PREFACE

The religious institutions have played a significant role in the social life of Assam since the ancient times. Such institutions are not only religious institutions but also cultural institutions. Besides imparting moral and spiritual education, such institutions have imparted social, political, literary and cultural education to the general people. Hence the religious institutions are the instances of the culture and civilisation of some specific races and nations. So in order to get a picture of the social life of a race a study of the folk-tales, folk-songs and the structures associated with such religious institutions is essential. The folk-tales associated with the religious institutions may not constitute history, but they determine some specific aspects of the social character.

The religious institutions are the proper places for strengthening mutual co-existence, unity and harmony. These are also the centres of informal education. The priests associated with the religious institutions have been imparting informal education since the ancient times. Besides they have also been imparting folkwisdom through the various activities of such religious institutions in an indirect way.

The expression 'religious institutions generally means matha, mandira, Satra, devālaya, nāmabara, tbān, church mosque and gurudwar etc. There are many mathas, mandiras and devālayas of the Sākta, Sāiva and Vaiṣṇava sects of Hinduism in Assam. Besides there have been satras and nāmagharas in all the parts of Assam since the middle ages. Such religious institutions have been surviving through various upheavals. At present some of these religious institutions have come to a state of decay and destruction. with the decay of a particular religious institutions, many things associated with it are also disappeared. Some of the activities of such mathas and mandiras are disappearing either due to the impact of western culture and
civilisation or due to the impact of materialistic thoughts. But the importance of the religious institutions in the religious experience of the general people has to be admitted. This is clearly evident from the grand plan of construction of the Harimandira on 1930 and the grand participation of the general people in the festivals and ceremonies conducted in the Harimandira.

A study on the educative importance of the religious institutions of Assam along with the various festivals and ceremonies conducted in them is no doubt significant. The discussion of the cultural and educative aspects of the society cannot be completed without a study of these institutions which have been imparting informal education through the ages. A proper assessment regarding the roles of education imparted and cultural life depicted through these religious institutions may be projected with the help of empirical study. As such the present study has been carried on which aims to focus meaningful light on these religious institutions along with the menfolk and womenfolk and so on associated with these temples.

A number of scholars, researchers and literateurs have made a thorough study of this aspect and have published a number of books. The Assam Sabha has published a dependable book in this sphere named pavitra Assam edited Dr. Maheswar Neog. But a comprehensive and systematic study of such religious institutions, especially of the Harimandira, has not been studied from the folkloristic point of view. But there is ample scope in this regard. Keeping this in view, an attempt has been made to make such a comprehensive study of the religious institutions. Being a student and a teacher of Education, my attention has been drawn to the study of the educative importance of such religious institutions. It is essential on the part of the teachers of universities and colleges to turn their attention to research activities. Keeping this in view I have chosen the topic’ Role
of the Religious Institutions with Special Reference to the Harimandira
in Imparting Informal Education Among the People of the District of Nalbari
for my research work. Though the topic is on religious institutions,
considering the volume of the thesis, attempts have been made to con-
centrate on the major religious institutions of Hinduism such as mandiras,
satras and nāmāgbaras etc. The scope of the present study has not in-
cluded church and mosque. According to the Ph.D rules of Guwahati
University a plan was made with Dr. Nabin chandra Sarma, one of the
stalwarts of Guwahati University, as the guide. After getting permission
and registration of the topic attempts have been made to proceed in the
research work under active guidance of Dr. Sarma.

In the preparation of the thesis the help and active guidance extended by Dr. Sarma is simply incomparable. He has studied
the work from the beginning till the Index in a detailed manner and
has inspired me to a great extent. I shall be remained indebted to him
for such active help and support in pursuing my research work.

Modern research methodology has been adopted to prepare the thesis according to the Ph.D rules of the University. Though
the topic provided vast scope for detailed analysis, considering the
volume of the work only a few important religious institutions have
been taken into the consideration. Similarly though much datas are
available about the informal education provided with each sātra and
mandira, only the essential datas have been used. Attempts have also
been made to develop the total picture with the help of significant datas. My labour will be fruitful if the work succeeds in drawing the
attention of the scholars, researchers and the elite.

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