CHAPTER III

THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE SATRA
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GOALPURA (Undivided):

3.1 RAMRAYKUTI SATRA: The Ramraykuti Satra has still retained the Do'lghar, the Namghar or Kirtanghar, Guru-griha, Bhakatar bāhā i.e., small Assam type residential house of the disciples, open air stage for dramatic performances, small house to keep the chariot and the store house. These were constructed by Hari Ātoi within a campus of the village known as Ramraykuti. According to the traditional story the prayer hall was constructed at the place where the main function of Chilaray's wedding with Bhubaneswari took place and the Guru-griha was constructed at the same place where Srimanta Sankaradeva stayed during the said marriage ceremony. Similarly the Bharāl-ghar (=store house) was built at the place utilised to keep the various etable and other essential commodities of Chilaray's wedding. The original construction of these house of the Satra were, however, built by the King -
Naranarayana, but these were completely destroyed due to some natural calamities. Later on, Hari Ātoi after identifying the actual cites of those Satra houses built up the necessary houses in those places at the time of rebuilt. In course of time these were also dilapidated, but again, these were repaired and reconstructed. The structural designs of Rāmrāykuti Satra appears to be different from those of the Satras like Barpeta, Bardowa and other Satras. Originally there was no separate Manikut to keep all the articles of worship in the Satra, these were kept in the prayer hall itself. This is a very interesting point to be noted in case of this Satra. Of course, a separate Manikut has been constructed recently towards the eastern side of the Kirtanghar after the pattern of other Satras.

The main prayer hall is 180 ft. in length and 90 ft. in breadth. All the walls are decorated with the portraits of different deities engraved on wood. These wooden portraits are very old. The famous book 'Ratnāwali' written by Mahapurush Madhavadeva preserved in the sinhāsana
which is a common term to mean the Guru-āshana by the local people. There is a four feet high image of the four-armed deity i.e., Nārāyana with four different āyudhas made of Tulsi tree on the right side of the āshana.

The do'lgriha has been constructed on the southern side of the Manikut at a distance of 50 ft. (approx.) the do'l-griha is constructed while the newly built gurugriha is located towards the south-west of the main prayer hall and the distance between them is about 60 ft. A pair of Pādukā i.e., foot wear is also kept on a sinhāsana in the Guru-griha. This Pādukā is popularly known as 'SriRāmchandra's Pādukā in this locality.

The Gurugriha was built-up after the model of Madhupur Satra. So its main entrance is on the eastern side of the house. This is another peculiarity of the Satras of present Dhubri and Cooch Behar districts. The Gurugriha has drawn a special attention and respect from the followers in these Satras. The big well of the Satra has been dug out by the side of the Gurugriha.
The Gateway for entry to the boundaries of the Satra is called the 'Bātcara' or 'Bātghar' i.e., the main Gate. At a little distance towards north side of the Bātchara there is an open stage used for various cultural performances including Bhaona in different occasions. The betel-nuts are the common decorative trees of the Satras chiefly planted on the back side of the houses of the disciples. The guest house is located at the outside of the Satra campus so that any visitor can stay there without any restrictions. The arrangement of the guest house in this Satra is very nice. The Satra people offer very cordial reception to the guest.

3.1.1 The most important festivals observed at the Bāmrāy-kuti Satra are the tithi of Hari Ātoi, the Rathajātra i.e., the Chariot festival. This Rathajātra imitates after the pattern of Ratha festival of Puri. The do'i festival is another important function of this Satra. At that time SriKrishna is worshipped with flower and dry coloured powder. Lord Krisna is also taken in a decorated dolā i.e., swinging seat on a procession, where the people play on colour. The
death anniversary of Hari Atoi on the Chaitra sukla dvitiya tithi i.e., second day of the new moon in the last month of Assamese calendar is observed with great solemnity. This festival observed with various religious and cultural programmes for two days. Pilgrims of this sect from different Satra of Assam and North Bengal make huge congregations every year during this tithi festival. The disciples coming from different places totally forget about their linguistic differences in chanting devotional songs. Thus they have developed some common feelings of national integrity. The foot wears preserved in the Satra are made open for offering respect and homage by the pilgrims. The first day of the festival is marked as Mukhyatithi i.e., main festival while the second day is marked as 'Bārām' i.e., the day to commemorate 'Pādukā'.

3.1.2 The Rathastrā, the festival of the chariot is observed in the month of Āsara as per Assamese calendar i.e., June-July. As this festival is generally observed with some amount of pomp and grandeur, the Satra compound
is crowded with various people irrespective of caste and creed coming from different parts of the State of Assam and North Bengal. On this day the idols of Sri Krishna, Balaram and Subhadra are placed in a nicely decorated chariot and take out with a huge procession of disciples shouting slogans in praise of these deities. They also sing devotional songs while go in procession. The prasādas are also offered to the deities and later on, distributed among the people.

3.1.3 The Do'īl Utsab is another important festival observed in the Rāmrāykuti Satra with a week long programme. On the second day, processions about twenty to twenty one do'īlā with Lord Krisna's image are generally carried on each swing seat by four persons and the people play various instruments like bounds, drums, cymbals, flute etc. with great merriments and dances.

3.1.4 In addition to these three principal festivals, the birth anniversaries of Srimanta Sankaradeva, Madhavadeva,
Badula Ātā, Būrha Ātā, Bīsnu Ātā and a few others are also observed with due solemnities. The birth anniversary of Lord Sri Krisna is observed with great care and meriments. Similarly Srimanta Sankaradeva's birth day is also celebrated with special programme. The Satra people gives importance for some Bhāonā performances on these two special occasions. Later on, some modern ideas are also coming up and they organise some seminar-discussions and pāl-nām in these two occasions.

3.1.5 Moreover, the tithi anniversaries of Sri Sankardeva and Madhavadeva have also got much importance. The Satra management committee take the entire responsibilities of financing these festivals. The fund for these festivals is generally raised from the public donation and contribution.

3.2 JIKĀṬĀ SATRA: The present Jinkāṭā Satra was built up in the year 1967 in accordance with the structural

1 See Chapter II.
design of Madhupur Satra and was formally declared a public place of worship for the followers of Srimanta Sankaradeva. The plinth area of the main Namghar is 120 ft. by 60 ft. in size while Manikut situated on the eastern side of it is also 30 ft. by 15 ft. The sinhasana preserved in the Kirtanghar is a gift of Madhupur Satra and two books, viz., Gunamālā and Nāmghosā written in the barks of Sānchi tree. The wooden image of Chaturbhuj Narayana is placed on the Choudal in alter of Manikut. This bigraha was also taken from Jhingapurni Satra. This Satra has a good relation with Madhupur and Rāmrāykuti Satra.

The Gurugriha which is located towards south-west of the Kirtanghar is not very small: it is 20 ft. long and 10 ft. wide. According to the Satra authority the ashes of Madhavadeva's funeral pyre are preserved here in a soil pot below the floor. In the Satra campus there is a small public library, a Do'il mandap, and two Assam type houses to stay the devotees.
3.2.1 The old traditional nām-prasanga is retained in this Satra. The devotional songs, nām-kirtana etc. are performed daily as common programmes as in Barpeta and Madhupur. They have done it in the Satra daily in three different times i.e., morning, afternoon and evening. In this Satra the devotees combined the different types of fourteen prasangas in three prasangas as stated below:

Morning Session:

i) Bargeet
ii) Bhatina
iii) Hari-nām-kirtan
iv) Bhagawat reading
v) Bhagawata's teachings.

Afternoon Session:

vi) Discourses on the sacred books
vii) Hari-nām-kirtan
viii) Lessons of Bhagavata

Evening Session:

ix) Gunamālā pāth
All the main fourteen prasangas are put in three groups, according to the convenience of the Satra devotees and they practise them with much care.

The Janmāstami and Do'īl are considered as the most auspicious festivals. Besides that Māghi Purnimā day, the birth day and the death anniversary of Shri Sankaradeva, the death anniversary of Madhavadeva are also observed every year in the Satra. In addition to that a few tithis of some other prominent ātās are also observed in this Satra with nāmkirtan.

3.2.2 Janmāstami, the birth anniversary of Lord Krisna is observed every year on the Krisna asthami day in the
month of Bhādra and, it continuous for next day also. On
the night of the tithi day the devotees stage the 'Jama-
jātra' nāt, a drama on the Lord's birth and the second day
is spent through nāmkirtana. Many of the devotees also play
on that day with mud and muddy water.

3.2.3 The Do'1 festival of Jinkātā Satra is most remarkable
one. The image of Lord Srikrīṣṇa is kept on the dolā inside
the Manikut and on the previous night of the Do'1 Purnimā
day the people set on fire a small thatched hut prepared for
this purpose only. After then Srikrīṣna's idolic image is
brought down with devoted rites from the Manikut to the
main Namghar, where the devotees worship ceremoniously as
per religious rites. Generally the kewāla i.e., celebrates
or other disciples take very active part in the function.

The popular song of this function is "Bāhir haiyase
dekhā sai sundar Nander Bhālā" i.e., 'look 'Oh-dear maids ',
the charming son of Nanda has come out'. Most of the disciples
join in this holy song. They apply the musical instruments ,
like drums, cymbals etc. while they sing in the functions, and place the dolā in the do'ī. All the disciples perform pradakshina around the do'ī, and after completing seven round pradakshina some of the disciples set on fire a small thatched hut built up near by the do'ī and the dolā put in the Kirtanghar with Krisna image.

The singers accompanied by the drummer and others start to sing the Bargeet in 'Basanta rāg'. The common Bargeet is "sai dekhare gabindar gandher sājan" i.e., 'oh friend! look at the scented and decorated clothings of Govinda'. Another popular song of this function is "choā chandan dilā krisnar gāye" i.e., 'see, the sandal-oil pow'd on Krisna's body'.

The second day is marked as Bhārpūjā i.e., full worshiping day. The day is celebrated starting with the Bargeet in the morning and 'chalān' Bargeets i.e., music describing how Krisna got-up from bed and moves-up to the swing or Brindavana. After a few hours in the mid-day the people gathered there take out the image from the Kirtanghar
and place it with reverence in a nicely decorated swing. They repeat the pradakshina and other performances as done on the previous night. After placing the dolā at the do'ī the singers i.e., gāyana start to sing "Bhai dekhone kumalā- pati daūlar upare", 'oh brother, look at the husband of Kamala on the swing' in sindhura rāga, and "Fāgu khelare karunāmay e nanda kumār", 'oh, dear son of Nanda go on playing coloured powder' in 'Bhātiyali Rāga'. The other holy songs of this function are "Hari Herare Bāp Pashilo Sharane", 'oh, dear one, see at Hari to whom we surrender' and "Tomār Binoda Hari Jāniba Kemane" i.e., "how would we know Lord what pleases you". There are some songs to sing in 'Basantā' and 'Tur Basanta' rāga respectively. The evening time is also spent in such merry-making moods.

On the third day the function started with the Bargeet "Utha utha bāpu gopāl he" '(please,) get-up, get-up, oh dear Gopal' in 'kau rāga'. On the afternoon the image is carried out from the swing and placed in a 'chaudol' which appears like a planquin with carrier having four rods on four sides
to be placed on the shoulders of four persons and then the people including the disciples use to sing the Bargeet "Ālo Bhāi Chalo āīsa jāī Brindābane", 'Oh brothers, come out and let us go to Brindaban'. Moreover the people throw the coloured powder at the idol in the chaudol. In the evening while they return from the fair the image on the chaudol is taken to the courtyard of every family of the Mahapurusiya sect in Jinkātā Satra. There also the people throw some coloured powder with high respect at the image of Krisna. They also offer some sweets to the gatherings and contribute some donations to the party. On completion of these visits to all families of the village the image has been again brought back to the Namghar campus. The Gāyana i.e., singers use to sing the Bargeet "Bhāl kāliā kānu khelān khelāy", 'the righteous blakish Kanu plays on well'. There after the image is placed at its right place in the Bhājghar or Manikut. This way the festival of Do'īl comes to an end. In addition to these three days the Do'īl festival at Jinkātā Satra is prolonged for seven days more in every year.
3.2.4 The Magh Purnima day is observed very gorgeously every years as the foundation day of the Satra with two days programmes. On the submoon day musical prayers are offered in the Kirtanghar with great pomp and hilarity. After the musical prayers the Bayanās play kholas which are decorated with Phulām gamochā. Thus they play both the 'Bar demāli' and 'sar u dhemāli' along with the Bargeets.

In the afternoon the disciples go on staging the 'Bhojan Behār' bhaonā, which continues till the late evening. The first day's ceremony is generally over with the discourses on the Bhāgawata and some other religio-cultural demonstrations.

The items on second day start with Bargeet. The various rare articles of the Satra including the pot of 'Chitābhasma' of Madhavdev are displayed to the public for offering special respects. Only the celibate or any other disciple who follow the prescribed rules very strictly are entitled to bring out these articles for exhibition. Ladies are also allowed to enjoy the festivals as visitors, but they are not allowed to enter in the Gurugriha, the Kirtanghar and Manikut. Such restrictions on the womanfolk are
strictly maintained. The guests both specially invited and uninvited are entertained in the afternoon while the discourses on the life history of the different gurus of the sect including Sankaradeva. In addition to that some religious-cultural shows are also arranged. Disciples from different places such as Upper Assam, Barpeta etc., use to visit Jinkātā Satra particularly on this Māghi Purnimā day.

3.2.5 The death anniversary of Sankaradeva is observed with special programme in Jinkātā Satra on the Suklā dvitiyā day of Bhādra month according to the Assamese calendar. On the Previous Krisna ekādasi day the devotees of this Satra starts singing 'Kirtāna' written by Sankaradeva for some hours. Thus they complete the chanting of the entire 'kirtan' for the period of seven days and it is completed on the day of the death anniversary of Sankaradeva. This is locally called 'pālādharā'. It is a special characteristics of observing Sankaradeva's death anniversary in Jinkātā.

Moreover Bargeets occupy a special place in the programme of this function, but nobody is allowed to sing
Bargeet other than Ahira, Kau, Lalit and Dhansri rāgas. Moreover, they are allowed to chunt the ghosā couplets, viz., "Rāma niranjan" "Kimate bhakati" "Karunāmay" "Rāsh leālā" only. A chorus on Bargeet "Nārāyan kāhe bhakati karo terā" is also allowed to sing. This way it is found that there are some restrictions in observing the anniversary.

After the Bargeet item some couplets from Ramayana are also sung by the disciples and this is called 'Rāvāna' song by the local people. At the time of singing 'Rāvāna' they use 'Manjirā' or 'Khutitāl' a small instruments.

The Nāgerā nām takes place in the evening and the thiya nām i.e., nām kirtan on standing is performed after Nāgerā nām. These are other special attraction of this anniversary in the Satra.

3.2.6 Similarly the death anniversary of Madhava deva, Chota Ātā is also observed in the Satra carefully and the day is spent with long programmes of discourses on Bhāgawata, Nāmghosā, Ghunting ghosā and Bargeet and staging
Ehaona specially in the evening. This anniversary has also attracted many people from different places.

3.2.7 After observing these two death anniversaries every year the Satra fix a day to observe 'Purnā', which means the final ceremony of these two anniversaries. This day is also observed with some special programmes based on religio-cultural items of this sect.

3.2.7 Over and above these principal festivals, the Rath-jātrā, and tithi of different atas are also observed at Jinkātā Satra. Expenditure of all these functions are met from the public donation. The management Committee solely depends on the public donation and gifts to run the festival smoothly.

3.2.8 There is a management committee headed by one president, who is selected by the Satra villagers. The Committee entrusts with the selected persons of the village
different responsibilities, mainly, at the time of festival observations. But Satrādhikār, locally called as satriyā bears the over all responsibility of the Satra's affairs. The residual works are divided among the Pāthak 'the discours- ser', Bāyan, Deuri, Bharāli 'treasurer' and other 'Bāraburhā' i.e., the group of selected twelve elderly persons and 'Pānch burhi' i.e., the selected group of five elderly old ladies. These people carry on their respective duties and the aim of these office bearers is to make the function a grand success. Such team spirit of the workers in Jinkātā Satra is quite admirable. Bharāli is to take the entire burden of keeping the accounts along with the stock of the store.

3.2.9 Jinkātā Satra shows a peculiarity with the Bāraburhā and Pānch burhi system. Such system is not available in other Satras. They are well informed and highly experienced elderly persons of the Satra in respect of Satra management affairs. The twelve aged persons act as Chieftains in the social system of the Mahāpurusiyās of Jinkātā village. This
Baraburana body looks into the socio-religious matter of the Satra village. In this sphere they act almost like the village Panchayat. On the other hand the Panch burhi body is to see whether the Varranda Kirtanghar i.e., the outside and the entire courtyard is clean or not; their main work is to conduct the nam-kirtan of the womenfolk. There is another managing committee in the Satra to look after the day-to-day affairs of the Satra. This committee is fully responsible for the maintenance of the Satra, its finance and such other attached activities. One Chowkidar, locally call 'Halmaji' is appointed by this committee, he is a paid employee of the Satra.

3.2.10 The Satra fund is collected from the gifts, donations, collections and other endowments. The entire lands for the construction of the Satra was a gift from a devotee. An annual fee at a fixed rate is collected from each devotee. Similarly contribution to the Satra at the time of each marriage and each Adyasradha are compulsory. All the Mahapurusiya people strictly follow these rules in the
Satra. People from other sects have also contributed on special occasions. It happens due to good impression of these local people on this Satra.

3.3 DHARMAPUR SATRA: The main Kirtan ghar of Dharmapur Satra stands in east-west direction. It is 100 ft. long and 25 ft. breadth. The presents Kirtanghar is a modern construction but the old structure was a thatched traditional big house. The Guru-āshana is kept in the Kirtan ghar while the Wigraha i.e., images are kept inside the Manikut. The Manikut is constructed towards the eastern side of the Kirtan ghar in north-south direction. There is a Math, known as Madhavadeva's math in the east-west direction towards the right side of the Kirtan ghar. This is also replaced by the new concrete construction. There is a pucca well near this Math, originally it was a thatched house. There is another math after the name of Lord Jagannath where there is another similar pucca well near by. This math shows some specialities. It has a wide pucca vārānda suitable for nam-kirtana etc.
3.3.1 There is also a Do'l as in other Satras of Goalpara. In front of the Kirtanghara on the other side of the road there is a 'Hātiyar ghar' which is used as common place for various purposes of the Satra. They use to take decision on various social disputes here in this Hātiyar-ghar. No devotee hostel was constructed here in the Satra within the campus. The devotees use to stay in different places of the village.

3.3.2 The most important festival of Dharmapur Satra is the 'Rāij Sabhā' i.e., Festive-gathering of the common people, this is also known as 'Jagannāth Sabhā'. This festival observed with great pomp and grandeur in the month of Bahāg or Jeth according to Assamese Calendar. The next important festival of this Satra is the death anniversaries of Sri Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva. They observe the tithi of Sankaradeva in the same manner as done in Jinkāṭā Satra, but Madhavadeva's tithi shows certain specialities. They take up the programme of Pāl-nām continuously for ten days. Besides that they arrange Nagera-nam and Bahā-nam. But the
Pal-nām of this tithi is most remarkable. Next to that the tithi of Mathuradas Burha Ātā gets some prominency. The nām-kirtana and other programmes of this tithi have been continued for five days. Two other festivals Janmasthami and Do'l are also observed in this Satra with sanctity, but the programmes of these two festivals are generally performed in one day.

During these festivals various cultural items like one act play, Bargeet, Bhortāl dance, Satriyā dance, Nāgerānām etc. are staged in the Satra. But in the post-independent period the Bhaona performance in these Satras have lost the original style and traditions. There are tremendous influences of the modern drama performances.

3.3.3 Dharmapur Satra is a recognised branch of Barpeta Satra. So, there is no separate Satrādhikār. All activities at this Satra are carried on with the directions of the Barpeta Satra. The day-do-day works are entrusted with some local devotees, who are generally selected by the committee.
The Atoi Pāthak is the chief among such persons. He always performs the daily prasangas. Deuries are to look after the daily offerings to the Vīgraṇa and such other worker inside the Manikut and Kirtanghar. The person called Kākati is the record-keeper of the Satra. All these office bearers, viz., Pāthak, Deuri, Kākati etc. are normally selected by the devotees within from themselves.

There is another local committee consisting of nine members to manage the overall affairs of the Satra. The head of this committee is called Mājumdar. He is to keep official accounts of the Satra along with the record of various properties of the Satra. The secretary of the Committee, another important office bearer is to look after the administrative affairs of the Satra.

The Zamindar of Bijni estate donated the entire 'Mererchar' mauza in the name of Shyamrāl Vīgraṇa of Dharma-pur Satra as tax free land when this Satra was in 'Mer'.

1 Neog, M.; 1969; 'Pabitra Asam', p. 327
Later on the major portion of this gifted land were eaten-up by the river and after the abolition of the zamindary system a few more bighās of land were encroased by the general public. After the installation of the Shyamrai Vigraha at Dharmapur village some rich devotees made donations of land at different times in the name of the Satra Vigraha. According to the fresh survey the area of land within the four boundaries of the Dharmapur Satra measured only four bighās. At present the total land under the possession of the Satra excluding its campus is 21 bighās 2 kāthās 4 lechās only. All these plots of land are cultivable lands producing sālī paddy by which they meet expenses for the daily offerings to the Vigraha and thus met the other expenditure of the Satra.

3.4 Dalgomā Satra: Dalgomā Satra namghara was constructed with the posts of 'Tulsi' tree and that original namghara was totally ruined by natural calamities later on. Fortunately at that time Sarojbala Adhikari induced her husband Raja Probhat Chandra Barua, Zamindar
Of Gauripur to sanction a substantial grant in aid for reconstruction of the Satra. As a result of her benevolence the Kirtanghar and the Manikut of the Satra could get the present shape and reputation. Of course, the local people did not hesitate to give their free labour to collect necessary timbers and to carry out the construction work. At the same time the 'padasilā' house was built by Late Gobinda Chandra Das of Kadamtala at Dalgoma village.

3.4.1 Earlier, persons of the Adhikār lineage performed the various rituals at the Satra. As the lineal personages of the following generations were scattered for the change of their residential places they could not carry out these performances properly and hence late Brojendra Adhikari took the responsibility to carry on these works for some time. But for the financial inability he handed over charge of management of the Satra to the common disciples. Since then the disciples began to form an Executive Committee for the management of all affairs of the Satra, including performances of daily prasāngas and other rituals. This
practice continues till to-day.

3.4.2 The principal festival in the Dalgoma Satra is the death anniversary of Harmohan Thakur. It is held every year on the Krishna Trayodashi tithi in the month of Māgh according to Assamese calendar. As he was the founder of this Satra his descendents observe this day with all festivities. The programme includes devotional songs, dramatic performances of religious themes besides normal offerings and worships. Since the charge of the Satra was taken over by a committee they observed its with a week long programme where Pāl-nām, Bargeets etc. are included.

3.4.3 The tithis of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva are observed after the traditions of Barpeta Satra with religious discourses and Seminars, bhāonās, devotional songs etc. with a week long programme. Besides the two sects i.e., Damodariyā and Mahapurusiyā the other people also came forward with material, financial and personal assistances. In addition to that the tithis of four Ātās
namely Thakur Ātā, Badula Ātā, Bar Bishnu Ātā, and Burha Ātā are also observed with all sincerity and devotion in the Satra. The tithis of these four Ātās are considered by the Satra as the indispensable religious rites of the Satra.

3.4.4 One other festival of Dalgoma Satra is the Do'l Jātrā held on the full-moon day in the month of Fālguna according to Assamese Calender. They also observe it after the traditions of Barpeta Satra. On the evening of the previous day of the actual date of Do'l jātrā the adhībās (= Preliminary) rites is observed with burning a miniature i.e., very small thatched hut. The next day the devotees go round the Do'l i.e., the swing alter specially made for this purpose and after completing seven rounds the idols of Krisna and Gopal were placed on it. This Do'l jātrā festival observe with eight days religious programmes.

In all those festivals, religious dramas like Bhāonā Bhojana bihār, Kotorā Khelā etc. are performed.
In addition to that modern dramas, theatres and various cultural shows are also arranged wherein local children take part.

3.4.5 The architectural system of this Satra is not so gorgeous as in the case of other Satras. The main temple i.e., kirtanghar is constructed in east-west length. It is about 40' ft. in length and 20' ft. in width. Its roofs are of C.I. sheets and the walls are cement plaster. This is entirely a modern construction. The main entrance is in the western side with two other doors on the northern and the southern sides. The eastern part of the house is the Manikut with its main entrance in the south. Looking from a distance the houses at the Satra appear to be residential quarters. In the eastern corner on the left side is the house of the Padasila i.e., foot stone. It is ordinarily constructed with C.I. sheet roofing. There is an old well within the Namghara campus. It is used only during the tithis and festive days. The boundary four walls of
the campus are broken and in a dilapidated condition. There is an open field within the boundaries of the Satra where only the cattle are moving carelessly. All these prove that the Satra lost its proper religious environment.

3.4.6 The various houses of the Satra are constructed over a plot of only one and a half bighas of land. In addition there is six bighas of cultivable land donated by different devotees. This plot is used for agricultural purpose. Half of the production is received by the Satra which is its own regular income. The devotees under the Satra pay some donations annually to it which is fully used in the daily offerings to the deities of the Satra and annual repairing of its buildings. Expenses of tithis and festivals are met from the contributions by the devotees and general public. All accounts of incomes and expenditures are maintained by the Executive Committee. The other festivals are observed timely and some committees
are formed for this purpose every year. Those committees in collaboration with the main executive committee and the general public manage all festivals performed in the Satra. When found necessary the festival committees are permitted to collect contributions from the common people. Normal expenses for other institutional performances are managed from the fixed donations from nearby villagers. These contributions are made either in cash or in kind. Resources also came from other avenues e.g., when some traditional observations like birth, marriage, death, social fines etc. take place, donations are collected for the Satra from the persons living in the surrounding villages.

3.4.7 For observations of religious rites and such other works etc. some persons are entrusted with responsibilities according to their suitability for these works by the Executive Committee. The head of these persons is called the Pāthak. Similarly Bāyan is another important person of the Satra. The Chief Bāyan and his other puisne
arrange rehearsals for the performers consisting mainly of boys and girls of devotee families for devotional dramas and musics. Similarly one who takes the responsibility of offering the various articles to the deities including sacred flowers and watery articles is called Deuri or Pujāri, who is expected to be a person of devotedly clean habits. No woman is allowed admission to the Kirtanghāra (= main temple) while they are to carry on the various acts of sweeping and washing in the entire compound outside the Kirtanghār. They also participate in devotional songs during the festivals sitting outside the Kirtanghār.

3.4.8 In religious dramas like 'Bhojan bihār' and 'Kotorā Khelā' only the boys are allowed to take part. They are called Natuwā i.e., dancers. This drama is staged on its traditional bhāonā way.

3.5 SHYAMRĀI SATRA: Shyamrāi Satra campus is located in the heart of the Goalpara town and it fulfills
all the requirements of the design for such an institution. The Satra campus possesses a prayer hall, a treasure house, Sinhāsana for the deities' Do'l, quarters for the devotees and a guest house. In addition to these, a very beautiful Math known as Sankar Math was also constructed in the Satra compound. It was constructed for the purpose of preserving a portion of the sacred 'asthi' i.e., bone brought from Madhupur Satra in Cooch Behar.² Construction of the present building of the Satra was entrusted with an Executive Committee formed for this purpose and formal foundation stone was laid in 1971 by late Mahendra Mohan Choudhury, a religious minded renown politician cum-social leader of Assam. When this Committee failed to work properly the people dissolved it and form another committee in 1976. This newly formed committee took up its constructional works earnestly and the math was completed in the first part of the year 1976 with an expenditure of Rupees forty eight thousand. People belong to business community and

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² See Chapter -IV, No.4.2.5, p.159
other well-to-do person of Goalpara town contributed generously to the fund for construction of the Math. The aforesaid sacred piece of bone is preserved in this Math. There are beautiful paintings of the mythological ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu and various activities of Balarama Krishna its four walls. Construction works of a guest house, a pond, one theatre hall and boundary walls are now undertaken with right earnest. While those on a huge gate with two stony lions embarking on it from both sides were beautifully completed. All expenses on the construction of the gate were borne by a devotee of the Satra Sri Prafulla Kumar Das.

3.5.1 Every year the festivals of Janmāstami, the birth and death anniversaries of Srimanta Sankaradeva, the Do'il Jātra, the death anniversary of Madhavadeva and the tithi of Mathuradas Burhā Ātā are observed with due solemnity.
3.6  *AMGURI SATRA*: The present condition of the Amguri Satra is very pathetic. Once the Zamindar of Ajni, Mukunda Narayan Dev, made a tax-free donation of forty one bighās of cultivable land and home steed land to meet all expenses for smooth functioning of the Satra. After the abolition of the Zamindari the Satra lost its landed property except its Namghar campus. But after sustained efforts of the devotees the Satra could possess nine bighās land, where stands the Satra with its compounds and the other thirty two bighās of paddy land lie nearby. The present Government (A.G.P.) of Assam through the Blocks level Co-ordination Committee (B.L.C.C.) of the Baitamari Development Block sanctioned some grants in aid to the Satra. Over the nine bighas of land with in the compounds of the Satra construction works on a new Kirtanghar (prayer hall) with the Manikut, measuring 82 ft. in length and 42 ft. in breadth were undertaken with proper attention.
BISNUPUR SATRA: At the behest of Mahapurush Sankardev, his grand son, Chaturbhuj Thakur founded an attractive Satra in Bishnupur. The Satra was a fullfledged one with all paraphernalia of a Kirtanghar with its Manikut surrounded by separate rows of hutments for living the people of different professions and services to the Satra. In 1635 the Satra was set on fire and looted during the invasion by Abdur Salam. Chaturbhuj Thakur was taken in captive to the Nawab of Bengal and was released after physical torture and realisation of considerable amount as penalty. Natural calamities also destroyed many of the house in the Satra village. The Satra is however, still continuing its various functions even after going through all natural, political and other man-made hindrances and calamities. Its present condition is pathetically dilapidated. To preserve the age old sacred articles at the Satra by remodelling and reconstructing the houses in the original site the present Assam Government offered financial grants. The construction work of a Manikut, Bhajghar

of this Satra is not same. The idols and images of different deities are kept in the bhājghar adjacent to the Kirtanghar. The Manikut is a house completely detached from the Kirtanghar and all old articles of faith are preserved inside there. The main festival observed in this Satra are the death anniversary of Srimanta Sankara-deva, the birth anniversaries of Sankara and Madhava-deva, the death anniversary of Kalindi Aai, the death anniversary of Purusottam Thakur, the death anniversary of Chaturbhuj Thakur. The Janmāstami and Do'īl Jātra are two other major festivals observed in the Satra. During these festivals devotees of various Satras from different parts of Eastern India came to this place and make it a pilgrims centre. At present the Satra is in a dilapidated condition, even then its surroundings are still charming.
3.8 MADHUPUR SATRA: The buildings of the Satra are very old and almost in a delapidated condition. A Vaisnava devotee, late Harmohan Poddar of Cooch Behar came forward to repair and reconstruct the Satra at his own expenses. He was assisted by Lakrisling Bengal and Bhedal Kayastha, two other gentlemen of Barpeta. The repairing works were completed in the year 1903 (1310 Assamese era) while Tolan Atoi was the head of the Satra.  

3.8.1 Subsequently during the time of Satradhikar Laxmi Kanta Atoi a few Vaisnava devotees of Assam, Mahim Chandra Atoi, Harmohan Das, Harinarayan Dutta Barua, Chandra Kanta Misra, Krishnananda Brahmachari and Kakā Nilamani Phukan began to rethink over the future construction of the Satra. At their advice a supervisory Committee was constituted to take proper interest of the Satra. Ultimately an agreement was signed between the then Chief Minister of Assam, Late Rimala Prasad Chaliha and Late Mohendra Mohan Choudhury

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on behalf of the supervisory committee that the construction work of the Satra would be done by the supervisory committee. Thereafter, the Satra was registered under the Act of Register Society of Assam Government authority, in 1960. After completion of the work the present building of the Satra was duly inaugurated in 1964 by Late Rājā Jagadwipendra Narayan Bhupa Bahadur who happened to be the last survivor of the Gooch dynasty.

3.8.2 The main Satra building and its other temples of worship and the main Namghara i.e., the hall of devotional songs etc. are constructed in accordance with the traditional structural designs of the Mahāpurushiya Vaisnava community. Thus the Satra as a place of worship and religious activities has retained five main parts, viz. (i) Bātchara i.e., the main gate, (ii) Kirtanghar or Namghara i.e., the Hall of devotional songs, (iii) the Gurugriha., (iv) the Bhājghar or Manikuta, and (v) the Chārihāti.
3.8.3 The entrance is a wide gate capable of giving entries to buses and loaded trucks. The Satra campus is planned on traditional Satra structural design for places of worship with the entrance divided into three parts. The main path in the centre remain closed by an iron gate with two other small paths on either side open for all time. The cost of construction was fully donated by Madhav Baisya of Suwalkuchi, a devote Mahapurusia Vaisnav.

3.8.4 The Kirtanghar and Manikut are very beautiful and constructed towards the eastern side of the main temple. It is 180 ft. in length and 90 ft. in breadth with a wide varandā on three sides. The Manikut is constructed in the eastern side of the Kirtanghar. In the Kirtanghar a sinhasana (altar), Chaturbhuj Nārāyana, the holy Bhāgawata are preserved. The four armed image i.e., Chaturbhuj Nārāyana carved out of Tulāsi plants.
The structural design of the main temple, the Gurugriha, is similar to that found in other Satras in Assam with the exception that it is not built at a place very closed to the kirtanghar as prevalent in other Satras, but here the distance between them is more. The superstructure and its roofs are constructed on the quadrectangular walls. It has a very wide door on the eastern side and hence it is called the eastern faced temple. The wide and spacious vārāndās on all sides is another peculiarity of the temple. The height of the wall from the base floor to the roof up to the lintels is 14.5 ft. The floor is 6 ft. high and the roof above the lintel is 12 ft. high while done of the building is 50 ft. high. Hence the total height of the temple is 70 ft. which makes it visible from a long distance. The whole structural design is based on the 'Rekh Deul'. The construction is completed in 1964. The outer space on the vārāndā and the inner temple is covered with marble stones. On the entry and the outer walls are very beautifully depicted with sand.

and cement the images of the Sri Sukadeva, Mahārāj Parikshit, Sugrib, Grāha -Gajendra, Garuraha and Hanumān. The holy Bhāgawat and other sacred articles used by Sankaradeva are preserved here as relies of Srimanta Sankaradeva. It is said that Chilaray and his subordinates were not aware of the prevalent traditions of constructing the temple or namghara to pray by the Vaisnav devotees when Sankaradeva was invited to come here from Phulbari. Hence, the houses constructed for his stay here were eastern-faced, and the doors or entrances were on the eastern side of the houses. So the admirers and the devotees paid their respects to Sankaradeva by kneeling west-faced before him. This is a Hindu tradition to kneel west faced. Gurugriha was built up with the same memory and tradition keeping the entrance to it on the eastern side.

3.8.6 Originally the Satra had four lines of houses to use by the devotees as their hostel. But in course of time these were not retained due to influences of the other sects.

6 Nath, Rajmohan; 'Madhupur Dhāmer Itiwirtta', p.12
Now there are only the foundations, Daha Mikut i.e., ten prominent devotees of Sankaradeva. These were set up by Gopinath Atoi, and these Daha Mikut stand as symbol of the revered tradition of chārīhāti. Some generous devotees have donated a few buildings on the memory of some of those ten foundations. Thus in the memory of late Jatin Ram Mahajan and Gopal Chandra Das a building was constructed over Chitta Mikut foundation in 1886 Saka era (516 Sankarabda) by their sons. Similarly another building viz., Jeevan Mikut was built in 1885 Saka era (515 Sankara era) by Devakanta Kakati, Nilakanta Kakati and Ratnakanta Kakati in memory of their father Dr. Bankanta Kakati. The Param Mikut foundation was constructed in 1886 Saka (516 Sankara era) by Jibakanta Saikia to commemorate his father, and Bandhan Mikut foundation was donated by Charubala Bhakat in memory of her husband. The remaining one over Hiyar Mikut foundation was completed by Achyutananda Das, Niranjan Das and Abalakanta Das as mark of respect to the memory of their father, Lakrisiing Bepari.
3.8.7 Now there is a guest house, with all modern facilities and the devotees and other visitors use to stay while they come to see the Satra. Moreover, the Satra management Committee is actively considering to build up a modern library to attract the educated and academic minded people. These are actually added innovations to the Satra.

3.8.8 All landed properties donated to the Satra by the Cooch King were sold in auction in default of payment\textsuperscript{7} of revenue in 1903 A.D. during the Chief Satradhikār of Tolan Ātoi. As a result the Satra faced an unprecedented financial crisis and it could hardly offered even mustard oil to keep its lights (banti) burning. An earnest devotee of Mahāpurushiyā Vaishnavism, Late Haramohan Poodar of Cooch Bēhar came to rescue of the Satra with a donation through a registered "Trust deed" a few portion of the two villages of Madhupur and Kachuban in the name of the Madhupur Satra.\textsuperscript{8} The estimated area of land covering

\textsuperscript{7} Das, D.; 1981 : 'Sri Sri Madhupur Satrar Samkhīpta Itiḥāṣ', p.8
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., p.8
these two villages was about 500 bighās of land. Thus, the expenses of the Satra was met with the incomes from this land till the date of formation of a supervisory committee stated above.

Tolan Ātoi was succeeded by Laxmikanta Burā Bhakat. He came to the Satra at the age of 30 years and stayed with Tolan Ātoi, whom he succeeded after his death. The financial condition of the Satra was not improved and half of the landed property of the Satra i.e., 250 bighās were again sold in auction in default of payment of revenue during Laxmikanta's time. According to records available only 250 bighās of land remained as the property of the Satra in 1951, but 185 bighās was recorded as the personal property of Laxmikanta Ātoi while only 65 bighās was recorded in the name of the Chaturbhusūgraśa i.e., the Satra.

The Sātrādhikār Laxmikanta Ātoi again transferred by registered deeds 30 bighās of land to his nephew (his brother's son) Narendranath Das (who was not a resident of that area, he lived at Ramray Kuti), 2 bighās to Fatik
Chandra Atoi and 8 bighas to a public school. The remaining 145 bighas were sold away by him at a price varying from Rs.16/- to Rs.350/- per bigha in order to meet the day-to-day expenses of the Satra, as it was explained*. This is probably a very dark chapter in the annals of the Satra.

At present there is only 65 bighas of land recorded in the name of Chaturbhuj Vigraha as landed property of the Satra. Out of it, 16 bighas are within the four walls i.e., the Satra campus while 42 bighas are under cultivation of the Satra and the remaining 7 bighas are under unlawful occupation of the different persons. Hence only 58 bighas i.e., only a little more than 10% of the original trusted property of 500 bighas land are under actual possession of the Satra.9

3.8.9 As at present income from this plot of 42 bighas of land outside the four walls of the Satra is the main source of income of the Satra. In addition it is getting a

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* All informations are collected from Sri K.N. Nath, * present Secretary of Madhupur Satra Committee.
9 All records are collected from Present Sadhidhikar F. Hazarika.
monthly assistance of Rs. 500/- from the management committee and other subscriptions. The Satra is somehow limping on with these meagre financial supports.

3.8.10 The fourteen prasangas have been put in three groups and performed as in Jinkātā. Each of the musical couplet from the Kirtan Ghosā is sung in its own choral tunes accompanied with appropriate instruments and different couplets are sung on different occasions in accordance with accepted principles. From the Namghosha only the couplets of proclamation of the name of God and those of surrender of God are sung in different tunes.

3.8.11 The language used by the people of Satra i.e., the Satriya community appears to be a bit peculiar as they use some typical vocabulary and the conversation style is also quite peculiar. For instance the words like Bāp, Prabhu, Ātoi, Rām (friendly one) etc. are used as forms

10 See No. 3.2.1, p. 103
of addresses by one devotee to other in the Satra community. Similarly Gosain, Satrapati, Satriya or Satradhikār or Adhikāraprabhu etc. for addressing the chief of the Satra.

Thagi sarāī (= a kind of ornamented plate with a stand below, usually made of bell metal), Chāul kātā (= rice), Ganāgan (= counting), Prasād (= eatable things offered first to the deity); Guru bhakat (= preceptor and disciple), Chāul sijā (= cooking rice or preparing foods), Sidhā (= food grains and vegetables given in lieu of prepared food); Guru bhakatar bastu (= articles of the preceptor), Niṃāli (= flowers, rice etc. getting after offering them to deities), Mālā (= sacred garland getting from Guru), Tilak (= ointment prepared by Sandal wood), Joā jāok (= let us go); Kar para āhā haise (= where from arrival was made), Bāp sakal (= devotees); Bāp bāndhab (= friends); Bāpu sakal (= respected devotees); Bhakat brinda samannite (= accompanied by the devotees); Bhāle kushale āhā haise (= arrival was auspicious and trouble free, it is supposed) are the peculiar expressions used by the devotees of Madhupur Satra in their day-to-day conversations.
3.8.12 The main festivals observed in Madhupur Satra are the birth anniversary of Sankaradeva and the tithi of Burir-po-Gobinda Atoi. This tithi falls on the Sukla dvitiya day in the month of Māgh according to Assamese calendar.

On both these days the holy articles of Sankaradeva are displaced for the public view. There are two other festivals, the death anniversaries of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva, the Rās-Purnimā Tithi, (Day of full-moon on which day Sri Krishna performed his Rās-leeā), the Do'īl Utsav (Holi-festival) and birth anniversaries of many other Ātās are observed with sincere devotion. All these are generally financed from the fund collected from the devotees and other public.

3.8.13 A good majority of the people living at the Madhupur Satra are illiterate, but they are very amiable, well-behaved and cultured in their conversation. They are humble in their dealing and admirable in their conduct.

They are very simple in their personal exposures. They talk about the various stories of the Rāmāyana, the Mahabharata, and the Bhāgawata, are well adopt in the
singings of various hymns and devotional songs. They discuss about the different religious books and the lives and activities of their learned Gurus. Besides those things they perform the daily routine of the Satriya activities regularly. They have also devoted sufficient times daily in chanting of hymns and singing of devotional songs. The system of informal education of Madhupur was considered as very important by many of the Vaishnava followers in the area. Even a few years ago Madhupur was considered as a main centre of informal training for the Assamese saints many of whom are still found at different Satriya centres of Assam. They are illiterate in the strict sense of the term but practically they are having sufficient knowledge of the religious teachings and moral precepts. This is a unique tradition of Satriya culture of Assam.

3.8.1 Madhupur was also a centre of art and artistic activities. Articles and utensils used in the Satra were produced by the devotees themselves. Some of them were supplied by the local people. The old scripts on sānchi
barks are carved beautifully on the boxes which are preserved by the Satra. All these are the creations of local artists, but many of them have passed away.

3.9 BAIKUNTHAPUR SATRA: The festivals of Do"l Purnimā, tithi of Deva-Damodara and Janmāsthami i.e., the birth anniversary of Lord Krisna are observed with ritual earnestness at the Baikunthapur Satra. On the previous night of Do"l Purnimā is observed the festival of fire i.e., barni Utsava at Baikunthapur Satra.

3.9.1 The tithi of Deva Damodar is observed on the first day after the new moon in the month of Bahāg i.e., April/May as per the Assamese calendar. On that day the head priest offers Puja i.e., ritual offerings to Lord Krisna and reads Srimad Bhāgawat Geetā. At the time of this reading and discourse, however, only a few old devotees remain present at the function. No Nam-prasanga i.e., Chunting of the holy name of the God along with a
suitable earthen instrument known as nagera was gone through but disciples of Chaitanya Deva carry on Sankrītan, i.e., devotional songs in praise of Lord Krisna and Chaitanya in the evening.

3.9.2 In addition, every year Janmāstami, i.e., the birth night of Lord Krisna in Krisna Astami Tithi in the month of Bhādra according to Assamese calendar (August/September) is observed. The followers of Chaitanya spent the whole night through Sankirtana while on the next day they play on mud and water. This is known as 'Nandautsav'. All these festivals are observed with the large hearted contributions of the devotees living nearby.

3.9.3 Situated at a distance of ten kilometers from Cooch Behar town the Bāikunthapur Satra is now in a very dilapidated condition. Feeling great distress at this state of affairs a few generous religious minded people of western Assam have come forward to take the necessary steps for entire works of repairs and reconstruction of the Satra. Their aim was to rebuild the Satra.
A few noted persons of Assam like Benudhar Sarma, Bimala Prasad Chaliha, Mahendra Mohan Choudhury, Baidya Nath Mukherjee and Rupmath Brahma etc. after paying visits to the Satra at Baikunthapur contributed for its thorough repairs and reconstruction as this was one of the foremost Satras of the Assamese Vaishnava saints. Later on a general Committee under the name of "Baikunthapur Satra Samiti" was constituted with eighty one members from different places of Assam and North Bengal and also formed an Executive Committee with Seventeen members including the office-bearers. The main function of the Committee was to undertake the repairs and reconstruction of the Satra and to look after its management.

Since the entire land measuring 172 bighas including 14 bighas inside the Satra boundary were surreptitiously got mutated by the illegal occupant, the committee first decided to reoccupy the land of the Satra area. Some of the illegal occupants were persuaded to transfer about fourteen

bighās of land by registered deeds to the Samiti on payment. But the committee could not do much.

Later on, with the approval of the Government of West Bengal a local Committee was constituted with the Deputy Commissioner of Cooch Behar as the President, the Satrādhikār of the Satra Shri Kanakendu Deva Goswami as the Vice-President and an young social worker Barada Kumar Dev as the Secretary. Meanwhile the property of fourteen bighās of land purchased earlier by the Satra committee was about to be put on auction for non-payment of the annual revenue for several years together. The local Committee paid up the revenue taxes including arrears and made provisions for the future payment of such taxes and also made the arrangements for cultivation in the Satra's land. In the meantime some portion of the land was again mutated by some local persons. Purchase of a pond adjacent to this plot of land was settled by negotiations carried out under the direct supervision of the Deputy Commissioner of Cooch Behar and other works of the constructions of the main temple,
the Namghar i.e., the prayer hall and guest house etc. have been undertaken and this will take a long time in re-establishing and renovating the Satra in proper way. This is the present condition of the Satra.

3.10 MADHAPUR SATRA : The main festivals observed at Madhapur Satra are the tithi of Harihar Ātā, tithis of Srimanta Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva, the Māghi Purnimā and the Do'īl Purnimā. Now these festivals are observed just to maintain the formalities. The tithi of Harihar Ātā fall on the Suklā dvitiyā in the month of Bahāg according to Assamese calendar. During this tithi disciples from Jinkātā, Simlabari, Satrasal etc. came in large numbers to this Satra. In co-operation of these disciples coming from different places tithi of Harihar Ātā is observed with certain pomp and grandeur. Except this all other tithis and festivals are observed by the local people themselves only and somehow maintain the tradition.
3.11  **NAKARKHANA SATRA**: This was another Vaisnavite Satra in Cooch Behar. But now it has lost its original activities. The last caretaker of the Satra was one Lakhimi Bhakatani, who had a second husband after the death of her first husband. She had no issue and her second husband was not a Vaisnava follower. Bhakatani preserved all the images and other religious articles of the Satra retaining the traditional prayers etc. to some extent. But her husband has no such faith and obedience to the Vaisnava faith. Thus the Satra is now almost in the stage of extinction. Other followers are establishing their link with Jinkatā Satra in Goalpara near North Bengal border.

3.12  **BHELĀ SATRA**: Rās-Purnimā i.e., the full moon day in the month of Kartik according to Assamese calendar the Principal festival observed in Bhelā Satra. Other two festivals are the Dō'ī-Purnimā and the Janmāstamī, which are observed with proper solemnities. The present Satrā-dhikār Dharani Bandhu Medhi celebrates these festivals with public contribution and donations. The neighbouring local
people show little enthusiasm and cooperation to this Satra. Formerly the people belonging to Rajbanshi Community of the nearby village Bheladoba were the disciples of this Satra. Now a few prominent persons of this village, namely, late Promod Sarkar, Kalicharan Sarkar, Sambhu Sarkar and others claimed themselves to be Kalitas. At present their descendants have adopted the title of Rai, Sarkar and have also changed their affiliation from Rajbanshi to Kalita. The local people have lost their faith and reverence to the Satra and its other activities.

The present Bhelā Satra is now an epitaph of its past heritage. Because of its destruction by the heavy floods and erosions of river Torsha specially during the reign of King Jagadwipendra Narayan all properties of this Satra were totally lost. In recent times an enquiring look at the affairs of the Satra by the eager pilgrims a feeling that the old memories would be revived is being generated. The Satra requires revival of its past.
3.13 HARIPUR SATRA: Amābasyā tīthi i.e., no moon day in the month of Bahāg according to Assamese calendar is observed in haripur Satra. The Satra Committee have arranged the Yajna with Bhajan songs by local singer. This is the principal festival of Haripur Satra. Moreover they observed Sivarātri in Krṣṇa Chāturḍasi tīthi in the month of Pālguna according to Assamese calendar with lītting banti and Sankritāna etc. The present local Satra Committee celebrates these festivals with public contribution. The local people show respect and co-operation to this Satra.