CHAPTER - II

THE SATRAS OF GOALPARA AND NORTH BENGAL
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2.1 The Vaisnavite Satras established in the undivided Goalpara district of Assam, Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri district of North Bengal have lost their original character, many of them have almost in a dying condition. After visiting these places, personally, a brief description has been added herewith in the following pages with a brief history of each of these Satras.

2.2 SATRAS OF GOALPARA

2.2.1 RÄMRÄYKUTI SATRA : The Ramraykuti Satra is situated in a remote corner in the border area of Bangladesh towards the west of the present Dhubri district. This Satra was founded by Ramray, a cousin brother of Srimanta Sankaradeva. This place has some historical importance. This holy place was located in the confluence of the rivers Sonkosh and

1 Neog, M.; 1969; 'Pabitra Asam', p.322
Baidak. According to local belief Chand Sadagar, a renowned merchant, have halted there while he was going to his business trip. Dewan Chilaray, the younger brother of Gooch King Naranarayan could learn at Patbasi that Ramray’s daughter Bhubaneswari Devi was an extremely beautiful and he was tempted to marry her. Accordingly communication was sent of Ramray for arrangement of his daughter’s marriage with the Dewan. Ramray who was also known as Jagatannada, a cousin of Sankaradeva, sought the advice of Sankaradeva on this marriage proposal. The Sankaradeva asked him to abide with the Dewan’s request as follows:

"An orders from a very powerful king can hardly be desobeyed. I have no objection to an intercaste marriage, marriage between the Koches and Kayasthas should take place".

Srimanta Sankaradeva, with his one hundred and twenty disciples including his cousin Ramray and niece Bhubaneswari came to this place and from the other side the King

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3 Goswami, Gaurikanta, 1964 : 'Sri Sri Hariātai Purusar Charitra', p.13
Naranarayan accompanied by his ministers, officials and brother Chilaray came to the same place. Thus both the parties cordially met the same place, each other at Ramray-muti. A new idea had cropped up in the mind of Sankaradeva and the drama 'Kāliya daman' was composed there by Sankaradeva, the great Vaisnava preceptor, and subsequently it was staged there in the presence of Naranarayana and Chilaray. All the people were charmed with the dramatic performances. As a result they were influenced very much by the Vaisnava faith of Sankaradeva.

After solemnisation of the marriage of Chilaray with Ramray's daughter the King Naranarayana left the place with his entourage giving one thousand and three hundred bighas of cultivable land to Ramray, father-in-law of Chilaray, requesting him to set up a Satra there so that he can preach the Vaisnava faith properly in that locality. But Ramray did not like to stay there for a long period of time.

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4 Neog, M. (ed.); 1986; 'Gurucharit kathā', p. 95
5 Goswami, Gaurikanta; 1964; Ibid., p. 18
He returned to Patbaisi with Sankaradeva and his followers. Ramrāyakuti thus, lost its importance after the departure of Ramray.

The place was not an idle site for permanent settlement, because of its location between two rivers and gradually the inhabitants left the place and settled elsewhere. Niranjan Ātai, the 7th Adhikara of Madhupur after Madhavadeva was in Baguān Satra, near Lakhipur. He brought certain worshippable materials from Madhupur Satra and placed in Baguān, where he breathed last. According to the local belief Niranjan Ātai asked Hari Ātai, his strong supporter to rebuilt Ramrāyakuti Satra at the original site of the wedding of Chilaray and Bhubaneswarī.

As per instruction of Niranjan Ātai Hari Ātai made up his mind to leave for Ramrāyakuti. The Zamindar of Lakhipur who donated the land for the establishment of a Satra at Baguān was not at all willing to allow Hari Ātai to leave the place. Anyway the Ātai left the place along with some
of his prominent disciples. After three days journey he arrived at the Rāmraykuti area and tried to find out the original site of Rāmraykuti. They had to stay at Mātiā Hill for a temporary period before shifting to the original site. Bulchand Barua was the Zamindar of Rāmraykuti at that time. His grandmother Joydurga used to take her daily bath in the river Gadadhar on the foot of this hill. One day while having her bath she suddenly found something like 'Sunrays' atop the hill and reported the matter to the Zamindar. According to Charitputhi Joydurga persuaded her grand son to take care of the peculiar 'Sunrays' come out from the Mātiā Hill. Bulchand followed his grandmother's advice and became the disciple of Hari Ātoi, who established the Satra at Ramraykuti with the help and co-operation of Bulchand Barua. The disciples had interpreted the peculiar 'Sunrays' as heavenly rays of five holy articles. These are pādukā of Śrīrāmchandra, Bhāgavat, Sāgarjhuli, Buridasam

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6 Goswami, G.; 1964; Sri Sri Hari Ātoi Purusar Charitra, p. 48

7 Ibid.
and the image of Narayana. He was very much charmed with the conversation of Hari Ātoī and decided to hand over him the area, which was under their occupation. Accordingly Hari Ātoī proceeded to the actual site. In the mean time Bulchand Barua and a number of people became his disciples. After then Hari Ātoī established the Satra at the spot the weddings of Chilaray and Bhubaneswari took place.

Regarding the name of Satra, there are different stories. Since Ramray who asked to built up a Satra in a gifted land of Narayanarayana it was known after the name of Ramray as Rāmray kuti. This place was located in a curved area of the river Rādak and such curved land is indicated in the local dialect as 'Kuti' and therefore, the Satra was named as Rāmraykuti i.e., the gifted place of Rāmray. This place is also known as Satrasal. According to the local beliefs the guests, who came to visit the Rāmraykuti were entertained under the 'Ghamiyāna' shaped like an

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8 Goswami, G.; 1964: Ibid., p. 50
9 Neog, M.; 1969: 'Pabitra Assam', p. 322
umbrella, and the people used to say that in Ramraykuti
guest were entertained in an umbrella like inn i.e.,
'atithisālā', and this way it was popularised as 'Chatra-
sālā' a Satrasāl. This is really an interpretation based
on folk etymology. Now, both the names Rāmrāykuti and
Satrasāl indicate the same Satra. It is a notable pecu-
liarity of the Satra.

The Satra maintains the old tradition of Adhikār
selection. The disciples assembled together to select
their Adhikār in a public gathering. This tradition of
Adhikāra selection has been prevailed till now. After
Hari Ātoi we get quite a good number of Adhikārs, whose
names are stated below:

(1) Hari Ātoi
(2) Janardhan Ātoi
(3) Kamdev
(4) Abhiram
(5) Madhuram
(6) Sidha Deka
(7) Hari Medhā
These adhikāras took much interests for the development of the Satra and the welfare of the disciples and its various activities. The Satra was managed by the public donation and contributions of the disciples. Kamadeva, a prominent adhikār wrote 'Rāmrāyūtī Charit' which was a small biography of Ramray with brief history of the Satra. Kamadeva's parents were Kamalalochan and Madhavidevi and he was born in Marichbari village, in Cooch Behar district.

The landed property was transferred to the Satra authority during the Adhikārship of aforesaid Biswadeva.  

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and its was legalised properly. After Jajnanarayan the Satra had no Adhikār for a period of ten years due to some controversies between the Satra authority and the Zamindar. Thereafter a new management committee was formed and the entire responsibility of the Satra was vested with Rabindra Nath Adhikary. After his death Sri Jitendra Nath Prodhani Atoi was elected as Adhikār by the Satra disciples. Now the Satra is managed by Sri Prodhani with the help and co-operation of the Satra committee.

2.2.2 JINKĀTĀ SATRA : The Jinkātā Satra is in a village of the same name in Dhubri district. It is situated in Assam-Bengal border at a distance of 4 km. from Halakura on the National High Way No. 31. It was established recently in 1967 on the day of holy Māghi Purnimā i.e., full moon day in the month of Māgha of Assamese Calendar by the then Satradhikār of Madhupur Satra. The local people of Jinkātā extended much help and co-operation in building up the Satra. A sincere Vaisnava devotee Lambodar Bhakat of Kherbari village have donated a plot of land measuring
six bighās at Jinkātā for this purpose to the Satrādhikār. This way the Satra has been established and the various properties including different images of Lord Narayana etc. have been placed in the Satra.

2.2.2.1 There were four different Satras in the surrounding area of Jinkata. In course of time all these were decayed and the Satriya property including the Vigrāha (images of Lord Narayana) were preserved by their descendants. Nothing is available regarding the history of these Satras; only the local people say that there were four Satras. Mandal Chandra Bhakat, Gangadhar Bhakat and Santosh Kumar Bhakat have somehow preserved the Satriya activities within their family members. These Satras are now almost dead. After persuasion of the local public all of them have donated the Satriyā property to the Jinkātā Satra with a view to make it more interesting and lively one. Sri Rupendra Nath Bhakat who established Jhingapurni after shifting from Cooch Behar have also donated all his Satriya
property to Jinkātā and thus Jhingāpurni has also merged with Jinkātā Satra. Now Jhingāpurni does not have separate identity as a Satra.

Jhingāpurni Satra, originally founded by Madhavadeva in Gooch Behar, but later on, it was shifted from place to place and ultimately merged permanently with Jinkātā, where the forefathers of Rupendra Nath Bhakat preserved the holy books, other properties and Viṣṇu images, etc. of the Satra. They have carried on the various activities of Satriya namghar.

Another very interesting point is the preservation of 'sacred ashes from burning pyre of Madhavadeva' in the Jinkātā Satra. There is a strong belief among the local population that Ehalak Chandra Bhakat got such ashes of Madhavadeva from forefathers and donated to the Jinkātā Satra. It is an additional attraction of the Satra.

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11 Sarma, Hargobinda; 516 Sankarabda: 'Dujana Guru Sankar-Madhava', p.46
Jinkātā Satra has also a Satradhikār as in other Satras of Assam. In Goalpāriā dialect such Satradhikār is called Satriyā. Umesh Chandra Atoi Burha Bhakat was the first Satradhikār of this Satra. After his death the Satradhikār chair is lying vacant till to-date because of non-availability of a suitable person to hold such respectable position. During the first five years after the establishment of the Satra, its day to day functions were performed by the local people on a routine basis. During the time of the Satradhikār all such works were performed by the Adhikārs, who was associated by the local followers. After the death of Umesh Chandra Atoi Burha Bhakat seven leading persons of the Satra hold the responsibility of maintenance of the Satra. They are fully responsible for the development and satriyā activities of the Satra, but none of them was identified as Adhikāra. The names of those influential persons are stated below:

(1) Patla Atoi
(2) Kshitish Ch. Bhakat
(3) Kailash Ch. Bhakat
2.2.2.2 Another Satra going by the name of Na-satra (new-Satra) was also established at village Jinkata. Some of the devotees of Jinkāṭā Satra separated themselves from Jinkāṭā Satra and built up another Satra which they called Na-satra i.e., New Satra. One Abhiram Bhakat, son of Nidhiram Bhakat a leading person of the village donated three bighās of land to this Na-satra. This Na-satra does not maintain the proper model of Assamese Vaiṣṇava Satra. It has a single Namghar with a Manikut, where the Vīgraha, i.e., image of Lord Krishna is placed at the altar which is locally known as Choudal. Infront of the Vīgraha the Shagawat is placed in the Guru-āśana. This Satra has also tried to built up a library.

(4) Swapan Kumar Bhakat
(5) Manaranjan Bhakat
(6) Shibendra Nath Bhakat
(7) Bhabendra Nath Bhakat (Present one).
2.2.3 DHARMAPUR SATRA: Dharmapur is a small village located just the eastern side of Abhayapuri in Goalpara district. Dharmapur Satra is also situated in the same village. It is a Vaisnava Satra and is considered as a branch of Barpeta Satra. After the devastating earthquake in 1897 this Satra was shifted to its present location at Dharmapur village from another village named Mer. During the Burmese invasion in 1822-1826 A.D. many people left Barpeta. They went towards Bijni in Goalpara district with their families and settled there with the permission of Amrit Narayan, the chief administrator of Bijni Estate. These immigrants were given settlement in the Merchar mauza. These people founded this Satra, when East India Company ruled over Assam. At that time many of these people left to their forefather's place at Barpeta and those who stayed they continued to manage the Satra. In the meantime in 1897 the Satra was totally

12 Neog, M.; 1969: 'Pabitra Asam', p. 327
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
destroyed by the earthquake. Due to generous contribution of the local administration the people again founded the Satra at Dharmapur installing original Shyamray Vigraha in the Manikut. This Satra follows the traditions of Barpeta satra.

Lengtisinga and Nayā or Na-satra, 15 two other Satras are available in Dharmapur village, both the Satras are situated at a very close distance to Abhayapuri town, but these two Satras are now in a dilapidated conditions. No recorded literature or past history in available regarding these Satras. The local people are found of telling some stories regarding its origin. Most of them narrated that their forefathers migrated to this place from the 'mer' under the Bijni estate after the earthquake of 1897 and thus they have founded Satras there. At present, they are not following the traditional customs of Vaisnava Satra strictly, only occasionally the Bhakats assemble there in the Namghar for Prasanga. Of course, every evening they

15 Neog, M.; 1969 :J:bid., notes, p.327
lit the 'banti' with mustered oil. Originally these Satras followed the Barpeta tradition.

Dharmapur, the present Satra and its disciples are also came from the 'Mer' like lengthisinga people. In that case the Satra appears to be a new one. But there are some evidences that Narayandas Thakur Ata extended warm reception to Madhava deва, the principal disciple of Sankaradeva in this Dharmapur. Madhava deва's 'padasilä' is still preserved there in Dharmapur Satra. From this it is clear that Dharmapur is a very ancient Satra. It is strange how such an old Satra could not maintain the old traditions and customs. Perhaps it was not properly maintained till the immigrants from 'Mer' settled there. These people gave a new strength to the Dharmapur Satra. The local population, at present, show the history of Dharmapur satra from their settlement only. But the earlier records give its old existence,

16 Neog, M.; 1969: Ibid., notes, p.328
The Satra has preserved its original Vigraha of Shyamrēy i.e., image of Lord Krisna. Besides that there are some other images of Krisna, Gopala and Lakmi. All these are installed in the Manikut at the alter while Bhāgavata is placed in the Guru-āsana. What is more the 'padasilā' of Madhavadeva, collected by Narayandas Thakur Ātā and the 'kharam' of Thakur Ātā are still preserved here in the Satra.

2.2.4 DAlgOMĀ SATRA: Dalgomā Satra is situated in the village, Dalgoma at a distance of 25 kms. from Goalpara town. It was established in 1157 Sāl by Haimohan Thakur. Narahari Thakur requested Dāityari Thakur, follower of Sankardeva to visit Dalgoma to help Harmohan Thakur in building up a Satra there. Accordingly Dāityari Thakur helped Harmohan Thakur, who brought the fiery flames to this place from Barpeta Satra. Therefore, Haimohan Thakur,

17 Neog, M.; 1969 : Ibid., p. 329
19 Ibid., article, 'Op.cit.',
the descendant of Ramcharan Thakur is identified as the actual founder of Dalgomā Satra.

Regarding its name there is a very interesting story. Sankaradeva at the age of 32 left for pilgrimage. He visited different religious places in India with his seventeen prominent disciples. They came across some unnaturally exquisite scenes on both sides of the bank of river Brahmaputra, and they had asked to their Guru many things regarding Vaisnava Bhakti. In reply to their queries the Guru told them in such conversation that in near future there will be established a Satra, which came in true afterwards. According to the popular belief the name of the place is originated from a typical snake, Gomā, i.e., nortconstrictor which was sufficiently available there. Its etymology is explained like this: dalgomā = dal + gomā i.e., dal means 'willows' and gomā means 'nori-constrictor'. Thus the place of 'gomā living in dal'. It is said that Sankaradeva have made a forecast regarding the establishment of a Satra in Dalgoma. 20 This Satra is also known as

'Amphābāpur Satra' i.e., Satra of a mango receiver,21 because of getting a mango in the mango-tree untimely in this particular spot of land.

Harmohan Thakur is regarded as the founder of Dalgomā Satra and there were three principal patrons of the Satra. These three patrons are recorded in the list of Satrādhikār also. These patroniser's names are at the top of the list while the Satrādhikārs names are given later on22 as noted below:

(1) Naraharidev
(2) Narayandev
(3) Jagajiwandev
(4) Harmohandev (founder = Satrādhikār)
(5) Santa Bhusandev
(6) Kantha Bhusandev
(7) Amrit Bhusandev
(8) Mithakanta Adhikary
(9) Gajendra Narayan Adhikary
(10) Brojendra Narayan Adhikary
(11) Sri Kamal Chandra Adhikary (present).

21 Ibid., p.115
22 Duttabarua, H.; 1941 : Kayastha Samājar Itivirtta', p.277
The Satra could not retain the Satrāyā traditions as in Barpeta. It has been deviated to a great extent. Moreover, it shows peculiarities in the appointment of future Adhikār who is generally selected and appointed by the old or present Adhikār himself. Moreover, there is provision of appointing a Dekā-adhikār. Of course, the Satrādhikār unofficially consult with his fellow disciples before the final selection and appointment of his successor. It is observed that from the eighth Adhikār, Mithakanta the Satrādhikār was selected from their own family and the adhikārship was, thus, confined within the family of the eight Adhikāras of the Satra.

2.2.5 SHYĂMRAY SATRA : Shyămray Satra is located in the heart of Goalpara town. It is not much old, it was established sometime back approximately 350 years ago. The original name was Shyamsundar Satra. This was at the initial

23 Hazarika, Rukmal (ed.); 1900 Saka : Smritigrantha, Srmanta Sankaṛ Math Pratisthā Utsab; article 'Sri Sri Shyamray Satrar Chamu Itivirtta; by P. Des, p.'kha'.
stage confined within a few families and it did maintain the exact characteristics of a Vaisnava Satra. They have lit the 'banti' i.e., holy light, but in course of time the general public became more interested for its development and thus this Satra appears to be a public institution and it has been maintained by the local public. At this stage the Zamindar of Mechpara donated about 5 bighās of land to the Satra. Thus the entire management of the Satra has been taken up by the public and a local body was formed for this purpose.

This Satra, now appears as a public institution and is managed by the public. This Satra has great respect for Barpeta Satra and maintain its link with Barpeta Satra. At present the Satra Namghar looks like a modern building like others temple with modern facilities.

At the initial period a Paṭhak was selected by the people of Chandaria to carry on day-to-day religious rites. Afterwards twelve 'disciples came over there from Kamalābāri Satra\textsuperscript{24} of Majuli and taught the local

\textsuperscript{24} Hazarikā, R.(ed.); 1900 Saka; Ibid., Op.cit., p. g'.
devotees lessons on the delicate aspects of devotional songs, playing with different musical instruments and religious dramas. They stayed in Shyāmrāy Satra for a period of six months and generated new religious life in the Satra with their teachings. Thus the Satra started enacting dramas and carrying on other cultural activities centering the sect.

One sincere bachelor devotee Luturu by name took the responsibility of all the religious activities of this Satra after the departure of the devotees coming from Kamalābāri to this Satra. Luturu served the Satra for about fifty years. After then another devotee Shurulu by name took such responsibility and he also served the Satra for about thirty years. After these two sincere devotees it was very difficult to get such dedicated bhakat to run the day-to-day activities of this Satra. The local people somehow maintain the Satra and occasionally they invite some 'Keoliā' devotees from Barpeta Satra at the time of some functions of the Satra. One Theblu, a person from Abhayapuri came to this Satra with a young boy Kereng and he was given
the responsibility by the local devotees to run the Satra. After his death Kereng who was known as Kereng Atoi such responsibilities and managed all day-to-day activities of the Satra till his death. He died at the age of 90. The Satra maintained the traditions and customs as in Barpeta, but after the death of Kereng Atoi this system has been changed.

2.2.6 AMGURI SATRA: Amguri Satra is situated in Amguri village, 6 kms. south-west from Bangaigaon. Mahapurush Madhadeva founded this Satra. There are a few local stories regarding the foundation of this Satra. It is said that once Madhavadeva came from Ganak Kuchi to meet his Guru Sankardeva in Gooch Behar. He reached Baitamari in the evening and he did not take risk to go further at night. One Sudra Patgiri requested Madhavadeva to stay in his house for the night and Patgiri considered Madhavadeva a noble person and offered him warm hospitality.

26 Neog, M.; 1969 : 'Pabitra Asam', p. 325
with devotion. The honoured quests took his meals after observation of required oblutions there. Patgiri had a peculiar dream at night and could know that his guest was a great pious man with noble personality. In the morning he saw that there was footprints of his guest over the hard stone piece where the honourable guest took his bath after arrival in the evening. After seeing these footprints Patgiri and his family members took shelter at the feet of the guest Mahapurush Madhavadeva. Thus many of his relatives and other neighbours got their initiation at Madhavadeva's feet. After staying for three days Madhavadeva left for Cooch Behar to meet Sankaradeva. Thus Patgiri built up this Āmguri Satra with Namghār etc.

The Satra is retaining the image of Gopināth i.e., Krisna alongwith Bhāgavata in the Guru-āsana. So, the Satra is also known as Gopināth Satra. The original stone piece, where there were Madhavadeva's foot prints, is also kept in the Satra. This padasilā is considered as a special religious material of the Satra. There are some other
local stories connecting such maraculous incidents.

All these are perhaps nothing but to link up with unknown powers i.e., God or Krisna, whi is the ultimate aim of Bhakti.

It is very interesting that Sankaradeva himself took special interest for the establishment of Amguri Satra. With that intention he asked Madhavadeva, when he was at Ganak Kuchi to visit Amguri for setting up a Vaisnava Satra there. Accordingly Madhavadeva built up Amguri Satra with the sincere help and co-operation of Sudra Patgiri, whom Madhavadeva appointed the first Satradhikār in Amguri Satra. The various records and local stories corroborate that Amguri was built up by Madhavadeva and one Sudra Patgiri was its first Satradhikāra.


2.2.7 BISHNUPUR SATRA : Bishnupur Satra is situated at the side of the confluence of two 'bils' i.e., small lake Jamranga and Kanara in the village Bishnupur, 12 kms. west of Abhayapuri in Goalpara. The Satra was founded by Chaturbhuj Thakur, the grand-son of Sankaradeva. The present village Bishnupur has its own great traditions.

At that time Chu-kām-phā who was also known as Khorā Rājā was the King of the Ahoms, in 1539 to 1630 A.D. Mahapurush Sankaradeva paid a visit to this Bishnupur at that time and carried on discourses on religion among the local people. His grand-son Chaturbhuj accompanied him and started a Satra there on Sankaradeva's direction. This was an idle place for constructing a Satra. The Satra had hātis i.e., lines of devotees, hostels and now these names of hāti, such as Pubhāti, Paschim-hāti, Hirāpārā, etc. are still retained. The place where Sankaradeva stayed for a few days is preserved still as a sacred spot which is considered by the devotees a most important spot of the Satra to visit. This Satra has

29 Neog, M.; 1969 : 'Pabitra Asam', p. 322
30 Ibid., p. 323
a great impact in the society. Mukundanarayan Dev, a Zamindar of Bijnor donated a plot of rent free land for maintenance of the Satra. But later on in 1950 A.D. the Government have acquired the entire landed properties of the Satra excepting three bighas, where the present Satra Namghar and its courtyard is located. Bhishnupati, son of Sumitra and grand-son of Chaturbhuj Thakur took the responsibility of the Satradhikār after Chaturbhuj, and his lineage are occupying the Satradhikāra position till to-day.

2.3 SATRAS OF NORTH BENGAL

2.3.1 MADHUPUR SATRA : This Satra is situated in a village called Madhupur near present Cooch Behar town in North Bengal. The present Madhupur Satra is not located at the original site, which has been washed away by the river Torsha, long back. The present site is about 4 kms. southward to its original site, which is about 10 kms. away towards North-West from the Cooch Behar town. It is connected with the nearest spot of the National High Way by a
The Satra has its traditional Manikut and Namghar while other residential houses are replaced by the modern R.C.C. building. It has been constructed recently about twenty six years back with the financial grant from the Government of Assam. The Satra has been receiving such grants from the Assam Government till now. The late Mahendramohan Chaudhury, former Chief Minister of Assam had initiated such interest for the development of Madhupur Satra, and all the present development is the result of his patronisation.

Madhupur Satra is considered as one of the main centre for the expansion of Assam's Vaisnavism of Sri Sankaradeva through the Satra institution, particularly outside Assam and has been bearing its torches faithfully in the midst of predominating alien Bengali culture coupled with the onthrust of Vaisnava cult of Sri Chaitanyadeva.

There are some local stories regarding the establishment of Madhupur Satra. The local people have still remember these stories with great reverence. Sankaradeva took a religious tour to Puri to visit Jagannath temple
with 120 disciples. On the way to Puri after completing
three days journey from Barpeta. Sankaradeva stopped his
journey then and halted there for one day and collected
some madhu, i.e., honey from the locality. So the disciples
called the place Madhupur\textsuperscript{31} i.e., the place of 'honey'.
The site was really idle for settlement from different view
points. So Sankaradeva thought to built up the place for
preaching his Vaisnavism. Prior to this second pilgrimage
of Sankaradeva, Sukladvaj, the famous Chilaray, had already
became a disciple of Sankaradeva. Meanwhile king Naranarayan
himself became an admirer, though not a disciple of Sankara-
deva.

Sankaradeva like other Vaisnava Gurus of Assam was
tortures by the Ahom King.\textsuperscript{32} Sankaradeva had to leave Upper
Assam and settled down at Patbaushi near Barpeta. At that
time Naranarayan was the King of Cooch Behar and his brother
Chilaray was the commander in Chief of the Kingdom. When
controversy between the 'Karmakandibrāhmaṇa' and Sankaradeva,

\textsuperscript{31} Neog, M.(ed.); 1986 : 'Gurucharit-Kathā', p.124
\textsuperscript{32} Sarma, S.; 1981 : 'Asamiyā-Sāhityar Samikkhātmak
Itivritta', p. 130
arose then Sankaradeva had to stay with Chilaray. Chilaray arranged an open session of debates on the religious scriptures various śāstras between Sankaradeva and the Karmakāndi Brāhmin Pandits. In the debate the pandits were defeated and Sankaradeva got the supremacy. Being very much impressed with the depth of knowledge of Sri Sankaradeva the King Naranarayan appointed him a court counsel. He requested Sankaradeva to reside in another Satra constructed specially for him at Kākatkutā. Accordingly Sankaradeva left for Kākatkutā.

The second pilgrimage took place two years after this incidence and on return from this pilgrimage along with his close associate Madhavadeva and other disciples Sankaradeva permanently lived in Kākatkutā Satra till to his last days in 1559 A.D.

At the time of demise of Sankaradeva, Madhavadeva in Barpeta. Ramananda, a son of Sri Sankaradeva was considered as the principal devotee of Kākatkutā Satra while

33 Bezbarua, L.N.; 1988: 'Sri Sankardeva āru Madhavadeva, p. 131
Srimān Ātā was given such responsibility of Madhupur Satra. At that time all the activities of Madhupur Satra along with other religious performances and cultural activities were performed smoothly. Trouble ensued however, after the death of Ghilaray in 1571 A.D. Then the Cooch Kingdom was divided into Cooch-Hāzo and Cooch-Komatā two separate Kingdoms where Raghudeva and Laxminarayan were made Kings respectively. They had also patronised the Vaisnava Satra. Laxminarayana had great revenue for Madhavadeva who established another Satra at Bheḷā, a few miles away from Kākatkutā in the bank of Torsha. Madhavadeva lived in this Bheḷā Satra till his death in 1595.

According to popular belief of the locality after the demise of Madhavadeva both the kākatkutā and Bheḷā Satra were washed away by the erosion of river Torsha and on the advice of the King and his mother queen 'Aaidhāi' the disciples of both the Satras decided to shift to Madhupur Satra. All personal articles of the two preceptors, Sri Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva have been preserved.

34 Nath, Rajmohan; 1964; 'Mahapurusiya Dharmar Darsan O Madhupur Dharmar Itivirṛta', p.13
by the followers in Madhupur Satra as sacred relics and mementoes. From then Madhupur Satra in Cooch Behar, Barpeta Satra in Kamrupa and Kamalabari Satra in Upper Assam have been identified as three principal centres for Vaishnavite religious importance by the followers of Srimanta Sankardeva. During this period Burir-po-Gobinda Atoi was the Adhikār of Madhupur Satra.  

After the death of Maharaj Lazminarayan, his son Biranarayan became the King of Cooch Behar in 1627 A.D. and he had also patronised the Satra in his Kingdom. During the reign of Prananarayan, son of Biranarayan after the death of Gobinda Atoi, the two prominent disciples Damodar and Niranjan Atoi claimed the Adhikārship.

In course of time Niranjan left for Baguān and carried away the Vīgraha and other holy articles while Damodar left for Bhutan. But Hari Atoi accompanied Niranjan to Baguān. This way importance of Madhupur Satra has been gradually come down and it has lost the traditional satriya characteristics.  

35 Das, Dhiren; 1981: 'Sri Sri Madhupur Satrar Samhīpta Itihāṣ', p. 4  
36 Goswami, G.; 1964: 'Hari Atoi Purusar Charitra', p. 41
Niranjan Ātoi established a Satra in Baguān.

After staying there for a long period Niranjan divided the holy articles, brought from Madhupur and ordained to Hari Ātoi that one part should be kept at Ṛāmrāykuti and the other part should be preserved at Madhupur itself. Niranjan Ātoi breathed his last there Baguān Satra. In course of time, Hari Ātoi replaced the sacred articles at their proper places Ṛāmrāykuti and Madhupur as ordained by Niranjan, and after then only Madhupur Satra regained its lost glory. At that time Gopinath Ātoi came to Madhupur Satra and became the Satrādhikār of Madhupur.37

There are ten different sacred spots in Madhupur Satra after the name of ten prominent disciples of Madhava-deva. They had occupied highly respectable status and position in the Satra.38 According to Gopinath Ātoi these holy spots are determined as follow:

37 Goswami, G.; 1964 : Ibid., p. 60
38 Nath, Rajmohan; 1964 : 'Mahapurusiya Dharmar Dārsan O Madhupur Dharmar Itivirtta', p. 13
The 'Chitta Mukut' foundation in the east—
i) 'Chitta Mukut' (a) Cherengia Sri Ram Atoi
   (b) Na-Shikar po-ram Atoi.

The 'Jiwan Mukut' foundation in North-East side—
ii) 'Jiwan Mukut' (a) Sriram Ați
   (b) Harihar Ați.

'Param Mukut' foundation in North—
iii) 'Param Mukut' (a) Janardhan Atoi—
   (Also known as hiyar mukut)
   (b) Gopal Atoi.

The 'Hiyar Mukut' foundation in South—
iv) 'Hiyar Mukut' (a) Burir-po-Gobinda Atoi
   (He hailed from village Bar-Karaibari)
   (b) Burā Jayananda Atoi.

The 'Bandhan Mukut' foundation in West—
v) 'Bandhan Mukut' (a) Bar Baikuntha Atoi
   (Also known as Param mukut)
   (b) Bar Tulashiram Atoi.
After three years Gopinath Ātoi left Madhupur for Jarabari at Janji on the request of the devotees of Jarabari area. At that time there were twelve other chief followers in Madhupur, such as, Kanu Ātoi, Paramananda, Sanatan, Keshab, Satananda, Murari, Gopal, Krishna, Joyram, Joyantiya, Madhav and Madhuram. 39

According to the records preserved in the Satra the names of the Satrādhikārs appear after Gopinath Ātoi as follows 40.

1) Harivallav Ātoi
2) Joyram Ātoi
3) Joy Ātoi
4) Damodar Thakur
5) Krisnanath Thakur
6) Ramnath Thakur
7) Gopinath Bāpu
8) Gangaram Bharāli Burhā Bhaṭat
9) Pachā Bharāli Burhā Bhaṭat

39 Goswami, G.; 1964: 'Hari Ātoi Purusar Charitra', p.62
40 Collected from the Satra records through Satrādhikār Laxmikanta Ātoi Burhā Bhaṭat, Madhupur Satra, The Adhikār is no more.
10) Kinaram Atoi
11) Niran Atoi
12) Tolan Atoi
13) Laxmikanta Atoi Burhā Bhakat
14) Fatik Chandra Atoi (living).

Madhupur is also popularly known as Cha-arār than i.e., the place of six groups each group having 4 units, altogether 24 units. These units are Charā, Chau-
khuti, Gagan, Srirāmpur, Haripur, Chautārā, Jhingāpurni, Phulbāri, Marichbāri, Hāldhībāri, Amarāguri, Maināguri, Betnā, Nāokuti, Dhāokuti, Hazrāpārā, Sālbāri, Soulmāri, Bāndukā, Dhpurguri, Naperā, Nabāti, Nabari, Marnāti. These twenty four 'thāna's were the chief branches of Madhupur Satra. But at present these Satras are almost dead. Only some names are still prevailed in that area covering Assam and Bengal border. In addition to these twenty four main branches, there were many other Satras in different places.

41 Sarma, H.; 516 Sankarabda : 'Dujānā Guru Sankar-
Madhava', p. 48
42 Neog, M.; 1969 ; 'Pabitra Asam', Introduction, p.41
of the present Goalpara, Dhubri and Kokrajhar districts in Assam and in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts in North Bengal which received direct patronages and religious directions from Madhupur Satra. Some of the sub-centres were also in existence in Rangpur, Gaibandhan, Lalmanihat, and Kurigram districts of Bangladesh which was once part of Koch Kamata Kingdom.

2.3.2 BAIKUNTHAPUR SATRA: It is situated in Cooch Behar district of North Bengal. Baikunthapur Satra occupies a very important place in Vaisnavite culture of Assamese Vaisnava. It is one of the most important Satras of the Brahma-Sambati sect of Vaisnavas. It is, now situated at a distance of 10 kms away towards the North of Cooch Behar town, attached with the residence of Sri Kanakendu-deva Goswami of village Vaikunthapur. The Vigraha of Lord Krisna the image of Madana Gopala are kept in a dilapidated house. This Satra is perpetuating the holy memory of the Damodari sect.

When King Laxminarayan, son of Late King Naranarayan, was ruling over Cooch Behar, Deva Damodar came to Cooch
Behar from Kamrup on the request of King Parikshit Narayana. He was received with ceremonial pomp and devotional respect on his arrival at Cooch Behar by King Laxminarayan and who ordered Biru Karjee to take the responsibility of constructing a Satra campus for Deva Damodar Guru. 43

Instruction were also issued that the Satra should be set up at such a place which would be easily visible from the royal place. Under the direction of Deva Damodar the Satra was constructed in the village Birinabari later on known as Damodarpur i.e., the sacred abode of Damodar. 44

The Damodarpur Satra was established in second decade of Sixteenth century at a distance of about two and half km. away towards the west on the right bank of river Torsha. 45 Subsequently the Satra was completely eaten up by the river Torsha. The Satra institution was shifted on Deva Damodara's advice to Bhitaria Dhap, 10 kms. away towards east of Cooch

43 Sama, Sonapati; 1968 : 'Deva Damodar Guru', p. 228
45 Chaudhury, H.; 1903 ; Cooch Behar Estate', p.83
Behar town. After Deva Damodar breathed his last in this new site the place was renamed as Baikunthapur as because their Guru departed to the heaven in this place. The Satra had originally a landed property of one hundred and seventy two bighas of land. The Satra was managed by the earnings of this landed property.

This place, Bhitaiuadhap, was surrounded on all sides by a high barrage got constructed by King Narenarayana with the help of the Kāmrupi Pāiks prior to its donation to the Satra. This Satra at Bhitaiuadhāp was self sufficient in all respects. There were distinct places for worship, religious discourses, devotional musics, Manikut, Charihāti etc. Moreover the Satra provided fine arrangement for Deva Damodara's comfortable and undisturbed living in the inner echeleon, while the visitors and house holding devotees were very decently accommodated out side the precincts of the main Satra. The whole arrangement was

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nicely plamed and it appears as the heavenly abode Bai-
kuntha on earth.  

After completion of the construction the Satra, it was opened with pompous ceremonial inauguration and devotional rights under the patronage of the King who donated landed property for its maintenance, engaged sentries, got potterman, barbars, washerman, goldsmiths and other artisans settled around the Satra.

At Bhitarūadhāp Satra, Deva Damodar breathed his last in 1995 A.D. After his demise, the name Bhitarūadhāp Satra became extinct and only the name Baikunthapur Satra began to come into vogue.

After demise of Deva Damodar Baladev, one of his very prominent disciples became the Adhikār of Baikunthapur. A list of the Adhikārs has been collected

50 Sarma, S.N.; 1981 : 'Asamiya Sahityar Samikkhatmak Itivirtta', p. 196
from Kanakendudeva Goswami, the present Adhikār of Baikunthapur as follows:

1. Santadeva
2. Arjundev
3. Bhimdev
4. Anantadev
5. Ramayadev
6. Hiranyadev
7. Kanakendudeva Goswami (the present one).

The head disciple i.e., Principal incharge in Bhelā-Madhupur was called 'Bar-Bhakat'. At the main gate of the Manikut at Madhupur dhām were kept images of innumerable deities. But no importance was attached to those images by the bar-bhakats who laid utmost importance on the discourses of Bhāgawat accepting it as the sole object of worship. But in Baikunthapur discourses on Bhāgawat and the Vedic performances were given equal importance. This is the distinctive feature between the Bhakats and the Medhias, the title given to the Head at Baikunthapur.51

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51 Chaudhury, H.; 1903: 'Cooch Behar Estate', p. 84
Adhikār in Baikunthapur was called Medhi after Deva Damodar left for his heavenly abode. The titles were nothing but only distinctive marks between the Satrādhikārs of Bhelā-Madhupur and those in Baikunthapur. 52

2.3.3. MADHAPUR SATRA: The Madhapur Satra53 is situated at village Haripur on the side of the National High Way at a distance of three kms. in the east from Tufanganj town. Originally it was situated at a distance of one and half km. from the well known fort of Chilaray in Phulbari or Tufanganj town. In 1912 A.D. it was shifted to village Haripur in a plot of three bighās of land donated by Late Indramohan Barman of Haripur village and since then it came to be known as Haripur Satra in this locality of Gooch Behar. The most sincere disciple of Madhavadeva, Harihar Ātā, was the founder of this Madhapur Satra. 54

At present the Madhapur Satra is now keeping the light litting the sacred memory of its past heritage mingled

52 Sama, Bemudhar; 'Dakkhin Pāt Satra', p.7
54 Ibid.
with the memory of Harihar Ātā in that plot of three
bighās of land, it is now almost in a dying condition.

2.3.4 NĀKĀRKHĀNA SATRA: Harihar Ātā, a sincere disciple
of Madhavadeva founded this Satra in plot of land owned
by Sukbar Daloi55 in Nākārkhāna village. There is a
popular story concerning the name of Nākārkhāna. Cat is
called 'nākār' in local dialect. Two of the cats belong­
ing to Harihar Ātā were drowned in a marshy inland water
and hence that water was given the name Nākār (=cat)
khera (=eater) subsequently it was articulated as Nākār-
khāna by the local people. At present this Satra is in a
decaying condition. The images of Lord Krisna of the
Nākārkhāna Satra are being preserved at the residence
of Lakshimajī Bhakatani at village Bhanukumari in Cooch
Behar district of West Bengal. According to local people
the forefathers of Bhakatani were Satrādhikār of this
Satra. She is now the proprietor of this Satra by inheri-

tance. At present this Satra property is included in

private property. It is gathered from the Bhakatani that the old scripts and sacred scripters were eaten up by the moth-eater and worn-out a few years back and as these were damaged and unable to preserve properly they have thrown away all the old manuscripts in the sacred river water. A bronze image of god Madan Mohan weighting 18 kms. was stolen away by miscreants. At present there are only a few bronze images of Lord Krisna at the residence of the Bhakatani.

2.3.5 BHELĀ SATRA: Madhavadeva used to stay at Bhelā Satra during the later period of his life and breathed his last there. The Satra is now somehow maintaining its own past tradition in a dilapidated house at the residence of Sri Dharani Bandhu Medhi of village Bheladanga in Cooch Behar district near Torsha river. Originally this Satra was founded by Madhavadeva during the reign of Maharaj

56 Bezbarua, L.N. ; 1988 ; 'Mahapurush Sankaradeva Āru Madhavadeva', p. 219
Laxmi-Narayana. According to local popular belief the Bhela birds used to fly over the marsh searching their preys (fishes) the place was called Bhelādovā (marsh frequented by Bhelas) or Bhelādāṅgā. During the reign of Koch King Laxminarayan, Madhavadeva was the supreme preceptor of Sankari cult after Sankaradeva. He lived at Bhelā and hence it became the main centre. The following persons became Satrādhikār of Bhelā after Madhavadeva:- Achut Guru, Sīrām Ātā, Beheria Mīsmu Ātā, Jayananda Mūrtha Ātāi and Buri r-upo-Gobinda Ātai. During the days of Gobinda Ātai the Satra was about to be eroded by river Torsha. At that time Bīranarayan was the King of Cooch Behar. In his generous donation the Satra was shifted to Madhupur. The grand son of Sankaradeva, Purusahattam Thakur lived in this Satra till his death. This particular spot of the Bhelā Satra was left uneroded by the river. A new Kirtan-ghara of Bhelā Satra was constructed on 12th Fāgun 1964 Saka era. It is in the Northern side of the P.W.D. road

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58 Neog, M.; 1969: 'Pabitra Asam', p. 359
from Cooch Behar to Mathabhanga on the right of the river Torsha. 60

At present in the reconstructed Bhelā Satra is predominated by the Brahma Samhati and so, the adhikār is called Medhi now. The Satradhikārs i.e., Medhis of the Satra are Chaturbhuj Medhi, Bhābabandhu Medhi, Jagabandhu Medhi, Jeebanbandhu Medhi and Dharanibandhu Medhi (present one). In the reconstructed Satra the images of Krisna, Gopal and Sālgrams were placed by Chaturbhuj Medhi.

2.3.6 HARIPUR SATRA: Haripur Satra is situated one kilometre away from present Madhupur Satra in the west in Madhupur village of Cooch Behar district. Original site of the Satra is completely eaten up by the Torsha river. The Satra has still retaining something and there is a very old Śiva temple, where a stone image 'Śiva linga' is preserved and day-to-day worship is still continuing by

60 Pathak, Gakul; 1384 Sal: 'Barpeta Satrar Itihash', p. 15
a priest. The priest is appointed by the local people.

According to Charit Puthi this Satra was founded by Hari-
deva. Death anniversary of Harideva is observed by litting
the banti and prayers.