva, Damodaradeva and Harideva in the district of Nalbari, of these the following are worth mentioning, e.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Place</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Śrī Śrī Vāsudeva devālaya</td>
<td>Bālkariā (Nalbari)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mādhava temple</td>
<td>Mādhapur (Tihu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śrī Śrī Kāndeni Gohāir temple</td>
<td>Gandhiyā</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jaipal temple</td>
<td>Ararā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaliyā Gohāin thān</td>
<td>Hāribhāṅgā</td>
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### Thāns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pandar thān</td>
<td>Chakbāzar (Nalbari)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gopāla thān</td>
<td>Yajñabhumī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gopāla thān</td>
<td>Chāndkuchi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bāra Gopāla thān</td>
<td>Sonkāni</td>
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### Satras

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Order</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khudiya Satra</td>
<td>Khudiya</td>
<td>Damodari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dāmodardham Satra</td>
<td>Pandulā</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamārkuchi Satra</td>
<td>Chamārkuchi</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihāmpur Satra</td>
<td>Bihāmpur</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nilpur Satra</td>
<td>Nilpur</td>
<td>do</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bārānghati Satra</td>
<td>Bārānghati</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnisālā Satra</td>
<td>Agnisālā</td>
<td>do</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nāmkonā Satra</td>
<td>Nāmkonā</td>
<td>do</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bālikariya Satra</td>
<td>Bālikariya</td>
<td>do</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kairāra Satra</td>
<td>Kairāra</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhurkuchi Satra</td>
<td>Dhurkuchi</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulābāri Satra</td>
<td>Ulābāri</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khānā Satra</td>
<td>Tihu</td>
<td>do</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marowā Satra</td>
<td>Marowā</td>
<td>do</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandhā Satra</td>
<td>Sandhā</td>
<td>do</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charābari Satra</td>
<td>Charābari</td>
<td>do</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pub Kālākuchi Satra</td>
<td>Kālākuchi</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbari Satra</td>
<td>Barbari</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tāmulpur Satra</td>
<td>Tāmulpur</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jāgārā Satra</td>
<td>Jāgārā</td>
<td>Haridevi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naptipāra Satra</td>
<td>Naptipāra</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bālisatra</td>
<td>Bāli</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Āmrikhoa Satra</td>
<td>Āmrikhoa</td>
<td>do</td>
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</table>
Satras

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Place</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kāihāti Satra</td>
<td>Kāihāti</td>
<td>Haridevi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arā Satra</td>
<td>Jāgārā (Arā)</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kūlbil Satra</td>
<td>Chāmatā</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bādesilā Satra</td>
<td>Bādesilā</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nalbari Satra</td>
<td>Nalbari</td>
<td>Chaitanyakadevi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sāhān Satra</td>
<td>Sāhān</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandheli gāon satra</td>
<td>Sandheli (Mākhibāhā)</td>
<td>do</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A brief description of the major Vaiṣṇava centres of the district is given below:

6.1 ŚRI ŚRI VĀṢUDEVA TEMPLE:

Śri Śrī Vāṣudeva temple was established in the days of Ahom kings in the village Bālikariā 5 kms. away from Nalbari town in its north-west direction by Nada-Kaji.

Legend goes that in the past a fisherman was trying to catch fish in Jaymangla bil of Khata mouza. But he could not lift his fishing net for seven days and seven nights in spite of all his efforts. On the last night late Nada Kaji dreamt a dream that a handsome man appeared before him and told him that he was Vāṣudeva who had been caught in the fishing net in Jaymangla bil. He was asked to rescue Vāṣudeva from the net. So Nada Kaji went to the Jaymangla bil in the morning and drew the net. Two pieces of stone came out in the net. He kept the two pieces of stone in the store of his house considering them to be Vāṣudeva. He described his dream to others with great devotion. Then the day of the death anniversary of his father came on the Pratipad titbi of the bright half in the month of Maṅga. Prior to the day of the anniversary Kaji arranged a sabhā in his house. His
house was filled with friends and relatives. The dhūliyā and taliyā came at the appointed time and played on their instruments. But a surprising incident took place on that day. The instruments did not make any sound. Nada Kaji began to tremble apprehending some danger. In the night he again dreamt that the same handsome man appeared and asked him to establish him in the sabhā maṇḍapa.

Accordingly Nada Kaji brought the two pieces of stone from the store and set them up on the sabhā maṇḍapa. During the process he saw that on one of the stones there were the marks of Vāṣudeva with Sanikha, Cakra, Gada and Padma. On its right was Goddess Lakshmi and on its left was Sarasvati and on both sides were Jay, Bijay. Beneath it was Hanuman. Nada Kaji arranged the other piece of stone at the seat. After some days Nada Kaji again saw Vāṣudeva in his dream. This time Vāṣudeva told him that he did not want to stay there. He asked Nada to establish a temple at Barasastara and make arrangements for his worship there. The Barasastara subā is situated in Bālikariā village. Nada Kaji built the Vāṣudeva temple there and established the idol of Vāṣudeva in that temple.

“It is told that the Ahom king Siva Singha donated 18½ purās (74 bighās) of land to the temple for its regular worships and other expenditures. This fact is recorded in the copper plate duly signed by king Rajesvar Simha and is preserved by the History and Antiquarian Department of Govt. of Assam.”7 Besides the main idol there are Vāṣudeva idol, Śivalinga and Śalagām in the temple. The temple is devided into two parts-manikut and conference hall. The conference is observed in a five day programme in Māgh Bihu. Besides this Śivarātri, Doul yātra and Janmāstami festivals are celebrated in the temple. The idol of the main deity is circled throughout the village. During the sabhā the idol of Vāṣudeva remains within the manikut.

On the full moon day the idol ofVASùdeva is placed in the conference hall. During the sabhā the idol is worshipped everyday and Yajña is performed. Nāma, Ārati, Ojāpāli and Nātak are performed during these days. Religious conferences are also conducted.

There is a committee for the management of the temple named 'VÅśudëva Janakalyân Kalâkristi Vikåsh Samiti'. The expenditure of the temple exclusively depends on the income from the landed property of the devālaya.8

6.2 MÅDHAVA TEMPLE:

This temple is situated in Mådhavapur village 4 miles away from Tihu in its north-east direction.

Legends are also associated with the main deity of the temple. According to one such legend a villager Sara by name had a cow. The cow had not given milk. The cow did not allow to be milked nor did she allow the calf to suck. If it was allowed to go, it ran off towards the birinā shrubs. One day the cowherd followed the cow to see what the cow was doing in the birinā shrubs. The incident was reported to the owner of the cow by a few cowherds. The owner came out along with the cowherds and they saw that the cow was standing over the birinā shrub and giving milk to it.

After the departure of the cow, the owner cleared the jungle there and dug the place. Suddenly there was a great noise and the pick-axe fell on his feet and he became senseless. In the night somebody told him a strange story in his dream. That man told him that the Mådhava from Hajo had reached Mådhavapur and Mådhava

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8. Informant: Sri Nripendranath Sarma (Male, 54), data collected on 25.6.98.
had to be satisfied. In the morning he called the people of the locality and told the whole story. The people became quite happy to know all such things. They all went to the birinā jungle. One statue of stone came out from under the shrub of birinā. A small house was built in that place. As the idol of stone was of Mādhava this temple became known as Mādhava temple.

There is a connection between this temple and the Hayagriva Mādhava temple of Hajo. It is known that king Jaydhyaja Simha donated devottar land for the maintenance of the Mādhava temple of Hajo. King Śiva Simha also donated much land to this temple. Thus the Ahom kings donated devottar and dharmottar lands to different religious institutions. The scattered lands are called the āhāt of the temple. Mādhavapur temple is a āhāt of Hajo temple. These āhāts have to pay regular tax to the main temple of Hajo. The Doloi is the owner of all such temples. The Ahom king had employed him. The official next to Doloi is Saikia. It is the duty of the Saikia to collect the revenue from the āhāts. To help him in his duty there is a Thakuriya and a Mazumdar. The Thakuriya has to keep a record of the accounts of the temple. The Doloi or the Saikia has to collect information regarding the revenue from him. The Saikiya enjoys two Purās of land without any tax. This system continued in Mādhavapur till the advent of the British.

Mādhavapur temple had 867 bighās 4 lechas of land. The cultivators of this land were called Pikes. The land given to them was called Paikān land. Like the other āhāts, Mādhavapur āhāt had also Bhogdhani land. The ryots had to cultivate this Bhogdhani land as the tax for the land enjoyed by them. Because the Ahom king made grants of some lands for supply of rice, fish and other necessary articles for the daily Bhog of the deity. Such lands are called Bhog lands.
There is an orchard of 90 bighas of land on the eastern side of Mādhavapur village. Its name was Khātarbari. This orchard was meant for all the ryots.

When the crops were harvested the saikia used to go to Mādhavapur from Hajo by a boat. If he took more than the required amount from the store, the store was closed by two snakes.

The head of the idol of stone in Mādhava temple is in a broken state. The priest is employed in the Mādhav temple and the pilgrims come to visit this temple. There is a conference hall along with the main temple.

6.3 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ KĀNDENI GOHĀNIR TEMPLE:

This temple is situated in Ojāpāra of Gandhiyā village of Dharmapur mouza in the district of Nalbari. It is not known when this temple was established. Thousands of pilgrims come to this temple and burn lamps (chāki) the day prior to the titbi of Kāndeni Āi. The story of the family of Kāndeni Āi is associated with this temple.

Chintamani Mahāprabhu, the descendant of Śrī Śrī Chaitanya Deva, came to Assam to propagate the Chaitanya cult. He was the son of Śrī Śrī Virachandra Goswami. He was a member of the family of Śrī Śrī Nityananda Mahaprabhu of Navadvipa, a descendant of Śrī Śrī Chaitanya Deva Virachandra Mahaprabhu came to old

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9. According to legends a group of 7 thieves came to the temple and prayed to God to allow them to steal from the house of the thakuria without any hindrance. But for three days they could not steal anything from the house of the thakuria. Later on they threatened the Gohāin they would steal from his temple. In the morning the people saw a man lying dead in the courtyard of the temple. A little far off there were two more dead bodies and after the village there were two more dead bodies. The remaining two went to their houses and died. It was known from them that they broke the temple and stole the ornaments of gold and silver. The man who hit the head of the idol with a stick died on the spot. The headless idol of the Gohāin stands as a proof of this temple.

Kāmarūpa in the beginning of 1583 to propagate religion. He entered the kingdom of Ahom king Dharmanātha and propagate the Vaiṣṇava religion. The king was impressed by his qualities and embraced Vaiṣṇava religion. The king donated him lands in Dharmapur and Dakhala and copper plate with inscription in 1583 for the spread of religion.11

When Virachandra Mahaprabhu prepared to go back to Navadvipā after the propagation of religion, the people expressed their grief. So, Mahaprabhu assured them that he would send his son Chintamani Gohain to them. Accordingly he sent his son who was newly married. The name of the wife of Chintamani Gohain was Śrī Śrī Dharmeswari Gohani. Chintamani Mahaprabhu engaged himself in the propagation of religion. He established the Chaitanya Dhām in Roumāri of Dharmapur mouza.

According to one legend Chintamani Mahaprabhu crossed the river Brahmaputra on a banana leaf and sat on a tiger and came to the north bank. The people of Gandhiyā village established a sātra by donating their land. This sātra is called Ālibāri sātra. In the meantime Chintamani Mahaprabhu became so much engrossed in the love for Kṛṣṇa that he forget his wife. His wife became afflicted with grief as her husband failed to turn up. So Virachandra Mahaprabhu sent message to his devotees. So, the devotees brought Dharmeswari Gohani to Chintamani Mahaprabhu and kept her Ālibāri Sātra.

After some years Chintamani Mahaprabhu left for Navadvipā leaving his wife under the care of one of his disciples. Mahaprabhu breathed his last at Navadipā. Dharmesvari Devi became afflicted with much grief receiving the news of the death of her husband. She died in grief. Mahaprabhu expired on the Sukla chaturthi of the

11. It is found in the book "Śrī Śrī Kāndana Āśā Māhātmya O Charitra Barānā" that the copper plate is in the house of Śrī Khagendra Narayan Dev Goswami of the village Gandhiyā.
month of *Māgh* and Dharmesvari Devi expired on the *Kṛṣṇapanchami* of the same month. As Dharmesvari Devi died while weeping, her name is Kāndeni Āi and the temple has been named Kāndeni Āi Gohānir temple after her.

Initially there was no idol in this temple. According to the legends two idols of stone were recovered while digging the Kālisāgar pond and the idols were setup in the temple according to the direction received through dreams. One idol is of Kṛṣṇa, Valabhadra and Subhadra and the other idol is of Goddess Durgā. According to some people the idols were brought by Late Professor Dinanath from the Zamindar of Bijni and were setup in the temple.

According to popular belief a whimpering child can be made quiet by burning a *chākī* in the temple and by giving a mark of the ash of that *chākī* on its forehead. A *chākī* is lighted in the temple for a month from the last day of *Ambuvāsī* and *nāma* is performed in the temple. The womenfolk arrange *Pachati nāma* and *Jagannāth nāma* in the temple. The elderly persons conduct religious gatherings and recite religious scriptures. In Gandhiyā village the folk stories about Kāndeni Āi and her family are prevalent.\[12\]

6.4 **JAIPĀL TEMPLE OF ARARĀ :**

This temple is situated in the village Ararā of Bahjani mouza 4 miles away from Nalbari town. According to legends a king named Jaipal established this temple before the reign of Ahom kings. Some hundred of years after king Jaipal a king named Phengua established his capital in Sonkuriha village 1½ miles away from Jaipal temple. The relics of this king such as a field named *Gararkonā* and a heath name

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Garakhia are still there. Before some days a sign of the garh of the
time of the king and an iron box were found in that field. The old
people of the Arara say that one day king Jaipal saw the God in his
dream. The God told him He was being drencked in the rains while
the king lived in his palace in peace. He commanded the king to
establish a house for him within 7 days or else the things would be
different for his kingdom. The king constructed a temple within 7 days
and called all the learned people of the state and inaugurated the temple.

It is told that king Jaipal had a white horse. When the
villagers slept in the night, the God used to go to Burāgohāin,
Bhāngrāgohāin and Gopālthān etc. and came back to his place
before the morning riding this white horse.

In this place there was a Gosāingbar (temple) in the past.
That temple was demolished in the earthquake in 1897. Now there is
a big Bat tree and an Ābat tree. Here the Arara Jaipāl thān Hari
mandir has been built. Before some day the people had built a
Gosāingbar in the same name at Māndātolā of Arara. Nāmakīrtana is
conducted here by both the menfolk and the womenfolk. The
Gosāinghar is situated on furlong away from Jaipāl thān in its south. A
sabha is held here in the month of Māgh every year. This sabha
continues for three days. The first day is called gandh. On that day
abulīyā and nāma are conducted. On the second day ojāpāli is
conducted. On the third day the general meeting and nāmaprasaṅga
are held.

The big pond of Arara is situated half a mile away from
Jaipāl thān in its north-west. Bhatelī festival is observed here on Ist.
day of the month of Bahūg every year. The Jetbūnām is conducted
on the bank of this pond.

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A temple of Lord Hari has been built in Jaipāl thān of Ararā and it has been inaugurated on 26th January, 1994. There is an old idol of stone preserved in this temple. Every sunday the devotees recite here the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa and the Gitā as well as the Rāmāyana and so forth.¹³

6.5 THE THĀN OF KALIYĀ GOHĀIN:

It is not known when the thān of Kaliyā Gohāin came into being in the Hāribhāṅgā village of Tihu area. Probably it came into being at about 1714-16. During the reign of king Shiva Simha this thān came into existence. There is a beautiful story regarding the birth of Kaliyā Gohāin temple. There is a rivulet of the river Pagladiah on the western side of Hāribhāṅgā village of Tihu area. This rivulet is known as Hokākhoā Jān. Once upon a time there was a house of an old woman on the bank of this rivulet. There was nobody else in the house except the old woman. One day suddenly an unknown person came to that house in the evening. He was black in complexion. The old woman treated him nicely and allowed him to stay in her house for the night. The guest was highly satisfied with the treatment of the old woman. The man asked the old woman to light a chāki (lamp) after taking bath. Accordingly the old woman lighted the chāki (lamp) and placed it at a fixed place. The next morning the man took his departure. But surprisingly that chāki continued to burn for seven days and seven nights without being refilled with oil. The old woman was greatly surprised. She narrated the whole incident before all the neighbours. The people began to believe that the man was Kaliyā Krisṇa as he was black in complexion and this phenomena was an example of his greatness. The people living near the Hokākhoā rivulet discussed and built a temple of thatched structure on eastern side of

the rivulet and the western side of *sasterather subār*. After that they established that *chāki* (lamp) on a particular day after performing *yajña* and *nāmaprasānga*. Since that day the people began to light the *chāki* (lamp) and perform *nāmaprasānga* daily. As the man of black complexion was presumed to be the Kaliyā Krīṣṇa, the name of the place is the *thaṅ* of Kaliyā Gohāin and the name of the house is the house of Kaliyā Gohāin.

King Shiva Simha donated land for the building and maintenance of temples at different places. He had donated four *purās* of land for the *thaṅ* of Kaliyā Gohāin in Hāribhāṅgā village. With the income from that landed property the activities of the temple are maintained till today. Later on the villagers decided to set up the *thaṅ* of Kaliyā Gohāin in the middle of the village. Accordingly they built the *thaṅ* of Kaliyā Gohāin with timber and C.I. sheets 1 miles east of Hokā khoā Jān in 1916-17. The people of Sasterāther Subā continued to worship in the old temple building a small thatched house. That *thaṅ* is called the *thaṅ* of old Kaliyā Gohāin. In that old place the boys of the locality continued to offer *bhog* to Gopāl collecting the materials from the villagers every year.

During the construction of the new temple Satya and Siri, two carpenters, saw Kaliyā Gohāin in dream. They came forward and build the *manikut* of the temple without any remuneration. Madhunath Bhattacharyya of Makhibaha village, realising the greatness of Gohain, built the seat of the Lord and gave a *dolā* to the temple. There are many examples of many childless persons attaining fatherhood and many diseased persons getting cured of their diseases by praying to the Gohāin. There is a conference hall of this temple over and above the *manikut*. Daul, Bhatheli and other festivals and a five day festival in the month of *Māgh* are observed in the *thaṅ* of Kaliyā Gohāin.14

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6.6 PĀNDĀR THAN:

The Pāndār Than is situated in the Chakbazar in the midst of rural surrounding and natural beauty is a centre of peace for the people. It is told that the Pāndābhābā (God) appeared to a man in the past in his dream and told him that he lived in that place and would be discovered after the jungle of the place was cleared. The next morning that man told others about his dream. The jungle was cleared and surprisingly a huge tulsi plant was discovered. The people were keen devotees to Pāndābhābā (God) and a temple was built in the name of Pāndābhābā. It is said that the neighbouring places have never been affected by epidemics due to the blessings of Pāndābhābā. This is still evident in the neighbouring villages.

According to another legend God in the form of Pāndābhābā used to roam around the nāmgbaras and Gobāndharas of the locality early in the morning. Even today some people say that they have seen such a phenomenon themselves.

This sacred place had become a gathering place of priests from Kashi, Benaras, Brindaban, Mathura, Gaya as well as the priest from different temples and religious institutions of Assam. Monks, artists and religious people were very much impressed by the sacred atmosphere of the Pāndār thān and had selected it as the background for art, culture and bhakticult. It has been a fertile ground for the maintenance of the dramatic art of the state.

There is a Viṣṇumandapa and a nāmagbara in Pāndār thān. Worship, Kīrtan and other devotional performances are held here. Lakshmi, Sarasvati and other worships are held here. The Mahāviṣṇu yajña and Bhāgavat pāth are conducted here with much pomp and ceremony. The lifting of water in pitchers by women and
the bhog distribution in the temple are very enchanting. Besides the Viṣṇu yajña, the lightening of chāki (lamp) is performed in full of religious fervour, is a special occasion in this temple. The Viṣṇu stotra recited in unoson by the priests, the sound of sanikha, ghantā (bell), tāl and the sound of uruli made by women and the sound of bombs etc. make everyone filled with religious fervour.¹⁵

6.7 KHUDIYĀ SATRA:

The Khudiyā satra is situated one mile away from Nalbari town in its north is an important satra of Damodar order. It was established in 1565 A.D.¹⁶ Vaiṣṇava poet Gopal Misra established the satra. He was the main disciple of Guru Damodar Deva. Though Kaviratna Gopal Misra was senior to Kaviratna Bhagavata Bhattacharyya by twelve years, he was the contemporary and friend of Bhatta Deva. Though the ancestors of Gopal Misra belonged to Orissa the identity of his parents has not been established. According to the received information Gopal Misra lived in Barpeta and studies Sanskrit with Bhatta Deva in chattrasala of Barnagarh. Gopal Misra established the Ulabari satra before the establishment of Khudiyā satra. But when he came to Khudiyā satra, he gave the responsibility of running that satra to his younger brother Ananta Misra. It may be mentioned that Ram Ray in his Gurulilā has described the friendship between Bhatta Deva and Gopal Misra.¹⁷

The idols of the satra are Shyāmrāy and Sālagrām. These are some general characteristics of the satras of lower Assam. Basing on such general characteristics Tirthanath Sarma observes “In all the

¹⁶. Maheswar Neog has written in ‘Pabitra Asam’, 2nd edition that Khudiya Satra was established by Gopal Misra in 1434 A.D. This mistake may be due to wrong information by informer or due to printing mistake. Satyendra Nath Sarma has opined that the period of Misra was between the middle of 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century.
¹⁷. Goswami, G. : (ed) Gurulilā, Pad - 146.5 (Dwijramrai bhanita)
satras of Kāmarūpa the bāti, bāti, manikut, kīrtangbar are not fully there. All these are domestic satras. The family of the Gohain became larger. In some of the satras there was no single Head Gohain. All the eligible members of the family could give sarana. The Khudiya satra is not an exception to this rule.

According to the received information that the total landed property scattered over seven mouzas is 1562 bigbās and 4 kathās. There are 400 bigbās in Gopālpur of Pānduri mouza, 200 bigbās in Kuntibāri satra, 50 bigbās in Barhātā village of Kamalpur circle, 63 bigbās in Nanarā village of Karār mouza, 300 bigbās in Pub Banbhāg mouza, 20 bigbās in Khātā mouza, 100 bigbās in Kachimpur of Natundehar mouza and some land in Barbarīsar mouza in the name of the satra. On the otherhand king Śiva Simha donated much land during the period of Mahinarayan Deva. This vast property of the satra could not remain as the source of income of the satra. In 1959 the Government acquired the landed property of the satra by the Assam state. Acquisition of land scaling into Religious Act Charitable Institution of Public Nature, Act 1959. This act was a little more profitable than the act of abrogation of the zamindari system of 1956. Because these satras received an annual compensation besides the 50 bigbās of land. The Khudiya satra continued to receive 10/12 thousand as annual compensation. This amount had spent for the repairing of the satra and for the various festivals.

In this satra bāraprasaṅga was observed daily. RamRai has written this in ‘Gurulila’. Though nāmakirtan, ghoṣāpāṭh, Bhāgavatpāṭh, padpāṭh, Bargū and Bhatimā are included in this bāraprasaṅga, in the Khudiya satra observes this rule on the

birthday of the founder of the *satra* on *sukla akādasi tithi* of the month of *Māgh*. The annual festivals observes in this *satra* are Damodaradeva *tithi, Janmāstami, Lakshmi pūjā, Pachati, Gītāpāth, Sīvarātri* and Daul utsav etc. Besides the *nāmakīrītana* continues to be held all the time. After the implementation of the above said religious act an eleven member committee was formed with the *satrādhikar* as the president to run the management of the *satra*.

Literature, music, art and craft and dance are some of the valuable contributions of the *satra* to Assamese cultural life. The predecessors of the Khudiyā *satra* have passed on their contribution to the future generations especially in the field of literature. Since the day of the establishment of this *satra* the technique of copying of the manuscripts, the preservation of such manuscripts and the solidarity of the *satra* are evident from the manannes of the writing of the manuscripts.

The *satras* of *Brahma Sampradāya*, after being separated from Madhavadeva, laid much emphasis on the literary output. Consequently less emphasis was paid on other aspects. Hence some of the manuscripts written in the script of medieval times are still in the possession of *Sri Gobinda Krisna Goswami*.22

### 6.8 DĀMODARDHĀM SATRA :

This *satra* is situated in the Pāndula village of upper Barbhag mouza of the district of Nalbari. The main person behind the establishment of this *satra* was Govindadeva Goswami, the tenth descendant of Damodaradeva of Barpeta Nagaon. It is known that Damodaradeva established the *Patbaisi satra* in Barpeta during the reign of king Parikshit Narayan and propagated the Bhagavati Vaiṣṇavism. But later on he came in the bad looks of the king. Then

22. Informant: *Sri Govinda Krisna Goswami* (Male, 90), data collected on 9.4.98.
he left the satra and went to Coch-behar where Lakshmi Narayana became the disciple of Damodaradeva and donated lands to him and established a satra named Damodarapurdhāma in the bank of river Teresa. Damodaradeva lived in the satra and propagated the Bhagavati Vaiṣṇavism there till his death. After his death his pādukā (wooden sandal) continued to be worshipped in that satra under the patronage of the Koch king. Later on the satra was demolished by the erosion of the river Teresa but the Pādukā (wooden sandal) of Damodaradeva was preserved. After somedays Govindadeva Goswami was commanded by an old man to establish a satra after recovering the Pādukā (wooden sandal) of Damodaradeva in a dream. He sold away the ornaments of his wife for Rs. 110.00 and purchased the left Pādukā (wooden sandal) of Damodaradeva and established a satra accordingly. He collected donations from Guwahati and Sivasagar and laid the foundation of the satra on the original site. But this satra was again destroyed by the erosion of the river.

At that time there was a conflict among the followers of Sarikaradeva and Damodaradeva and hence a conference was held in the village of Pāndula. Govindadeva Goswami came to this conference and resolved the conflict between these sects. In this context Goswami spoke about the ill fate of the satra. A general meetings were held in Ranākuchi and Barkholā villages regarding the establishment of the satra. One Goswami of Mourā village donated land for the establishment of the satra. Though it was decided to establish the satra there, it could not be done because of conflict among the organisers. On 13th of Kāti in 1323 (1917 A.D.) a general meeting was held in Pāndula village and according to the resolution of the meeting the satra was to be established in that village. Seventy four persons donated land for the satra and on 17th of chait, 1325 (1919 A.D.) 15 bighās 7 lechās of land was registered in the name of Damodaradhama. The villagers built the math and the kirtanghara of
thatched structure. Govindadeva Goswami brought the *pādukā* from the original site and put it in the *nāmagbara* of *Pāndulā* and inaugurated the *dbām* on the death anniversary of Damodaradeva. He also established Damodaradhām Ratnamala Tola there. Later on it was named Damodaradhām Dhiresvar Vidyālaya. A well and a pond were dug for drinking water. ‘Dharma Senā Bāhint’ were employed in different places for collect contributions to build the permanent structure of the temple. They collected contributions from different sources and built the *math, manikut, kārtanghar, tolaghar* and hostel etc.

On the 14 *chait* of 1329 (1923 A.D.) the new *math* was inaugurated and the idol of Vāṣudeva was installed. Many statues of Narasingha, Mahadeva, Narada, Viṣṇu, Sri Ram etc. were set up on the outer walls of the temple. The statues of Jay and Bijay at the gate and the statue of Ganesh on the top of the gate were also set up. The icons of Hanuman and Garuḍa were ingraved within the walls of the temple. An idol of Vāṣudeva made of bronze brought from Kashi was installed on a copper seat. The *pādukā* of Damodaradeva was decorated with silver and gold threads.

On the 25th *Bhādra* of 1334 (1928 A.D.) the executive Committee took a decision to build a Kārtanghar of the size of 24 ft. breadth and 70 ft. length and this decision was executed. There is a trust deed of Damodaradhām. In that deed there is the detailed description of the properties of the temple and of the Sanskrit tola. There was a copper plate bearing names of the donors in the temple. But the plate and the idol of brass were stolen. Now besides the old *math*, there are the *Bulanīghara, Manikut* and *nāmagbara* in this *dbām*.

Of all the festivals of the *dbām*, the death anniversary of Damodaradeva in the month of *Babāig* is of prime importance. This festival is called *satrasabbā*. It continues for six days. On the third day of the *sabbā* the death anniversary of Damodaradeva is observed. On
the fourth day Viṣṇu yajña is performed and on the sixth day purnābhuti is offered. On all the six days nāgārā nām is performed. Another festival observed in Damodaradrām is Rāsāyātrā. It is observed for 5/7 days together. Besides this the Daul, Jannāstami, Śivaratri and so on are also observed there. During the month of Māgh the Āikīrtan (kīrtan by the women folk) is continued.23

6.9 GHULI SATRA:

Londra Medhi and Bhondra Medhi, two brothers of the village Nankārvairā, built a temple of thatched construction in Ghuli in the forest in 1939 A.D. These two brothers and some other villagers began to perform kīrtan in the evening after the day’s work. Gradually it came to the knowledge of others in the locality. A sabhā was held on a particular titbi in the month of Kāti every year from 1943 to 1946 A.D. Thus the Ghuli satra became known as a religious institution. It became the heart of locality. People from far off places came to this satra with their offerings during the sabhā of the month of Kāti. Besides the sabhā, astaprahara, kīrtanpāib, ghosānām are conducted in this satra. On the titbi of Māghi purnimā the Viṣṇu yajña is observed here in a five day programme. Later on the people became more interested in nāmakīrtan than in yajña in Ghuli satra. Still yajña continued to be conducted along with nāmakīrtan in Ghuli satra till 1979. There was no misunderstanding among the people in such a surrounding. In 1980 nāmakīrtan mahotsava was performed with much pomp and gaiety on the day of Māghipurnimā instead of the yajña for five days. Nāgārā nām and āpiojā groups come from far off places to perform nāmakīrtan to Ghuli satra on Māghipurnimā. The speciality of this nāmakīrtan is that it only sings from Kīrtana, Dasama Bhāgavata, Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata.24

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