CHAPTER SIX
SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-RELIGIOUS RELATION WITH THE TEMPLE

Organisation of the services in the temple, Hayagriva Madhava have been described in the previous chapter. In this chapter I shall try to describe the socio-economic and socio-religious relation with the temple.

DALAI AND THE TEMPLE:

DALAI acts as a main administrative officer of the temple. Its financial matter is dealt by DALAI. But as the temple has got a well defined managing committee, he is to obey the rules and regulations of the managing committee. Sometimes meeting is held to discuss about the management of the temple and the meeting decides the matters and approves the proposals accordingly. Income of the temple comes from two sources - from Government grant-in-aid and from PRANĀMI (money offered to deity). A box is kept by the managing committee within the temple. The pilgrims offer money in the box, the box is sealed and the seal is opened by DALAI in presence of a magistrate after two or three months. The amount is kept by DALAI. The government extends a grant-in-aid for the management of PANCHATIRTHA (five shrines) of Hajo. At present SEVĀITES which are associated with the temple are also paid from that income. Repairing of living houses of the temple, supplying necessary material objects to the temple, payments etc. are done by the DALAI according to the suggestion imparted by the managing committee. This
managing committee is organised for looking over the PANCHATIRTHA. So DALAI has got intimate relation with the temple, the relation may be socio-economic or socio-religious.

About two decades ago PRANAMI offered to deity was taken by the priest. Other workers inside the temple got a little portion of this amount.

DEITY AND PRIEST:

In the Hindu religion deities are always worshipped in the form of icons or some other symbolic expression. Raw materials used in making deities may vary. Historical and present data reveal that deity is installed in sacred place but who installed this are definitely not known. Sometimes it comes to the notice that images of deities are accidentally found in any place. Possibly at one time those particular images were worshipped anywhere and these were displaced possibly by natural calamities. Priest is essential with the installation of image. Worship also starts where the image is already there. A religious institution must have a religious head who is very near to image or any symbolic expression. The priest or religious head is all in all who controls the religious institution. In historic age, generally temples with architectures and sculptures were built by the kings.

From the reference cited above it seems that the Hayagriva Madhava temple was originally a Buddhist temple. The priest informed me that the deity Hayagriva Madhava can not be moved i.e. fixed to the chapel of the temple. It is always
covered with a fine thin piece of cloth. The priest does not know the time from when the deity was covered with cloth. The deity, *CHALANTA* Madhava is there, it is taken away in procession from the temple. When did worship of the main deity start in this temple - about this exact date is not found. Whatever may be the time, five deities were established in the *GARBHAGRIHA* (sanctum) of this temple and to worship the deity need a priest. The local people of Hajo told me that a brahmin priest was brought to the temple from Kanauj in Uttar Pradesh. The priest started worshipping the deities. It is seen from the above fact that priest and deity are closely enter into reciprocal relation. The proper function in this had not been started without the priest. This relation works on more conceptual or abstract than on material level (Roy, 1992:97). The temple came into existence as a part of royalty. The king is the chief custodian; the brahmin is in the pivotal role for keeping the system of the temple in operation. From this point of view he comes in between the masses and the king. King although is the custodian of traditional codes but the brahmin is in the executive role. He is a go-between king and the people. He is a counsellor of the king and he worships the deity.

The priest required other material cultural items to perform worship daily to the deity. Structurally each and every material items are interrelated to each other. And every material item has function. Where there is the structure, function must be there. So the priest alone could not manage the material items which were always essential for performing the religious activities. The classical codes have had their own functional
relations. These are conditioned by the cultural codes of given time. So the priest determined the classical codes connected with the deity of this temple particularly in the performance of worship and related other religious activities. For example classical code determined the MANTRA (prayer in verse) which will be required for the performance of worship to such deity. So the priest selected some men and distributed different religious activities of the temple among them and king allotted land to each group in exchange for their service. The service of the temple have been discussed in the previous chapter.

DEITY, PRIEST AND SUPAKAR:

PAKA BHOGA (cooking meal) is always offered to deity. For this a brahmin was selected, only brahmin is permitted for holding this post. The different paraphernalia for meals were arranged by the king in the past. Now DALAI performs the role of king. This was done by entrusting upon the SEVAITE (those persons who perform the services of the temple) or occupational group. Information reveals that the items required for daily offerings come from two sources - one from regular store house meant for temple and second one from the offerings carried by the pilgrims. There is a relationship in between the daily meals and SUPAKAR. If the cook does not prepare the meal for deity, the cooking meal could not have been offered to deity. So the cook has got inexorable relation with the deity. The different paraphernalia for meal, utensils for cooking and other activities associated with those are always most essential and so every material item is being closely connected with the cook. The cook’s relationship with the
deity is through the priest. In this activity i.e. in the cooking of meals the post, KOTHBANIA was created who arranges the different paraphernalia for meals, cleaning utensils and cook house, supplying water to the cook house, washing etc. are done by KOTHBANIA. There is no direct relationship of KOTHBANIA with deities of the temple. But his activities are solely interconnected with the religious codes of the temple.

PRIEST, ṬHPARIA AND THAIT:

In the temple the brahman priest, deity and material items form an indiscrete functional relations. This ultimately is related to socio-cultural or socio-economic aspect of population living in and around the temple.

Generally the relationship of ṬHPARIA and THAIT with deity is not seen. They have functional relation with the priest. They were selected to help the priest in the arrangement of worship. The activities of ṬHPARIA have already mentioned. His duty is to cleanse the holy place where NAIBEDYA (raw eatable offered to deity), PAKA BHOGA (coked food) and HOMJAGNA (a burnt offering of clarified butter) are daily offered to deity. THAIT helps ṬHPARIA in cutting raw fruits, roots; in washing pulses, gram, MUG (one kind of pulse) ; dishes, bowls and other material items. ṬHPARIA has got an indispensable relation with the priest. He is to see the lamp so that it never extinguish.
SERVICES AND ITS RELATION WITH THE TEMPLE FROM OUTERSIDE

THE TEMPLE:

Flowers or alike materials are always indispensable for worshipping the deity. But classical codes determine the kinds of flowers and other alike materials for worship. Generally white flowers, leaves of *TULASHI* plant and garlands made of *TULASHI* leaves are considered to be the most essential items for worshipping the deities of the temple. One or two men were selected for supplying these to the temple. They are called *MĀLĀKAR* meaning garland maker. In course of time a group of *MĀLĀKAR* emerged. They get economically involved with the temple. As the deity must be offered *TULASHI* leaves and garlands of *TULASHI* leaves, they undertook to plant *TULASHI* aside the household compound or in the field near home. The present data reveal that *MĀLĀKAR* make nine different kinds of *MĀLĀS* (garlands). Importance is placed in the making of pure *TULASHI MURMĀLĀ* (head garlands). Priest might have specified the type of *MĀLĀ* according to the functions. They produced these with the help of traditional expert. When they had to pay revenue for land, their obligation to the temple became loose. They have been supplying flowers and garlands to the temple since then. For this payment is made. It appears from that a *MĀLĀKAR* or a *MĀLĀKAR* family has got economic gain, but it is actually not. When we turn to the relationship of *MĀLĀKAR* and pilgrims, it is seen how far they socio-economically and socio-religiously involved with each other.
It is observed that offerings of pure *TULASHI* garlands and white flowers continue even today. At present thousands of thousands *MURMĀLĀ* are sold here by *MĀLĀKAR* to pilgrims. So they got socio-economically involved with the temple in the past and are being involved at the present. Their relationship with the priest is always there because flowers and garlands for deity were supplied by them to the priest of the temple. And the priest used these for worshipping the deity. The same traditions and the process for interaction in between the temple and *MĀLĀKAR* continue even today. In between that comes the process of trade, but that does not disturb the system (that is socio-religious and socio-economic).

**MĀLĀKAR AND PILGRIM:**

Devotees from far and near places come to visit the Hayagriva Madhava temple. Devotees follow the classical traditions that have been continuing since historic times. In the past devotees took *TULASHI* leaves and garlands directly from *MĀLĀKAR'*s house in exchange of goods and proceeded to the *GARBHAGRIHA* (sanctum) of the temple. Thay handed over the offerings to the priest. And the priest offered these before deity by uttering *MANTRA*. Devotees prayed to deity by raising hands or by touching the forehead to the floor kneeling down. The priest blessed them and gave them *TULASHI* garlands or flowers. The devotees also offered earthen lamps with mustard oil and wick. I observed that devotees carry earthen lamps from their home. Probably in the past, devotees might have been carried earthen lamp with them. Custom continued in the past
for worshipping the deity by devotees or pilgrims, still continue today also. But a little
change is seen in case of collecting flowers, garlands and earthen lamps. At present
pilgrims need not go house to house for collecting these. Because some salesmen sit
regularly at the foot of Manikut hill where the temple is located. Salesmen are from
*MALAKAR* family. Salesmen keep in their shop earthen lamps and vessels, *DHUPA*
(incense), garlands, flowers, mustard oil, ghee and other materials needed. Pilgrims buy
the required materials from salesmen. Observations reveal that from 50 to 60 shops sit in
the month of Kāti, Māgha and Bohāg. Thousands of pilgrims come daily to visit and offer
something to the deity. Some pilgrims order directly to a *MĀLAKAR* family to make
*JĀLIMĀLĀ* and *BERMĀLĀ* according to their desire. The price of a *JĀLIMĀLĀ* and
*BERMĀLĀ* is from Rs. 100.00 to 400.00 and from Rs. 20.00 to 60.00 respectively. In
time they get proper valuation for these *MĀLĀ*. The reason for desiring *JĀLIMĀLĀ* is that
the main deity Hayagriva Madhava is covered with this *MĀLĀ*. Pilgrims’ agreement with
*MĀLAKAR* is based on religious relation through the temple. There are some differential
functional involvement of *MĀLĀ*. The classical symbol is being transmitted from one
generation to another. Information reveals that the economics among these three parties
are always confined to *MĀLAKAR* only; that is - a section of *MĀLAKAR* is producer
and a section of the same emerges as a seller also; the pilgrim remaining constant.

**KUMAR AND MĀLAKAR**:

Kumar and *MĀLAKAR* are the two occupational groups who maintain
relation with the Hayagriva Madhava temple. The relationship between these two groups might have been there during past also. Each group has his traditionally inherited occupation of his own. Each group in respect of occupation has distinctiveness of their own - the former one make pottery on the wheel, while the latter one make garland by hand. Kumar’s pottery is considered to be ritually pure. Hence their pottery finds entry in the temple or ritualistic institution. The potteries of Kumar have their distinct culturally assigned roles and status in material cultural level.

In ancient days the Kumar’s pottery were assumed to be used in the temple for the aforesaid attribution bestowed by the system as is inferred from the oral history. Types required for the purpose of worship in the temple were determined by some nonmaterial factors consisting of socio-cultural or religio-economic values. It is observed that classical codes determine the types (Roy, 1992:93). Accordingly the priest suggested Kumar to make some particular type of pot and earthen lamp for the temple. Vessels for offering BHOGA (cooked food or raw food), earthen lamp, vessels for keeping pure water for worship etc. are needed in the temple. Temple obtains these items regularly from the Kumar potter. This speaks of the fact that the Kumar was directly related to the temple. So far as the information goes, this was obligatory as this group enjoyed usufruct right over the land alloted to them by the temple for the supply of pottery to it. When the temple land was taken over by the government they are to pay revenue for land to government, thus reducing the economic control over the
occupational group that existed prior to the introduction of this system. The temple looses its economic control over this group. But this group could not detached themselves from the bindings of ancient system. The Kumar pottery continue to remain as an unavoidable part of the temple even today making the relation between these groups and temple inexorable. Whenever essential items of pottery become necessary, any person associated with the temple is sent to the Kumar's house for these. He brings these on payment. Observation reveals that pottery is replaced by metal vessels in the temple. Two types of pots viz.; vessels of offering and earthen lamps are being daily used by pilgrims. Pilgrims buy these in the shop. About one thousand earthen lamps become everyday necessity. These are kept in shops. The shopkeepers directly bring these either from the Kumar's house or through middlemen. Either shopkeepers directly enter into contract with the Kumar or middlemen enter into contract with the Kumar. Informants told me that middlemen may be from any ethnic group. Shopkeepers invariably the MĀLĀKAR. Shopkeepers told me that if local Kumars fail to supply required earthen lamps and vessels, they directly go to Guwahati and buy these from there itself. If middlemen also can not contract with local Kumar for the supply of sufficient earthen lamps and vessels; they enter into contract with Kumars living in distant places and the middlemen supply these to shopkeepers.

HOMKHARIĀ AND THE TEMPLE:

The service of HOMKHARIĀ has been already referred to in the previous
chapter. He supplied materials for HOMIAGNA. HOMA is daily performed during worship in the temple. So he has a relationship with the temple. As temple land was allotted to him, it was obligatory for him to supply materials for HOMA. When he had to pay the revenue for land, his bounden duty loosened. The practice of HOMA continues. The traditional service of HOMKHARIĀ is no longer available in the temple. Once this group formed an essential and unavoidable part of the temple system.

THE TEMPLE AND RONGĀLI DHOBĀ:

In the past a person was selected for washing the cloths used for deities of the temple. For this activity temple land was allotted to him. He had a relation with deities through the priest. Priest can remove the cloths from the body of deity and hands it over to RONGĀLI DHOBĀ. The description of RONGĀLI DHOBĀ is mentioned in the previous chapter. When they had to pay the revenue for land, the service of RONGĀLI DHOBĀ gets diminished and their relations with the temple ceases to exist. It seems from the above fact that the socio-economic relation bounds them with the temple.

GANDHIĀ AND THE TEMPLE:

The group GANDHIĀ comes into view according to their service imparted to the temple. Local age-old persons say that people used handmade incense a few years ago. Machinemade incense takes the place of handmade ones. The female made incenses (DHUPA) with the help of man. Because he had to collect the raw materials for making incenses. GANDHIĀ had intimate relation with pilgrims. Pilgrims took DHUPA to offer
deity from GANDHIA’S house in exchange for goods. When shop started at the foot of the Manikut hill, DHUPA took its place in shops. Shopkeepers used to procure them directly from GANDHIA’S house or through the middlemen. Both entered into contract for DHUPA with GANDHIA. The tradition continued but when they had to pay revenue for temple land, they gave up the practice of making the item and machinmade DHUPA is being used in the temple. Pilgrims have been buying DHUPA in shops on payment since then.

BHARALI AND THE TEMPLE:

The service of the BHARALI (store keeper) towards the temple has been discussed in the previous chapter. Store keepers formed the service group in the past. He was incharge of store house of the temple. Here an economic relation grew up in between the store keeper and the temple. The store keeper had to collect paddy and such other products from KHAT (land allotted at a distance from the temple). He used to keep the account of the stored materials. It was his obligatory duty for which temple land was allotted to. At present the service ceases to exist in the temple.

BANIĀ, PILGRIMS AND THE TEMPLE:

Baniā was intimately related to the temple through the priest. The priest defined the types of ornaments required for deities. And Baniā accordingly made these ornaments for every deity of the temple. It was their bounden duty to repair and make ornaments for deity. In exchange for that Baniā enjoyed the usufruct right over temple
land. This occupational group still extends this service which they did during the past. At present it is done on payment because they had to pay revenue for land to the government. Pilgrims when desire to offer ornaments to deity, they get the desired ornaments made by the Baniās of Hajo. Because they carry this conviction that the Baniā of Hajo make ornaments for deity of this temple. So they know the types of ornaments required for deity. Nowadays this is done on payment. The present practice as is seen today has been continuing since ancient days.

MARIA AND THE TEMPLE:

Maria, a Muslim community had an intimate relation with this temple in the past. They were responsible for supplying and repairing brass metal products to the temple. This was obligatory as they were allotted land free of taxes. The relation between the Maria and the temple through their material cultural items is discussed in the previous chapter.

Their relation with the temple is set up through the material items supplied to the temple. The writings of different scholars (It is referred in the previous chapter) speaks of the fact that it was a Buddhist shrine, that in course of time converted into a Hindu temple. But the Buddhists of North East India come annually to this temple to pay their homage and to worship the Buddha - MAHĀMUNI. This is an ancient practice and continues till today. The Bhutias at that time came in contact with the local people and consequently trade grew up at Hajo centering the temple. The Bhutias
exchange some utensils with the Mariā for their product. Mariā made ʿARJONG (an utensil for drinking wine) for Bhutia and in exchange for that Bhutia supplied them some goods such as ʿARBRANG (a kind of fragrant and pungent seed), Chilli, LĀ (sealing mix) etc. So an economic network among the Bhutia, the Mariā and the local people grew up in this place centering the temple. Mariās are economically well known as brass metal producers. But the information reveals that their beginning as brass metal producers grew up centering the Hayagriva Madhava temple.

HĀTKHOWĀ AND THE TEMPLE:

The description about the service of HĀTKHOWĀ has already incorporated in the previous chapter. Here an attempt has been made to analyse their economic as well as socio-religious relation with the temple. HĀTKHOWĀ was related to the temple from outside. They were primarily related with Bhutia, Tibbetan and Chinese. They acted as PĀNDĀ (a mediator between clients and temple) and when the Buddhists came to visit the temple they were with them. For this act they get remuneration from them which might have been either in cash or in kinds. HĀTKHOWĀ acted as middleman in exchanging the goods among the local people which they carried with them. HĀTKHOWĀ played an important role in strengthening the socio-economic and socio-religious relation with local people, traders and the temple. It is informed by the local people that even they occasionally went to Bhutan, Tibbet with some essential goods and
in exchange for those they brought some necessary goods therefrom and here at Hajo they traded these goods among the local people.

Now Bhutias, Tibbetans simply come and visit the temple but they do not stay here. Probably it is due to the introduction of regular and speedy transport communication system between this two places. Nowadays the former relation is not found here. The service HÄTKHOWĀ is no longer required in the temple and thus the relation between HÄTKHOWĀ and the temple ceases to exist but the HÄTKHOWĀ as service group in name exists.

KAIBARTA AND THE TEMPLE:

An account of the service of Kaibarta, a fishing community has already been referred to in the previous chapter. Kaibarta had to maintain a good socio-economic and socio-religious relation with the temple. Temple land was allotted to them for imparting assigned service to the temple. At present the fire woods necessiated for the cooking are managed by the temple committee. The other goods such as rice, vegetables etc. when required for the temple, are carried by Kaibarta men and women; this continues at the present day also. But the Kaibarta extends this service on payment.

SAUKĀDHARA AND THE TEMPLE:

The service of SAUKĀDHARA has been incorporated in the previous chapter. Here an effort will be made to mention about that how far SAUKĀDHARA was socio-economically and socio-religiously related to the temple.
History tells us that the Muslims reached the valley first as invaders in the 13th century. But actual Muslim settlements in Assam are said to have began in the year 1498 AD at Hajo, when Hussain Shah of Bengal destroyed the Kamata kingdom (Gait, 1926:41-42; Tabu Taid 1998). It is mentioned in the previous chapter that Raghudev-narayan rebuilt this temple in 1583 AD but it is not known when and who built the original temple. On the other hand Muslim settlements started at Hajo in 1498 AD. The muslim settled here on the temple land. So it became obligatory for Muslims to serve the temple by rendering some kind of service. The king determined the duty for Muslim at the outside of the temple. His duty was to pilot by holding a stick in his hand infront of the procession. From the above fact it is found that the Muslims were made to be involved with the temple. This group is distinct from the Maria. This is already referred to the previous chapter. At present also the service $SHAUKADHARA$ continues but on payment.

$DOLABHARI$ AND THE TEMPLE:

The activities of $DOLABHARI$ have been mentioned in the previous chapter. Originally it was the rule to carry deities in the $DOLA$ (palanquin) kept within the temple. Originally the type of palanquin was determined by classical code and that particular type of $DOLA$ was made by the direction of the king. The same type of palanquin continues till today. To carry it two men were selected and when it needed they were engaged in this service. For this service they enjoyed revenue free homestead
land as well as cultivatable land. In this way the service group *DOLABHĀRI* emerged. Here a socio-economic and socio-religious relation existed in the past. That relation continues in the present also. They are directly related to the temple through the palanquin. The main deity of the temple is carried from the temple in palanquin during procession on some festive occasions of the temple.

When one *DOLABHĀRI* was interviewed, he informed that their men can carry the palanquin. Formerly it was their obligatory duty but now they are paid.

*CHATRADHĀRI, BANIĀ AND DEITY:*

At present also the service *CHATRADHĀRI* are found in the temple. The person who handles the umbrella is called *CHATRADHĀRI*. It was his duty in the past to handle the *CHATRA*. For this act they were allotted temple land. The *CHATRA* made of silver has relation with the person who holds it in hand. Again deities are closely related to both *CHATRADHĀRI* and the *CHATRA*. *CHATRAS* are generally made by *BANIĀ*. In this case *BANIĀS* have got relation with *CHATRA* and the temple as well.