CHAPTER FIVE
ORGANISATION OF SERVICES IN THE TEMPLE

In this chapter an attempt has been made to describe the organisation of services (SEVĀITE) in the temple of Hayagriva Madhava itself. Here I shall try to describe various services/occupational groups responsible for specific services, emergence of SEVĀITE groups and also their relationship with material objects associated with the temple.

History tells us that temples were built by kings. And so he was the chief custodian of the temple. The king played an important role in governing the temple’s activities. Informants told me that the king who took responsibilities for the management of the Hayagriva Madhava temple, brought 120 men (CHAYKURI HAJELĀ) to Hajo from various places. In order to keep up the proper function of the temple both ritualistic and economic, a well organised socio-economic network is essentially required. The socio-economic network that evolved was, towards early part of 20th century, not based on monetization. The king first of all appointed a priest (DEUÐI) from the caste Brahmin. Priest alone could not maintain activities of the temple. He required other persons mainly for worship. So the king entrusted responsibilities on some persons for which they were brought. They ought to associate with the temple regularly. Allotment of temple land was made by the king to those persons who were given responsibilities in the temple. Allotment of temple land made to persons on condition that they were to discharge their
respective service to the temple free of cost. The system worked in this manner. In this way different service (SEVĀĪTE) groups came into existence. They were to enter into definite and specific relation with the temple. The persons from aforesaid groups had to serve the temple and this was obligatory. Here activities and emergence of different service group and their socio-economic and socio-religious relation with the temple are discussed below.

There are altogether twenty nine different kinds of services performed by various persons or groups in the temple, Hayagriva Madhava. These persons formed some groups or classes and later on service/occupational groups came into existence. The surnames or titles of the people or groups came into existence according to their kinds of services rendered to the temple (Pathak, 1999:1). Informations about the different services and servants of the temple have been collected by means of direct observation as well as interview method.

The different persons or groups are - King/DALAI (main patron), BAR DEURI, SARU DEURI (chief priest/assistant priest), ĀTHPĀRIĀ, DUVĀRĪ, SUPAKAR, THAIT, HOMKHARĪ, BHAŘĀLI, CHATRADHĀRI, NANDHĪ, UDHAÑPATA, DOLĀBHĀRI, BANĪ, CHOWĀRI, GĀYAN, RANGĀLI DHOBĀ, KOTHBANĪ, KHADATOLĀ, MĀLĀKAR, MARIĀ, SAUKĀDHARĀ, NĀYAK, HĀTTHONĀ, BĀRIĀ, MAJUMDĀR, KAIBARTA, KUṂĀR, JAGĀI, DEVĀDĀSHI. Out of these, three are performed by brahmans and the rest by non-brahmans.
When the temple land came under the jurisdiction of the government, temple loosens the grip over the groups. As a result of this a little change has taken place in the services of the persons. Persons from different service/occupational groups began to perform their services in exchange for money. The same system continues which was in the past.

DESCRIPTION OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF PERSONS/GROUPS:

KING/DALAI:

When the temple was under the royal patronage, the king was the chief custodian of the temple. When the temple became free from the royal system, DALAI system was introduced and he discharges same administrative function as the king did in the past. The office of DALAI is not hereditary, he is elected from the BARDEURI (chief brahmin priest) descent group. The record reveals that the DALAI were mainly from the brahmin caste. When election for electing DALAI is held, persons belong to the BARDEURI class of both adjacent and far away villages can cast their respective votes. For this purpose they must have shares in the temple.

BARDEURI AND SARUDEURI (Chief priest & Assistant priest):

Priest must be from the Brahman caste. The post, priestship is devolved upon from generation to generation. According to traditional history, the original brahman priests of the temple came from Kanauj in Uttarpradesh and were engaged in the services of Hayagriva Madhava. There are four families just near the temple as their
descendants. In course of time they emerged with new and distinct identity as DEURI.

The families of these people are found in some villages of the Kamrup district. The
villages are Gerua, Bangaon, Nakuchi, Nandi, Sonkuria, Namkhal, Hajo etc. BRAHMOTTAR
land was allotted for them, so they took all responsibilities in the
performance of worship and other connected services with the temple.

At present Sri Haren Sarma from the Gerua village is the chief priest of
the temple. There is an assistant priest (SARUDEURI) who also performs worship in
absence of chief priest. He always helps the chief priest during the performance of
worship. Pilgrims go near the deities and offer PUSHPĀNJALI (offering of flowers).
The priest utters MANTRAS (charms) during PUSHPĀNJALI.

ATHPARIA:

His duty is to cleanse the sanctum of the pitha (seat) where NAIBEDYA
(raw eatable offered to deity) and PAKĀ BHOGA (cooked food) are daily offered to
deities. It is his duty to tend the lamps before deities within the temple. His duty is to see
the lamps so that it never get extinguished. He always stays in the temple.

At present Sri Keshab Chowdhury holds this post. He is non-brahmin and
information reveals that generally for this post person other than brahmin is appointed.
The present ĀTHPARIĀ is from the Malakar class. Sri Keshab Chowdhury informed me
that there are about ten ĀTHPARIĀ families here from which persons can perform this
service to the temple. He can not be appointed from the rest. There is a hamlet named
ATHPARIATOLA near at the foot of the Hayagriva Madhava temple.

DUWARI (Door keeper):

He is non-brahmin. His main duty is to keep guard on different doors of the temple and looks the doors when all services are over. He also opens the doors of the temple. At present Sri Alit Rajbongshi works as DUWARI. He also performs the service of THAIT as the same no longer exist. Information reveals that the act of awakening the deities in the morning is performed by the persons from Jagaitola.

SUPAKAR (cook):

At present there are three cooks in this temple. They are brahmins. Only brahmins are permitted for holding the posts. They are entrusted with the task of cooking meal (BHOGA) offered to deities. BHOGA is daily offered to deities. Pilgrims daily come to the temple to offer BHOGA before deities. They come with paraphernalia and raw items for BHOGA. The pilgrims handover the paraphernalia to the cook, SUPAKARS cook these and a little portion of cooked food is offered before deities. When worship is over, they distribute BHOGA amongst the pilgrims. These are the daily entrusted duties of SUPAKAR.

THAIT:

He is also non-brahmin. His main duty is to make necessary arrangement for NAIBEDYA. In the past the post was from the Mālākar class. Now this service is performed by a Rajbongshi. His name is Sri Alit Rajbongshi.
HOMKHARIA:

Persons who supply branches of mango tree for HOMJAGNA (sacred firelit to propitiate deity) are known as HOMKHARI. HOMA is daily performed in the temple. Branches of mango tree are also necessary for HOMA in the DAUL worship. Sri Sitaram Koch supplied these. Informant told me that now there is no HOMKHARI in the temple. The committee manages these somehow.

BHARALI:

At present temple has a store house. In the past the store house was big. It is located at the foot of the Manikut hill where the temple stands. The devotees came to the temple with many goods to offer deity and the surplus goods were deposited in the store house. Moreover the temple has got its own land. The temple has about 58000 bighas of land. It had got land in different places like Tihu, Barama, Checha, Gerua, Baragaon etc. outside Hajo. In addition to residential land it has enough agricultural land. So the temple earned paddy and such other things. For example the temple had KHAT (land allotted at a distance from the temple) in places like Talia, Checha, Madhapur. Sri Satya Bharali (M, 57 Years) of Bharalitola informed me that he was incharge of the store house prior to the government took over the temple land. He informed me that he himself harvested paddy from the field and shiefs were kept preserved in the store house. The paddy stands for mother goddess Lakshmi - a Hindu concept. By preserving that in the temple he symbolically ensures the presence of mother goddess Lakshmi in the store.
house permanently. He also did the same in the store house located at Talia near Checha. A portion of these was also kept in the Lakshmi temple located just near the Hayagriva Madhava temple. The person who was incharge of the store house was called BHARALI. The presence of Bharalitola in Hajo proves that in the past this service group was formed according to their kind of service that they discharged towards the system. Now the committee maintains the store house.

**CHATRADHĀRI:**

*CHATRA* means umbrella of moonlike whiteness. A person from Malakar family handles the umbrella on the heads of the deities. When the deities are carried in DOLĀ (palanquine) during procession through the main path of the Hajo town to Chaparighat on the day of BĀRUNISNĀN for having the deities bath and to Suwalkuchi on the day of ASHOKĀSTAMI, umbrella is used to protect the deities from sun, wind etc. He is known as *CHATRADHĀRI*. The umbrella is made of silver. BANIĀ makes this umbrella. These are used during procession. Now payment is made to a person who holds the umbrella.

**GANDHIĀ:**

The person who prepare DHUPAS (incenses) particularly for the temple is known as *GANDHIĀ*. The word *GANDHIĀ* is derived from the word GONDHA (incense). The Hayagriva Madhava temple daily requires many incenses during worship. Moreover pilgrims offer DHUPA to the temple. In the past hand made DHUPAS were
used in the temple and also by pilgrims. During worship incenses are lit; so it was their
duty to supply incenses to the temple. To know about the role of *GANDHI* in the temple
I met Mrs. Bhadre Nayak (Fe, 60) and she informed me that there are now about seven
Gandhia families in Gandhiatola near Bharalitola. According to her, persons having
*GANDHI* title are not found here. She told me that she herself made *DHUPA* and
supplied to the temple. Information reveal that the preparation of *DHUPA* is reserved for
the female. Then I met Mrs. Jyotshna Das (Fe, 49) and I collected some informations
about the system. She prepared *DHUPA* and supplied these to the temple. Even women
engaged insuch business, took *DHUPA* from her in exchange for other goods. Data on the
methods and techniques of *DHUPA* making were collected.

Firstly to prepare *DHUPA*, bark of *BAGHNAL* tree and *SHAOLO* tree are
to be collected. Then barks are dried in the sun. Fully dried barks are powdered fine in
*DHENKI* (a wooden pedal for cleaning or pounding rice etc.). Fine powder is mixed with
water. Innumerable thin bamboo sticks are already made measuring about 10cm-15cm in
length. Mixed powder forms *LAD* (lump). Then a little portion of *LAD* is wrapped
around the stick by hand. A smooth wooden stool is used for such purpose. These are
dried hand in the sun. She informed me that *DHUPA* being a sacred thing, it is made by
putting on a newly washed cloth after taking bath. Even materials brought for *DHUPA*
are not touched without bath. Land was assigned to them. When they had to pay revenue
For land, they gradually gave up this occupation. Now for the scarcity of handmade
DHUPA artificially made DHUPA are used in the temple.

UDHANPATA:

The person who make earthen support for cooking vessel is called UDHA-

UDHANPATA. He was engaged in making earthen support of cooking vessel in the
cooking house of the temple. Generally there are three earthen support to place the
cooking vessel upon it. Fire woods are used through the three earthen supports. At
present permanent hearths are used for placing cooking vessels. There is a hamlet named
UDHANPATA in the Hajo town.

DOLABHARI (palanquine bearer):

It is their duty to carry deities in palanquine when deities are taken out
from temple in procession on some occasions. For this activity palanquine is used. The
palanquine consists of two elongated cylindrical shafts on either side to carry it on the
shoulders. Two persons carry the palanquin on their shoulders. In the past it was
obligatory for them to perform this duty free from any remuneration. Nowadays the
system DOLABHARI is there and they perform this duty on the payment. There was a
DOLĀ made of elephant’s tusk, but now wooden DOLĀ is used.

BANIA:

Persons who make various ornaments from gold, silver and other metals
are called Bania. It is an occupational group living in the Hajo town. It was their duty to
supply ornaments for deity of the temple. I met Sri Uday Kalita, son of late Konoram,
Kalita of Sonaritola and he informed me that his father made ornaments for deities and supplied these to the temple. He also supplied ornaments to the temple. Even today also he makes ornaments for deities on order from pilgrims. Temple land was also assigned to them. If deities' ornaments are to be repaired, a responsible member of the temple committee comes to Sri Uday Kalita's residence of Sonaritola. He renders this service on payment. In the past it was obligatory for them to make and to repair ornaments for deities without any remuneration.

**CHOWĀRI:**

It is his duty to handle the *CHOWAR* (a tuft of yak hairs with a small haft) infront of the deities when the deities are brought out from the *GARBHAGRIHA* of the temple for procession on particular fastive occasion to take them to particular places through the main path of the Hajo town. The *CHOWĀRI* welcomes the deities by waving the *CHOWAR* which is considered to be a sacred thing. *CHOWAR* is kept in the temple. The system continues but nowadays the *CHOWĀRI* is remunerated for this work.

**GĀYAN:**

The persons who perform music are called *GĀYAN*. These persons formed a group or class and they live in *GĀYANTOLA* near the Hajo town. Sri Tarun Das and Sri Dhiren Malakar from Ganeshtola informed me that many years ago late Ghunucha Gayan (Fe) and late Charu Gayan (Fe) showed Devadasi dance. The priest Harendra Nath Dev Sarma told me that he himself enjoyed Devadasi dance showed by them but after their
death this tradition came to an end. Information reveals that a male named Naren Dutta (M) performed this dance wearing female dress and ornaments. When the deities are brought out from the temple and carried on by procession to different places on some festive occasions, Gayan used to play on various musical instruments and sang songs infront of the procession. Nowadays procession continues but the role of Gayan in connection with disappears. At present band party, drums are used in the procession and they are paid.

**RANGĀLI DHOBĀ (washerman):**

The duty of washerman engaged in the temple was to wash the cloths used by the deity. Later on therefrom the service group, RANGĀLI DHOBĀ came into being. Informants told me that cloths were never washed by woman. RANGĀLI DHOBĀ first takes a bath and then washes the cloths. The costumes are exclusively washed in cold water without using any detergent like soap or soda. Sri Upen Pathak (M, 70) who resides in Bharalitola, infromed me that his father late Bhakatram Pathak used to wash the cloths of the deity. For this work they got temple land. According to Sri Upen Pathak, there are about six families as lineal descendants. Members of the families when interviewed, it is revealed that none practise this service. Nowadays the service of this group is taken over by the persons who always work in the temple. They were specifically engaged in this work.
KOTHBANIA:  
He is engaged in the cleaning of BHOG-GHAR (the house where offerings are prepared) and in the arrangement of paraphernalia for BHOGA (offerings). He also supplies water in the BHOG-GHAR and helps the SUPAKAR (cooks) in other connected works.

KHADĀTOLĀ:  
Some persons were engaged to carry earth in KHADĀ (an open basket used for carrying earth) for making altar. This temporary altar made of earth was used to place deities on it. Therefrom the hamlet, Khadātolā came into being. Khadātolā is located just near Sonaritola (a hamlet). This elevated seat was prepared in the central place in between Khadātolā and Sonaritola. When the deities are brought out from GARBA-GRIHA of the temple in procession and are taken away through the main path of the Hajo town, the deities are placed on this seat already prepared by persons of Khadātolā. Villagers offer molasses infront of the altar. There are about ten families who offer molasses. Nowadays they offer sweets made of CHANA (the oily substance of milk) instead of molasses. They got temple land. The central place in between Khadatola and Sonaritola is known as MITHAI KHOWĀ CHAK (a central place where molasses are offered to deity).

Earthen seat is now replaced by the wooden stool or equal elevation.
MALAKAR (Flower supplier and garland maker):

It was his duty to supply flowers and garlands to the temple. There are about 130 Malakar families in Malitola of the Hajo town. MALAKAR also lives near Hajo CH'AK (central place) and Jagaitola (a hamlet). Out of 130 families, 60 families know the art of making MĀLĀ (garland). I met Sri Urbashi Chowdhury (F, 60), Barada Malakar (F, 61) and Rukmini Malakar (F, 52) and they informed me that there are about 8 Malakar families who take this occupation as a sole means of their livelihood.

Temple land was assigned to Malakar. So they were to supply flowers, garlands to the temple free of cost in rotation, pilgrims also got flowers from Malakar free of cost.

TYPES OF MĀLĀ:

Malakar makes different types of garlands from flowers, TULASHI (sacred basil), paddy, rice and coloured leaves. Types are MUR MĀLĀ - flower made and TULASHI made; DHUKDHUKI MĀLĀ; KANTHI or GAL MĀLĀ; JĀLI MĀLĀ; KĀTā MĀLĀ; BER MĀLĀ; CHĀULIAR MĀLĀ; DHĀNAR MĀLĀ; B'AR CHATRA; KRISHNAR JANMA DOLĀ (a kind of palanquin made of flowers for lord Krishna); SARU MĀLĀ, MURĀL for bride (head decoration); MURĀL for bridegroom (headgear). See table 6.

MĀLĀ FOR DEITY:

Priest informed me that JĀLIMĀLĀ is used for the main deity, Hayagriva
Madhava. Because it covers the main deity. It is made according to the need. KANTA-
MALÄ, DHUKDHUKI MALÄ are used for other deities. Flowers and garlands used for
the day are taken off from the deities in the next day morning. These are not used twice in
the temple. Every day these are discarded after use (see chapter 4).

MÄLÄ FOR PILGRIMS:

Pilgrims generally prefer MURMÄLÄ (head garland) made of flowers and
TULASHI leaves (ocimum sanctum). TULASHI leaves are prefered because its leaves are
part and parcel for Vishnu worship. According to priest Vishnu worship remains
incomplete without the offering of TULASHI. The MÄLÄS reciprocate in accordance with
the need. He produces MURMÄLÄ for Vishnu. TULSHI is pronounced as TULASHI in
Assamese dialect. In addition to that a pilgrim has personal desire to offer other MÄLÄ to
Vishnu. This becomes a mental obligation for him; in response to that Malakar produces
different varieties of garlands for the floral decoration of Vishnu. So the pilgrims desire
to offer MURMÄLÄ to the deity Vishnu. This is customary for them.

A few decades ago each Malakar family had a TULASHI garden. They
themselves produced this and used in making different kinds of MÄLÄS. Different kinds
of garlands and their uses are shown in the table 6.

Red flowers are never used in making MÄLÄS; even deities are not
worshipped with any red flowers. It is believed that the deity Madhava is repulsive to red
flowers. So red flowers are considered as impure, therefore pilgrims use white, yellow,
white rose, cream coloured and such other flowers to please the deity. Red flowers are not permitted since such flowers are used in worshipping Sakticult. Not only that the use of red vermillion is avoided, in place of that white CHANDAN (paste of white sandal wood) is used for worshipping Vishnu.

Sri Hemen Chowdhury (Malakar) who sells MĀLĀ and CHĀKI (earthen lamp) informed me that now he regularly supplies flowers and required MĀLĀS to the temple. He supplies white, yellow, creamy and white rose flowers to the temple. He always has to supply TULASHI leaves unblemish with stalk. He gets remuneration for that. Before Hemen Chowdhury, the family of Sri Sadananda Malakar, a school teacher used to supply these to the temple.

**TABBO IN MAKING MĀLĀ**:

Information reveal that particularly in Hajo, MĀLĀS made by Malakars are sold for the offerings in the temple. Shopkeepers were interviewed by me and I found that each shopkeeper belongs to Malakar family. In the past MĀLĀ was specifically made by woman only. When I visited Malakar families I saw women making MĀLĀ. Sri Hemanta Chowdhuri who occasionally sells flowers, MĀLĀ and CHĀKI (earthen lamp) informed me that he himself makes garland. According to him nowadays males also make garland. He has his own TULASHI garden. Those who have no TULASHI garden, buy these from basil garden. Malakars more of less produce basil plant in their own compounds. Flowers are also bought by them. Flowers and TULASHI leaves are supplied
to them from different places such as Barchapari, Satdala, Dadhigaon etc. These places are not so far from the Hajo town. These plants are kept in sacred water for the next day. Observed that basil and flower garland are kept for the next day. They keep these in their own home by sprinkling sacred water over it. Before starting the preparation of garlands, it is customary for a maker to get himself purified by taking bath. Garlands are considered as sacred when these are made after taking bath. Fibres of banana tree used in making garland are considered as sacred. There are some relaxation ; cotton thread is taking place of banana fibres. The informants when asked about this matter, informed me that cotton threads are used due to scarcity of banana fibres.

In three months namely Chait (March-April), Bohāg (April-May) and Jeth (May-June), basil are not found available, then the makers use leaves of TANGĀLATI, SHUKĀLATI and BANTULASHI plant in making garlands. Those leaves are considered equivalent to basil and sellers sell garland of such leaves to pilgrims as TULASHI MĀLĀ. Moreover in these three months flower garland are sold to pilgrims. It is due to the scarcity of TULASHI. Shop keepers told me that except these three months garland made from NĀRGI (marigold) flowers are used in other months also but for decorative purpose only. Especially young boys buy flower garlands at the time of returning home but not for offerings.

MAKERS AND SUPPLIERS:

I visited some of the Malakar families to enquire about their occupation.
They informed me that they place order of *TULASHI* garland to families who practise this occupation and they supply these directly to shop keepers on contract. Moreover it is found that in between the two parties viz makers and shopkeepers some middlemen are there. Found that the occupation always remain confined to among the Malakar. They may be shopkeepers, suppliers and makers.

I have collected some informations on monthly income of garland sellers and garland makers. It is shown in the following table.

**TABLE -3**

Name of informant - Sri Hemanta Chowdhury (Malakar, 40)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>No. of garlands sold</th>
<th>Prices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>TULASHI</em></td>
<td><em>BOHĀG</em> April-May</td>
<td>10,000-12,000</td>
<td>Each mala is sold within Rs. 1.00 - 2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>TULASHI</em></td>
<td><em>JETH</em> May-June</td>
<td>8,000-10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>TULASHI</em></td>
<td><em>ĀHĀR</em> June-July</td>
<td>4,000-6,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>TULASHI</em></td>
<td><em>SĀON</em> July-August</td>
<td>3,000-5,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>TULASHI</em></td>
<td><em>BHĀDA</em> August-September</td>
<td>3,000-5,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>TULASHI</em></td>
<td><em>ĀHIN</em> September-October</td>
<td>10,000-15,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>TULASHI</em></td>
<td><em>KĀTI</em> October-November</td>
<td>15,000-20,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>TULASHI</em></td>
<td><em>ĀGHON</em> November-December</td>
<td>10,000-12,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>TULASHI</em></td>
<td><em>PUHA</em> December-January</td>
<td>4,000-6,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>TULASHI</em></td>
<td><em>MĀGHA</em></td>
<td>20,000-25,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Informants told me that other expenditures too are there such as threads, TULASHI, flowers etc. If the seller himself does not make garland, he has to buy these from middleman or directly from makers. If the seller buys these from middleman, he has to pay more, but profits less. In order to make more profit he enters in direct contract with maker. Generally a seller buy garlands directly from makers in Rs. 30.00 - 50.00 per 100 pieces. But if a seller buys garlands from middleman he has to pay Rs. 50.00 - 60.00 per 100 pieces.

I met Sri Urbashi Chowdhury (Fe, 55) a Malakar woman whose family members are living primarily depending upon this occupation. Her one son is doing this business. He always sells garland, CHĀKI, DHUPA and to sell these he has a temporary shop at the foot of the Manikut hill. She and her daughter practise this occupation and they know how to make different kinds of garlands. Her son gathers TULASHI and flowers and they regularly make garlands. The son sells these at price of Rs. 1.00 - 2.00.

She informed me that they have to buy garlands in the month of KĀTI and MĀGHA. At this time they buy garlands directly from makers on contract. She has her own TULASHI garden but owing to insufficient land and production she has to buy TULASHI leaves
from other places for making garlands.

**MARIĀ (Muslim):**

Maria live in Mariatola (Muslimpatti) at the foot of the Manikut hill. It is located at a distance of 150 meters west from the temple. The gaonbura (village headman), Abdul Barik informed me that there are about 200 Maria families with a population of about 1800. Marias are distributed over about in 52 villages of Assam. I met Irshad Ali (70) of that village to collect some informations on the role of Marias in the temple. Informed that about 700 invaders came to Assam during the invasion of Assam by Mirjumala. Then Ahom king kept them in captivity or as prisoners. The king engaged them in different works. There was a saying that first of all the Marias were engaged in cutting paddy but seven hundred Marias cut only six hundred sheafs of paddy. The king considered them as unworthy for this work,. Then the king engaged them in cleaning garden. They cleaned the garden slashing off all the plants. The papaya trees of the graden were taken away by them to use as post to erect house. After that they were engaged in feeding grasses to king’s elephants and horses. The king observed that they fed grasses from the backside of the elephants and horses. Then the king appointed them in cutting land to fill up compound. It was seen that they were carrying earth on their shoulder facing one another. The king considered them misfit for these works as well. Then they were set free. Probably a few persons who had knowledge of metallurgy to make cannon ball of brass and gun powder as a part of their earlier profession, carried
those with them. A few Marias including brass cannon ball makers took shelter in Hajo.
They saw some earthen vessel at the foot of the Manikut hill. They began to produce
brass metal vessels by imitating the earthen vessels. But that came to the knowledge of
king and he engaged them to supply brass metal vessels to the temple. Thenceforth they
have been continuing this craft and are responsible for supplying the temple with their
brass metal products at a given quantity. In exchange for this service, temple land was
allotted to them. They supplied big $\text{THĀLI}$ (large deep iron vessel), $\text{KALAH}$ (pitcher used
as water pot), $\text{TAU}$ (large brass cooking utensil) made of brass metal to the temple.
Nowadays the system has ceased to exist. According to Dilnur Ali and the present priest
of the temple, today also even the Marias supply and repair vessels but that on payment.
The Marias also make lamp and $\text{ARJONG}$ (wine vessel) for Bhutias.

The Marias are considered to be hierarchically lower than Sheikh and Shayad. In the past Marias were not allowed to marry with Seikh and Shayad. Informants
told me that the main cause behind these is that Maria woman did not know the art of
weaving, different activities connected with agriculture etc.

Even today they are associated with the temple. They had voting right in
the temple. They have their faith in the deity, Hayagriva Madhava. They visit temple
from the door of the western side but they do not enter in. When the Muslims come to
visit Powamakka located at Hajo, these pilgrims also come to this temple for visit. They
visit the temple from outside and move around the temple. Sri Hemen Chowdhury, a
those with them. A few Marias including brass cnonon ball makers took shelter in Hajo. They saw some earthen vessel at the foot of the Manikut hill. They began to produce brass metal vessels by immitating the earthen vessels. But that came to the knowledge of king and he engaged them to supply brass metal vessels to the temple. Thenceforth they have been continuing this craft and are responsible for supplying the temple with their brass metal products at a given quantity. In exchange for this service, temple land was allotted to them. They supplied big _THĀLI_ (large deep iron vessel), _KALAH_ (pitcher used as water pot), _TAU_ (large brass cooking utensil) made of brass metal to the temple. Nowadays the system has ceased to exist. According to Dilnur Ali and the present priest of the temple, today also even the Marias supply and repair vessels but that on payment.

The Marias also make lamp and _ARJONG_ (wine vessel) for Bhutias.

The Marias are considered to be heirarchially lower than Sheikh and Shayad. In the past Marias were not allowed to marry with Seikh and Shayad. Informants told me that the main cause behind these is that Maria woman did not know the art of weaving, different activities connected with agriculture etc.

Even today they are associated with the temple. They had voting right in the temple. They have their faith in the deity, Hayagriva Madhava. They visit temple from the door of the western side but they do not enter in. When the Muslims come to visit Powamakka located at Hajo, these pilgrims also come to this temple for visit. They visit the temple from outside and move around the temple. Sri Hemen Chowdhury, a
Malakar who sells flowers and garlands, informed me that last year when Yakub Ali (50) of Mariatola gave me responsibility to offer DHUPA and garland to Madhava on his behalf, he himself offered these in the name of Yakub Ali. When they go near the temple, they incline their head in devotion. Irshad Ali (70) informed me that last year when the face of his young daughter was covered with pimple or boil, a TULASHI garland was offered to Madhava in the name of his daughter through a Hindu man with an expectation of recovery of his daughter’s disease. Many such instances are there among them. Seen that Marias were socio-economically related to the temple.

SAUKĀDHARA (Muslim):

SAUKĀ means stick; DHARĀ means holder. The person who holds the stick is called SAUKĀDHARA. Information reveal that the SAUKĀDHARA is from Muslim community (GARIĀ). GARIĀ did this in the past and it continues. His assigned duty is to pilot and guard the procession. The deity CHALANTA Madhava is brought out form the GARBHAGRIHA (inner compartment of the temple) of the temple in procession in some festive occasions. The person must have a stick in his hand. I visited the village, Saikiapara which is located on the bank of the river, Lakhaitara at the distance of 3 Kms to the northern side of the Hajo town. I met Md. Mushahak Ali, head of the village. Saikiapara to know their role in the temple. He said, “Now there are about one hundred twenty muslim families and about seven Malakar families in this village. But the Malakar families are located at a little distance from the Muslims in the same village. We were
given twelve puras of temple land. Saikiapara is a hamlet but the name of the revenue village is Rajabazar. I myself performed this duty which was indespensible for our part. Even today also I perform this duty but that on payment”.

RAJĀDAUL (in the name of king) is held in the DAULGRIHA (an idol-house) after one month of the GOVINDA DAUL. It is located at the same compound of the Hayagriva Madhava temple. In this connection Holi festival is held which is known as RAJĀ-PHĀKUA. On this day the deity Madhava is carried on by procession to Chaparighat of the river, Checha flowing near the Hajo town and there Muslims also enjoyed Holi (PHĀKUA) with PHĀKU (dust colours). When they pass through the lower compound of the temple, they generally incline their head only to show reverence and devotion to the temple. An informant told me if Madhava appears in one’s dream, one offers garland to Madhava through the hands of Hindu devotee. There are about sixty Saikia families (Muslim) out of one hundred twenty families. At present also they have their voting power in election of the temple. Persons from Saikiapara had to go for carrying paddy from KHĀṬ(landed property) to the store house of the temple.

NAYAK:

The duty of a NAYAK was to supervise the activities of different SEVĀITES (service). He also advised the SEVĀITES in different activities entrusted upon them.

HĀTKHOWĀ:

The king entrusted one person to collect taxes from the Bhutias, the
Tibbetan, the Chinese who came to visit the temple every year. For this act the person is called HĀTKHOWĀ. I met Sri Ashok Kumar Hatkhowa (40) with a mind to have more insight about them. He informed me that there are now about sixteen HĀTKHOWĀ families as their descendants. Sri Jyotish Hatkhowa whose family lives in Guwahati, is an employee of State Bank of India. He knows well that once upon a time a person named late Kaliman Koch was HĀTKHOWĀ. He collected taxes from Bhutias and Tibbetans when they came to visit the temple, they were given full security and for this, HĀTKHOWĀ was entrusted with the responsibility to provide them security. In exchange for this service he got four anas as tax per head from these Buddhist pilgrims. HĀTKHOWĀ also acted as guide for these pilgrims. They took them to different temples of Assam. There was a saying at that time SIKITHUR TIROTE TIROTE meaning four anas against per head (pilgrims). The informant named Bira (M, 65) of the hamlet, Bharalitola informed me that he himself performed this duty. Bhutias, Tibbetans carried many things to Hajo such as JĀBRANG (a kind of fragrant and pungent seed), LĀ (sealing wax), chilli, BHOT pencil, dogs etc. and they took big vessel such as TAU (large brass cooking vessel), ĀRJONG (wine vessel) etc. made of brass from Hajo in exchange for aforesaid items. They also performed worship in the temple. They used lamp made of brass while worshipping. They came here with red and yellow cloths, Ghee (a product of Yak milk) and other necessary materials for worship. Red and yellow cloths were hung around the temple. Coloured pieces of cloths are fastened in hand as amulet.
Nowadays Bhutias, Tibbetans come to visit the temple and return on the same day instead of halting. For this the HATKHOWĀ as a profession has become defunct but HATKHOWĀ as service group exist till today. Temple land was assigned to them. When the land comes to the custody of the government they had to pay revenue for land. The individual ownership of the land to this group made their relation with the temple very loose, almost it got detached.

**BĀRIA :**

It was the duty of the BĀRIA to collect banana leaves for BHOGGHAR (cooked house) of the temple. Banana leaves and earthen pots were also used in worship to offer BHOGA (offerings) and in other activities. Banana leaves were used to keep boiled rice. Now due to scarcity of such leaves thin white cloths are used for this work. In worship earthen vessels and metallic vessels are used instead of such leaves.

**MAJUMDAR :**

He was in charge of keeping accounts of the temple. I met Sri Mamat Majumdar (M, 77), an informant and when I asked him about the responsibilities of the post, MAJUMDĀR, he said “I worked as Majumdar in the temple and kept accounts of it. We collected revenue and Dalai was paid ten percent of the collected revenue, I got one percent of the same. Pāike had to pay expenditures, salary system was not there”. He informed me that there are twenty two Mauzas under this temple and the government sanctioned rupees thirty eight thousand per year for PANCHATIRTHA (the five shrines).
of Hajo. At the moment the office of MAJUMDĀR no longer exist in the temple management. Dalai performs the function of MAJUMDĀR at the moment.

**KAIBARTA**:

Kaibarta, a fishing community of Assam, is one of the occupational groups living in Hajo. They had to supply firewood in the temple. It was their main duty. Information reveals that at present no Kaibarta supplies firewoods in the temple. I have seen during my field work that three women were carrying on their head riceful of basket. When I asked them, they replied, “We were carrying rice for the temple. We are Kaibarta, it is our duty. This was our duty to carry rice and supply firewood to the temple without any payment. Now we have done it on payment. Because we have to pay revenue for land”. At present also the persons from Kaibarta caste make BHELĀGHAR (a temporary shed made of a kind of long grass) for DAUL worship. Now tradition continues but not as a bounden duty, it is on payment. Sri Khetimal Kaibarta supplied firewoods to the temple.

**KUMAR**:

The pottery in India is considered to be of a very ancient origin. Its antiquity is recorded in various literary and archaeological sources. Evidence of uses of pottery in the 1st millennium B.C. are found in many places of India. The name KUMBHĀR is derived from Sanskrit word and it is used in different parts of India with only slight variations. The mention of KUMBHAKĀRA or potters are found in BRAHMA-
VAIDATYA PURĀNA (census of India 1981:1) in the seventh century B.C. According to historians the pottery played an important role in socio-economic life of the people during the period between 200 B.C. and 650 A.D.

Like other occupational caste pottery is also associated with a particular caste. They are commonly known as KUMBHĀR. In Assam they are known as Kumar. The Kumars belong to sudra caste and their social status varies from place to place. The other important caste who derive their livelihood from pottery is Hiras. The Hiras are Scheduled Caste in Assam.

The Hira is a class of potter who shapes the vessel by hand. All the potters of the Hira community are females. The males never make pots. While the Kumars shape vessels by wheel. Both male and females make pots. The Kumar potteries are mostly used in ritualistic purposes, while the Hira potteries are used in utilitarian purposes. The earthen wares manufactured by the Kumars have great demand in Assam particularly in the performance of rites and rituals.

In the past, Kumars living in the Hajo town were functionally associated with the Hayagriva Madhava temple. Kumar potters supplied earthenwares needed for various activities in the temple.

Kumarpara lies near the hill side at a distance of 1 KM eastward from the temple. Kumars are also found in Pakhamela and Dhupargiri in the Hajo town. Information reveal that there are about 60 Kumar families in Kumarpara. Out of these
about 20 families are maintaining this occupation. Rest of the families have now practically given up this occupation. There are also 7 Mukhi families in this village.

It is a custom that the potteries made by the Kumar are shortlived excepting a few ones. A pottery once offered in worship can not be used again, it is discarded instantly when its function is over. That's why the quantum of production of the Kumars is higher than that of Hiras. Everyday a large number of such vessels are discarded after use.

Kumar potter’s duty was to supply pots to the temple. Allotment of land was made to kumar on condition that they are to render their respective service to the temple free of cost. In the past they supplied various earthen vessels to the temple. These are - big cooking vessels, TEKELI (jar), DĀNGAR KALAH (big pitcher), MĀLE (wide mouthed basin), CHARU (wide mouthed bowl), CHĀKI (lamp), GHATA (miniature pitcher used for ritual purpose), GACHĀ (lamp stand), DHUNADĀNI (basin on stand), DHUPDĀNI (stand for burning incense sticks) etc.

I at first paid a visit to Sri Mamat Kumar’s (M, 87) house. I met him and interviewed him about their functional involvement in the temple. He said that he used to supply earthen vessels to the temple free of cost twenty years ago. He mainly supplied big pitcher, big and small lamp and wide mouthed bowls to the temple. I met Sri Probodh Ch. Kumar (M, 79) of this hamlet. He told me that he served the temple by supplying earthen vessels. I went to Sri Kaushalya Kumar’s (Fe, 57) house for the collection of
data. Her husband died eight years ago. She has been maintaining her family since then by this occupation. She told me that she supplies earthen lamps free of cost in the temple once in a year. She also offers ten TEKELI (small jar) to the temple during DAUL worship.

When pilgrims came to visit the temple they had to collect earthen lamps and vessels directly from the temple. The related men of the temple were engaged to supply lamps, vessels, flowers for pilgrims.

At present the system in replaced by salesmen. When the temple land came under the government, as a result of that the present system came into existence. Some salesmen sit at the foot of the Manikut hill where the temple is located. Salesmen have a set of earthen lamps and vessels, DHUPA (incense sticks), flowers, mustard oil, TULASHI garlands and other required materials for worship. Pilgrims buy their required materials from salesmen to offer in the temple. Kumars directly supply required potteries to salesman or traders. The traders buy these from the Kumars and supply to salesmen. When I interviewed one salesman, he told me that he enters into contact with a Kumar who always supplies supplies required potteries to him. The Kumar himself comes to his shop to supply potteries. In the evening the Kumar comes to his shop and collect prices. I visited Kumar families and observed that they make mainly lamps, wide mouthed basin, big pitcher and small jar. I saw these types of pots drying in the sun in their own courtyard. Informant told me that Kumars sometimes are incapable of supplying lamps of
required quantity what the salesmen want for the pilgrims in the months October, November, January, February, March and April. So lamps are supplied from outside the Hajo town. Salesmen himself bring lamps from Guwahati also when local Kumar fails to meet required demands.

At present whenever the temple requires earthen pots, one related man of the temple goes to Kumarpara and brings pots on payment. The temple does not require earthen pots except a few pots such as lamps, Kumar_Charu_ and Tekeli. When brass metal and copper vessels were introduced in the temple, the necessities of earthen vessels decline.

I interviewed Sri Hemanta Chowdhury (M, 40, Malakar), the shopkeeper who sells flowers, garlands earthen lamps with Ghee (purified butter) and mustard oil,Dhupa (incense sticks) etc. and collected some information on this business. He informed me that he has been doing this business since 1986. According to him the pilgrims are gradually increasing.

A table of his monthly income is given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the month</th>
<th>No. of sale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOHAG (April - May)</td>
<td>10,000 - 12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JETH (May - June)</td>
<td>8,000 - 10,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Earthen lamps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1HĀRA (June - July)</th>
<th>2,000 - 4,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SHĀON (July - August)</td>
<td>2,000 - 4,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BHĀDA (August - September)</td>
<td>2,000 - 4,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ĀHIN (September - October)</td>
<td>8,000 - 10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KĀTI (October - November)</td>
<td>15,000 - 20,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ĀGHONA (November - December)</td>
<td>8,000 - 10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUHA (December - January)</td>
<td>2,000 - 3,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MĀGHA (January - February)</td>
<td>15,000 - 20,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHĀGUNA (February - March)</td>
<td>10,000 - 15,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAIT (March - April)</td>
<td>6,000 - 8,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I met Sri Rabin Malakar who has a shop where he sells TULASHI garlands, flowers, lamps, DHUPA etc. I collected some information about his business. His father also did this business. After his father’s death he took this business for livelihood. Sales begin in the morning and in the evening shop keepers take away the commodities to their own home. Rabin Malakar has been maintaining his family by this business. When I asked about how much he earns by selling earthen lamps with purified butter and mustard oil, he informed me in the following way.
I have seen that there three shops are regularly opened for selling. During the month of MĀGHA, KĀTI and BOHĀG, some temporary shops are opened to meet the additional demands which can not be made by the permanent one. This is in order to meet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the item</th>
<th>Name of the month</th>
<th>No. of sale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earthen lamps</td>
<td><strong>BOHĀG</strong> (April - May)</td>
<td>8,000 - 10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>JETH</strong> (May - June)</td>
<td>7,000 - 8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ĀHĀRA</strong> (June - July)</td>
<td>1,500 - 2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>SHĀON</strong> (July - August)</td>
<td>1,500 - 2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>BHĀDA</strong> (August - September)</td>
<td>2,000 - 3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ĀHIN</strong> (September - October)</td>
<td>6,000 - 8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>KĀTI</strong> (October - November)</td>
<td>15,000 - 18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ĀGHONA</strong> (November - December)</td>
<td>7,000 - 8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PUHA</strong> (December - January)</td>
<td>1,500 - 2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>MĀGHA</strong> (January - February)</td>
<td>16,000 - 20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PHĀGUNA</strong> (February - March)</td>
<td>9,000 - 13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CHAIT</strong> (March - April)</td>
<td>5,000 - 8,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the demands of additional rushes of pilgrims that goes very often more than one thousand in number. Earthen lamps are sold in twenty five to fifty paise perhead. 

**JAGĀI**:

Servants who play musical instruments early in the morning to awake the deities from night’s sleep, are called *JAGĀI*. There is a hamlet named Jagaitola near the temple. It was the duty for them to awake the deities early in the morning. Early in the morning *JAGĀI* came to the temple and sang *PUWĀR GEET* (morning song) with *DHŌL* (drum) and *TĀL* (Cymbals). The activities of such group has ceased to exist nowadays, but the function continues. System is there but it is performed by the other *SEVĀTĪS* staying in the temple compound.

Thay were economically pulled by the temple because they got temple land for habitation as well as for agricultural production. When they had to pay revenue for such land their relations with the temple disappeared.

**DEVADĀSHI**:

In India women ritualistically connected with temples are known as Devadashis i.e. females dedicated to the service of god. The Devadashis could either live in the cloister adjoining the temple or in their own house. There were separate villages for *NAT* (Devadashi) community and they stayed with their parent and danced in the temple at prescribed time (Neog 1966:11).

Mr. N.M. Penzer has discussed in detail about the institution of Devadashi
in different parts of the world. He says that Mesopotamia is the original home of the institution and traces it back to about 2090 B.C. during the first dynasty of Babylon (Ghose 1937:520-524).

It is reported from Northern and Eastern India that once Devadashi dance was performed in the temple. The custom of dancing girls attached to temples had been prevalent in Kashmir from time immemorial and that it was a hereditary profession. Anybody could take any of them as a wife. The word DEVADASHI does not occur in northern and eastern India, they simply are designated as NARTTA, DEVAVARAVANITA, PRAMADA etc. (Ghose 1937:522).

One important and interesting feature of the Saiva temples of Assam was the dance of NATH. It is known to all about the NATIS of Saiva temples of Negheriting, Biswanath and Dubi near Pathsala railway station, Barpeta etc. (Neog 1966:11).

Informants told me that in the past Devadashi dance was performed in the Hajo temples. The Devadashi dance in Assam was not only restricted to the Saiva temples but it was performed in this temple also. Such a performance in Hayagriva Madhava and Kedar temples is not an unusual phenomenon or a departure from the eastern Indian tradition. Eastern Indian traditions also support the existence of Devadashi dance in the Hayagriva Madhava and the Kedar temple of Hajo. It may be that the two temples were influenced by same cultural tradition of eastern India. Such custom might have entered into the Hajo temples and hence the commoness exists. The presence of
Natpara, a hamlet at Hajo carries the reminiscence of the existence of this custom practised during past. The dancing girls attached to temples used to accompany the procession of deities. The dance disappeared from the temple in course of time and the Natpara of historical past replaced by a new name Gayantola.