CHAPTER III

PURUSĀ SAMHATI

I. Characteristics of Purusā Samhati

The name of the Samhati owes its origin to Purusottama Thākur, the eldest grandson of Sānkara-deva. The orthodox circle of the group explains that the term Purusa is derived from Purusa Narāyana, who is supposed to be its first initiator. Others hold that the name is derived from Mahāpurusa, the honorific epithet applied to Sānkara-deva. Because according to them, Sānkara-deva is said to be the initiator of this group. The name is so associated because the adherents of this group want to establish it as the main cult and consider other groups as derivatives. But as we have already seen, during the time of Sānkara-deva the Samhati division of Assam Vaisnavism did not come into existence. Purusottama

1 In support of the view, we can recall words like Mahāpurusikā, Mahāpurusīyā etc.
and Caturbhuja are considered as founders of this
group of sattras. This community includes the sattras
coming from the grandsons of Śaṅkaradeva and their
successors who claim direct descend from the two
Thākurs. 'The Purusa Śaṁhati claims to have been
retaining the original features of Śaṅkara's faith
and, therefore, to be the main Śaṁhati. The Bardowa,
bar-bāra-janiyā, sara-bāra-janiyā and Kanakā-bāra-
janīyā groups of sattras constitute this community. 2
This group gives much emphasis on Śaṅkaradeva as
the only guru and lays special importance on nām-
kīrtana. 3 That does not, however, mean that there is
any sense of disregard of the Śaṁhati towards Mādhava-
deva. Mādhavadeva also occupies the same exalted
place as that of Śaṅkaradeva. Both of them are
considered equal; as the popular term 'dujanā guru'
( the two gurus) is generally used to mean them.

2 SHT*, p.155.
Sattras belonging to this group developed various ways and modes of singing or chanting congregational prayers such as 'pāl-nām', 'uṭhā-nām' etc. Observances of Brahmanical rites and idol-worship are also to be found in this Sanhati. Judged from this point of view, it exhibits not much difference from the Brahma Sanhati. As the Purusa Sanhati retained the main features of the faith, it might have influenced the other three Sanhatis particularly in matters relating to the ways and modes of 'nām-kīrtana'. For, Purusottama is said to have formulated the detailed rules of congregational prayers.

One of the remarkable features of the sohism is that among the four principal sattras, the Narowā group of sattras, like the Moāmarīyā Gosāis, have their Brahmān disciples till today. The Kowāmarā group of sattras,

4 Whatever might be the form of the idol, they call it 'Viṣṇu-mūrtti', instead of calling it Kṛṣṇa or Nārāyana etc.

5 Dwārika, vv. 2281-2288; 2292-2301; 2320-2327; 2343. Harinārāyana, v. 355; Bap Chandra Mahanta: Mahāpurusa Sankaradeva, ed. 1, Jorhat, 1964, p. 79.
like, as followed by all other twice-born classes. But the remarkable feature of the Narowā Gosāis is that they take two 'powā's (six round, each 'powā' consisting of three rounds) of their sacred thread and never use 'uttari' (a hand-woven sacred thread). The Gosāis of other three sattras, however, take only one 'powā' (of three rounds) and take 'uttari' also.

Brāhmans do not occupy a high place in the above group of sattras and the disciple Brāhmans make all other obeisance which have to be done by other disciples too. This is a remarkable trait common to sattras of other groups also. But in most cases, sattras of other groups headed by non-Brāhma pontiffs gradually lost this particular trait.

II. Main points of difference from other Sāmhatis

As regards 'the four reals' (cāri vastu), viz., guru, deva, nāma and bhakat, the guru occupies the first place in the Puruṣa Sāmhatā as opposed to the
'deva' element of the Brahma Samhati. The Brahma Samhati freely admits some smārtta rituals, but the Purusa Samhati observes these with some restrictions. On all ceremonial occasions, this group of sattras worship only the Viṣṇu instead of the Pañcadevatā of the Brahmanical group.

The Kāla Samhati puts emphasis on Mādhavadeva and Gopāla Ātā and also on the gurus of the particular sattrā. But the Purusa Samhati does not owe allegiance solely to the gurus but to Śaṅkaradeva alone and admits Mādhavadeva equally. According to the Kāla Samhati, Gopāla Ātā is endowed with the qualities of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva and, therefore, he has been considered as 'Pūrṇa Gopāla', signifying the fullest incarnation of all the qualities of the above two. The place occupied by Gopāla Ātā in that schism seems to be very high. In the Purusa Samhati, neither Purusottama nor

Caturbhuja occupies such an elevated position as the founder of the schism. The place of Sankaradeva among the followers of Kāla Saṁhāti is not direct and immediate as it is among the Puruṣa Saṁhāti group.

The Nikā Saṁhāti gives stress on outward cleanliness and observance of various formalities; but the Puruṣa Saṁhāti does not consider these as the sole means to pursue bhakti. Observance of such formalities and outward cleanliness are, of course, not totally denied by the Puruṣa Saṁhāti. Another feature of the Saṁhāti is that the sattras affiliated to this group use Na-ghosa by Purusottama after Nām-ghosa by Mādhava-deva after their congregational prayer. But the successors of Caturbhuja do not observe it freely except on some particular occasions. This convention is prevalent even among some sattras like Gaḍamūr, Kuruwābāhī etc.

8 Bap Chandra Mahanta: Mahāpuruṣa Sāṅkaradeva, ed. 1, Jorhat, 1964, pp. 133, 180. It has gone so far that even some sattras of the Nikā Saṁhāti have accepted such modes and ways of prayer formulated by Purusottama. The influence of Vamsīgopāla and some sattras, originating either from him or from his successors, is still a distinguishing aspect. The procedure of prayer services of the Kuruwābāhī-sattra (Brahma Saṁhāti) is the same as followed by the Bardowā group of sattras.
which owe their origin to VamsiGopalaDeva. This proves the influence of Purusottama Thakur over other groups also.

Caste distinction in the Purusa Samhiti is not so rigid as is generally observed in the Brahma Samhiti. But in this respect the Purusa Samhiti is not so liberal like the Kala Samhiti. So the sattras belonging to the Purusa Samhiti equally have their Brāhmans as well as non-Brāhman heads. Although the Brahma Samhiti has some sattras managed by non-Brāhman heads, they are very few in number having no importance even within that Samhiti. Canting congregational prayer in different ways among the Purusa Samhiti sattras has developed centering around the Bardowā group, which has influenced even some sattras affiliated to other groups including the Caitanyite sattras of Assam. The Puruṣa Samhiti has tried to bring about an integration between itself and the two other groups in the formal aspect, but it has not tried to bring the Kāla Samhiti into its fold. The heads of sattras of
the Purusa Samhati comprises Brahmans and non-Brahmans as well, but the four principal sattras, generally known as 'oāri sattrīyā' of central Assam, are headed by the descendants of the daughters of Purusottama and of the sister of Caturbhuja. The holy relics like the 'pada-silā' (stone with the impress of Śankaradeva's feet), kharam (wooden sandal) and scriptures (like the famous illuminated Bhāgavata X, Ādi) are still preserved and worshipped with great reverence in the above four sattras. There are other articles in the sattras, connected with Śankaradeva and other Vaisnava saints and considered as objects of worship. Some sattras of other Samhatis have also preserved some holy scriptures and monuments; but relics are not found in any other sattras except in those four. Sattras of this Samhati have been initiating Brahmans, women and kings.

9 King Parīkṣitenārāyaṇa and his son Rūpanārāyaṇa were initiated by Purusottama. Sundaranārāyaṇa, son of Baghudeva, was administered initiation by Caturbhuja. vide Vidyānanda, vv. 112-113; 329 and 385. The Āhom King Rāmadhvaja and some royal officers were initiated by Ramākanta Atā of the Narowā-sattrā. vide Hari-nārāyaṇa, vv. 477; also PKKI, p. 113.
held at some quarters of the faith that Śaṅkaradeva refused to administer initiation to the above three categories. Although Brāhmaṇa meant the practising priest only. The part played by woman in this Samhāti is a remarkable feature in the case of Kanakalatā Āi, the first of the three wives of Caturbhūja Thākur. 'It was for the first time in the history of Assam Vaisnavism that a woman acted as a religious head and appointed other persons as Superiors'.

These apostles came to be known as Kanakā-bāra-janīyā. According to traditions, Kanakalatā appointed them with the help of Dāmodara Ātā, the successor of Caturbhūja Thākur. This view is supported by Āi Kanakalatār Caritra, Harinārāyan and Dvārikā Dvīja.

Celibacy is not generally encouraged by this group, but in their old age in order to pursue bhakti

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10 SHT., pp.150-151; also NMSIA., p.93.


12 vv.438-442.

13 v.2767.
the devotees may take shelter in the vicinity of the 'kīrtana-grha' of a sattrā, which is known as 'udāśīnar-bahā' or 'hātī-bahā'. The ways of living of the Gosāīs are very simple but 'the articles they used in their audience chambers and their prayer halls, the magnificence of their processions when they went out, and the receptions held in their honour, and the numerical strength of their devotees and attendants bespoke their kingly pomp and array'. The Gosāīs of the Narowā group of sattrās have their own disciples of different professional castes such as barber, washerman, cook, etc., who served the families of their gurus as and when required. The relation between the disciple and the guru in the Puruṣa Śāṃhati appears to be very keen and cordial. The disciples are treated as equal in social institutions like congregational prayer and bhāonā etc., where people irrespective of castes,

can take important parts according to their aptitude. On such occasions, a Gōsaī plays an equal part with the monks and lay disciples and even without hesitation impart training to perform bhāona and to chant 'nām-prasāṅga'. For that purpose they even camp in a village for months together if necessary. The disciples of this community help the gurus manually or financially, in marriages, śrāddha rites and in all other social functions according to their ability. The disciples of this group of sattras are relaxed of any fixed tāthe(kar).\textsuperscript{15} They had to give only a piece of cloth for marriage of the girls of their family. This is called 'bīyā-daniyā-kāpor', (donation of cloth on the occasion of marriage). Similarly, a piece of utensil is to be offered to the guru at the death of a disciple by his son or successor. This is known as 'sewā-jānanī'(meaning, informing the guru of the fact with some offering).\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} PKKI., pp.118-120.
\textsuperscript{16} Information gathered from Uṣā Devī, wife of the late Satrādhikār Sivendra Deva Goswami of the Bāli-sattra, Nowgong, Assam.
Almost all the Gosais of this Samhati are expert in dance, song, painting, literature, medicine, manuscript preparation, astrology, woodcrafts, works of allumination and fire-works and making astrological calculations for ceremonial rites, confirmation of social sanction to marriage proposals and observances of purificatory rites (prāyācittta) and fasting on different occasions and the like.

III. Life and personality of

(A). PURUṢOTTAMA THĀKUR

Puruṣottama Thākur was a man of strong personality and immense organising ability. After the passing away of Mādhavadeva, he was recognised as a great religious authority of the time. His organisational ability naturally led his followers to form a distinct group which later on came to be known after him. From that point of view, it will not be irrelevant to consider the life and activities of this prominent Vaisnava leader of the post-Sāṅkara period.
Sāṅkaradeva's eldest son Rāmananda Thākur was married to Sumati and Purusottama Thākur was born to her at Paṭ-bāusī on the eleventh day of the bright-moon in the month of Āśvina in 1561 A.D. According to another authority, he was born on the dasāmi tithi (tenth day) of Sunday midnight in the month of Agraḥāyana in 1484 Saka, in the first part of the 'hastā' Nakṣatra. This astrological calculation gives rightly the initial syllable 'Pu' of his name. He was seven years old when Sāṅkaradeva passed away. His father also died within a year of the death of Sāṅkaradeva. Purusottama was four years older than Catur-bhuja Thākur. He was educated under the guidance of

17 The Guru Caritra of the Bāli-sattra gives the name Basumati and the Śrī Sāṅkaradevar Vamsāvalī Caritra, a MS preserved by Puspakanta Deva Goswami of Bardowā, gives the name Sumati.
18 KGC., p.780, states the eleventh day of the dark-moon of the month of Phālguna, on the 'dhanistā' Nakṣatra.
19 APVC., f.2(b). The PKKI., p.225, gives his date of birth as Saka 1484= 1562 A.D., without mentioning the source of its information.
20 Dwārikā, v.1481.
21 The KGC., in p.426 gives 13 years and the same work in p.780, puts 7 years.
22 Dwārikā, v.1482.
Madhavadeva and afterwards he studied under Jayavara Adhyāpaka of Paṭakīya for one year. In some biographical literature it is narrated that Sankaradeva declared to have his full faith and future hope on his grandsons. Even Madhavadeva also said to have made Purusottama the real successor to the headship. Some biographers like Vidyānanda and Dvārika also categorically assert this view. It is an established fact that after the death of Madhavadeva, Purusottama's personality was incredibly a dominating one among the Vaisnavaś of the time.

In course of time Purusottama married Rukmini alias Revati. There is another Rukmini, Sankaradeva’s

23 KGC., p. 781; Vidyānanda, v. 19.
24 KGC., pp. 782-783.
25 KGC., p. 780; Vidyānanda, vv. 7-10.
26 Ratikānta, vv. 121-126; Harinārāyaṇa, vv. 300-304; KGC., pp. 422-426.
27 vv. 25-26.
28 v. 2280.
29 The Vamsāvalī by Naradeva, f. 2(a) and the MS by Candracāru give us both the names as identical. Jayahari, vv. 125-126, gives the name Revati (also cited in FKKI., pp. 127-128); Ratikānta furnishes the name name, v. 147; Dr Neog accepts the name Revati. The FKKI., shows that Rukmini had no issues (p. 143). The prose biography of the Diciyāl-sattra, f. 14(a), gives the name Indumati instead of Revati.
daughter by his second wife; but her further genealogy is wanting. From Revati's side, Anantapriya was born to Purusottama. The information given by Dvārika Dvija regarding Purusottama's line, however, appears to be contradictory at some places to other early works and hence, erroneous. After the death of his first wife, Purusottama married Lakṣmīpriya and Rukmiṇī. According to Dvārika, Lakṣmīpriya was the daughter of Harasiṅga Caudhārī of Darāṅg. Anantapriya was married to Indrajit Gābharugiri or Indrajit Caudhārī. The name appears as Manohara Gābharugiri or Manorāma at some places instead of Indrajit. From Indrajit's

30 The SHT., p.113 gives the name as 'Rukmiṇī or Viṣṇupriya'.

31 The Dīcyāl Vamsāvalī, f.14(a) states that Anantapriya was Indumati's daughter, whereas some other MSS inform us that she was the daughter of Rukmiṇī.

32 vv.2417-2434.
33 SHT., p.149.
34 vv.2417; The PKKI., p.143 states that she belonged to the family of Balacandra Baruwa of Raṅgāmāti.
35 Jayahari,v.125; Ratikānta,vv.147-148; PKKI., p.143; Śrī Caritra,f.2(b) and SHT.,p.152. According to a MS of the Bāli-sattra,Indrajit married Manohara's daughter from Anantapriya's side, Mādhurī, vide f.5(a). This view is supported by Candracāru also.

36 Dīcyāl-sattra coll.,f.3(b); Candracāru; MSS of Puspa-kanta Deva Goswami, Bāpuṭi Nām-lagowa of Bardow; Guru Caritra of the Bāli-sattra; Dui Mahāpurasar Vamsāvalī, f.3(a); Bāli-sattra coll.,f.5(a) and the Kujī-sattra coll. The last work gives the name Manurāma, while in Dvārika,v.2419, we find the name Rāmagiri.
line, sattras like Kudhimara, Cepetimara, Hatimarā and Ghariyāle-khowā sprang up. Lakṣmīpriyā gave birth to three daughters— Kesavapriyā, Bhavapriyā and Damayanti. Kesavapriyā was married to Niraṅjana Gābharugiri, but she expired prematurely leaving no issue. Niraṅjana again married Bhāt-nākhātī Āi, daughter of Lakṣmī’s brother and four sons were born to him, viz., Cakrapāṇī, Sarangapani, Gadāpāṇi and Padmapāṇi. They later on established their sattras known as Cāmaguri, Cārikhoronī, Dīghalī and Bhogbārī respectively. Of them the Cāmaguri-sattra attained prominence for royal patronage of the Āhom King Cakrabhujadasimha (1663–1669 A.D.). Lakṣmī Āi’s second daughter Bhavapriyā died before her marriage and the third one, Damayanti was compelled to marry the King Brajanārāyana by force.

37 She has been shown as identical with Rukmīni in SHT., p. 152. It is said that she was adopted by the Thākur as his daughter.
38 Jayahari, v. 126.
39 Dvārikā, v. 2432, gives her name as Rāmatī.
40 Jayahari, vv. 179–180.
41 Bezbaroa, pp. 275–276.
Opinions differ on the question of Purusottama's span of life. But it is said that he passed away in 1619 A.D.\textsuperscript{42} Aniruddha gives this date as 1616 A.D.\textsuperscript{43} That Purusottama was born in 1561 A.D., is accepted by almost all the biographers, except the statement made in the \textit{Kathā Guru Carita}\textsuperscript{44}. The \textit{Prācīn Kāmarūpya Kāyastha-samājar Itivrtta}\textsuperscript{45} gives 1555 Saka= 1633 A.D., as the date of Purusottama's death without, of course, giving us the source. Thākur lived for fifty five years. He first married at the age of twenty two\textsuperscript{47} and held the charge of the Order for twenty seven years

\textsuperscript{42} SHT., p.149; Dvārika, v.2484. The latter further states that Purusottama died of dysentery.

\textsuperscript{43} Aniruddha, vv.141-160. APVC., f.2(b) also gives the same date. It further states that 'according to some other opinion, Purusottama lived for 78 years'.

\textsuperscript{44} p.780.

\textsuperscript{45} p.227.

\textsuperscript{46} Vidyānanda, v.484; Harinārāyaṇa, vv.380-381; MS of the Bāli-satra, f.12(a); Dīciyāl-carita, f.14(b); Guru Caritra of the Bāli-satra, ff.8(a) & (b); and MSS of Puspakanta Deva Goswami and Bāpuṭi Nām-lagowā of Bardowā.

\textsuperscript{47} SHT., p.148.
But his span of life has been shown differently by different authors. Of the two brothers, viz., Puruṣottama and Caturbhuj, the death of the former has been compared by almost all biographers to 'the falling of one of the two tusks of a mighty elephant'.

During the time of Puruṣottama, the Vaishnavas of Assam were divided into some groups and this has created a gulf of difference among the so-called Saṁhatis. According to Aniruddha and others, Puruṣottama became religious head (dharmācārya) at the age of twenty-two. It is said that Madhavadeva convened...
religious congregation and nominated Thākur as his rightful successor. It was Purusottama who first attempted to put an end to the difference that prevailed at his time among the groups of Assam Vaisnavas. The part played by Rāmacarana Thākur, nephew of Mādhavadeva, in this matter, however, cannot be denied. He brought Mathurādāsa Budhā Ātā and Gopāla Ātā more than once to Purusottama's place for a compromise.

Purusottama established a sattra at Janiya, about seven miles from Barpeṭā. There Nārāyanadāsa Thākur Ātā narrated the life of Saṅkaradeva to the congregation. Mathurādāsa, Nārāyanā's best friend, accompanied by Gopāla Ātā, accused Nārāyanā of not telling the life of Mādhavadeva. The matter has gone so far that a sharp

51 Ratikānta, vv.121-124; Harinārāyaṇa, vv.301-304; Vidyānanda, vv.23-26; Dvārikā, v.1704; also MS preserved by Bāputī Nām-lagowā and Madan Ātā, v.15.

52 Harinārāyaṇa, vv.348-350; 354; 360-363.

53 Jayaharī, vv.43-48; 110-113; Vidyānanda, vv.58-60; 129.
division between the two groups came into existence. Even Mathurādāsa refused to send the Nām Ghosā to Purusottama and being offended at such behaviour, the latter composed the Na Ghosā. Like Ramaorana Thākur, Badalā Padma Ātā also tried his best to bring a compromise between the two and he even took Mathurā to Purusottama’s place.

Purusottama’s grand-mother was living with him when he stayed at Janiyā. Once he came to Barnagar and camped at Kāśikuoi for his treatment. It is said that there the Thākur obtained royal patronage from Satrājīt and the latter’s wives were administered ordination by Purusottama. The prince Rūpanārāyana was also initiated by the Thākur. Here again, Thākur converted one Kṛṣṇavallabha Ātai from the Caitanyite faith. After staying for some time, Purusottama went.

54 Jayahari, vv. 12–21.
55 Jayahari, vv. 24–25.
56 Jayahari, vv. 34–35.
58 Vidyānanda, vv. 112–113; Jayahari, vv. 174–175.
to Pat-bāusi and then again to Janiya. Afterwards
he used to stay at Koo Behār for two and a half years
where he breathed his last on the fourteenth day of the
dark-moon of 1538 Saka= 1616 A.D., in the month of Pausa.
Puruṣottama had sent out well chosen six Brāhmaṇ
and six non-Brāhmaṇ veterans to preach and propagate
the faith all over the state. He selected these persons
like his grand-father Śāṅkaradeva, on the basis of
religious accomplishment. A section of people did not
like this act of his and they began to speak ill of
Puruṣottama. He was an erudite scholar and a passion-
nate devotee. He had poured forth many beautiful songs
besides some other works of merit. Puruṣottama proved
himself to be a shrewd debator on more than one occasion

60 Vidyānanda, v.118; Guru Caritra, f.8(b); Dvārika, v.2458;
and APVC, f.2(a).

61 APVC, f.2(b).

when he defeated some scholars of repute from Nadiya and other parts of the country. Once he had gone underground for a year at Janiya for fear of royal persecution, as the ears of the king were poluted by some Sāmnyāsīs (ascetics) for not worshipping the goddess Kāmākṣyā. Purusottama's mother was also a deeply religious and knowledgeable woman who defeated some scholars by dint of her arguments.

Thākur composed his Na Ghosā, a work written in imitation of the Nām Ghosā by Madhavadeva. It is said that as a result of a temporary split between the followers of Purusottama and those of Mathurādāsa, and because of Mathurādāsa's unwillingness to provide Purusottama with a copy of Madhavadeva's work, Thākur composed this book containing one thousand verses.

63 Harinārāyaṇa, vv.321-329; Jayahari, vv.192-205.
64 Jayahari, vv.54-58; Vidyānanda, vv.34-37.
65 Āi Kanakalatār Caritra, by Ramakanta Muktiyar, ed.2, Nowgong, 1942, pp.44-46.
66 Dvārika, v.2333.
But afterwards he felt that the work would appear to the people as a sign of dishonour to Madhavadeva and so he put it on fire. His disciple Kṛṣṇa Ātā saw it and saved it from the flames. But already a part of the work was damaged and, therefore, we do not have the book in its completeness. The Na Ghoṣā gives the original Sanskrit slokas where there were any. Two other literary works, Budha Bhāsyā and Santa Sāra, are also ascribed to him. He composed a few devotional songs which display his command over the poetic art. Moreover, we have a good number of popular proverbs ascribed to Purusottama, some of which are still in vogue.

67 Dvārīkā, vv. 2338-2340.

68 The most popular of them is one which castigates the characteristics of the people belonging to different communities. The proverb goes like the following:

'Koo bhelekā, Nat ṭeiekā, Keōṭ oumgī-kāthi, Kalitār ghan ghan gāthi, oaidhaya sāstrat Bāmun pandit, tathāpi Kāyasthar nāti'.

(The Koo community is generally innocent, Nat Kalitās are out-spoken, Keōṭs are simple and plain, other Kalitās have intelligence with ability to discern and dispute, Brāhmans may have scholarship in fourteen sāstras, even then, nobody can stand a descendant of Kāyastha, who is supposed to be an all round expert).
Thākurā set out on a pilgrimage for six months towards the last part of his life. The details of the tour, however, is not given by any biographer. He lived at Pāt-bāusi for thirtyseven years and appointed twelve apostles there. He was popularly known as 'Bar Thākur' (the elder grandson of Śaṅkara-deva) as opposed to Caturbhūja Thākur, who was called 'Saru Thākur' (the younger Thākur). So the apostles appointed by Puruṣottama came to be known as 'Bar Bāra-janīyā' (the senior group of twelve, as they were disciples and deputies of the Bar Thākur).

Towards the last days of his life, Puruṣottama nominated his younger brother Caturbhūja as the successor of his Order. Prior to that he attended his brother Caturbhūja at Sundarādiyā when the latter was suffering from some disease. Puruṣottama asked some

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69 APVC.,f.2(b); Jayahari, vv.127-129.
70 Ratikānta, vv.173-174.
71 Harinārāyaṇa, vv.379-381; Dīciyāl-oarita, f.14(b);
    Dvārikā, vv.2464, 2482; Ratikānta, vv.198-202.
72 Jayahari, v.95; Vidyānanda, vv.46-56.
of his disciples to bring Caturbhuja to his residence at Bhelā when the former apprehended his own death. But his wife Lakṣmīpriyā cunningly debarred the person from going to Caturbhuja's place. Therefore, Caturbhuja could not receive the information of Puruṣottama's ailment and the latter breathed his last at Bhelā in Koo Behār. In some biographies, it is narrated that Puruṣottama kept for his brother a holy scripture under a sealed cover. His funeral rites were performed by Manoharagiri and his son-in-law Nirañjana Gābharugiri, near the grave of Mādhava-deva.

73 Harinārāyaṇa, v. 375, states that he deputed four disciples, but according to Dvārikā, v. 2464, Puruṣottama asked Kāthar-po Kamalalooana to go to Caturbhuja's place.
74 Harinārāyaṇa, v. 376; Dvārikā, vv. 2465-2470.
75 Diciyāl-sattra coll., f. 8(b); Koroong-sattra coll., f. 15(b); Harinārāyaṇa, v. 381 and MSS of Bāpuṭi Nām-lagowā, Candracāru and the Kujī-sattra coll. Dvārikā is singular in holding that Thākur's wife performed the funeral rites (v. 2485).
76 Dvārikā, v. 2486.
The death of a dominating personality like Puruṣottama was a great loss and subsequently, further disruption of the Saṃhati was now in evidence, as a result of which another schism, the Nikā Saṃhati, could make its headway. Puruṣottama, like Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva, passed away at Koo Behār. It is remarkable that his personality was a great asset to the community and he was the only person who tried his best to unify and organise it into a compact body.

(B). Caturbhūja Thakur

The significant rôle played by the two grandsons of Śaṅkaradeva for the propagation of the cult cannot be denied. Caturbhūja assumed the charge of the Order immediately after the death of his brother, Puruṣottama. Vidyānanda, the biographer, gives us elaborate account of the life of Caturbhūja Thākur. Other biographers also are giving some accounts of the life of Thākur.

Caturbhūja was the only son of Haricaraṇa Thākur, Śaṅkaradeva's youngest son. Caturbhūja Thākur's mother,
Viṣṇu Āi was the daughter of Rāmadāsa Ātā. He was born at Pāṭ-bāusī in 1516 Saka = 1594 A.D., in the month of Vaisākha. It is said that at the time of his birth there was an earthquake and the baby did not take anything for five days. Viṣṇu Āi has got

77 According to the Dicoiyāl-sattra coll., f.4(a) and Harinārāyaṇa, v.386, the name appear as Rāmapriyā.

78 According to some verses quoted in the Āi Kanakātel Caritra, p.49, by one Parasūrāma, Viṣṇu Āi was the daughter of one Gopāla Jāmādār of the village Bagulā. But Dvārikā, vv. 2501-2503, says that Haricaraṇa married Mādhavadeva's sister Urmilā. It seems, therefore, that Dvārikā's account in this matter cannot be accepted as genuine. The CMTV., f.12(a), also supports this view and further states that Urmilā was Rāmacaraṇa's sister.

79 Dvārikā, v.2503; but in v.1483, he says that Caturbhujā was born in the month of Pauśa on the last part of the Rādā Nakṣatra. But this seems to be only an astrological calculation so that the initial syllable of his name could be 'Ca'. According to the APVC., f.2(b), Caturbhujā was born in Śaka 1514= 1592 A.D. Aniruddha gives his date of birth as Śaka 1517= 1595 A.D.

80 Harinārāyaṇa, vv.386-387.
two other female issues, Govindapriyā and Kāntī by name. At the age of eleven, Caturbhuja was invested with the sacred thread. Govindapriyā is said to be of four years older than Caturbhuja. Govindapriyā was married to Gaurīkānta Baruwa Ata and Kāntī Ai to Vatsala Caudhāri. In some works confusion is made between Baruwa Ata and Vatsala Caudhāri, and some of these biographical works are silent about Kāntī Ai, stating only the Govindapriyā's line.

81 Āi Kanakalatār Caritra, p.49.
82 Dvārika,v.2502.
83 Dvārika,v.2506, gives his name as Kali, whereas the the spurious Santamaḷā, vv.240-241, states that Govindapriyā was married to one Hariharā Kāyaṣṭha or Beltolā. It further states that Govindapriyā died before attending her puberty. This account, quite unknown to any other record, appears to be purely fictitious.

84 Naradeva,f.2(b); Bāli-sattra coll.,f.6(a). In the Diciyāḷ-sattra coll.,f.4(a), and the Koroṅg-sattra coll.,f.11(b), the name Yadavānanda Gāsharugiri appears as Kāntī Ai's husband. It is interesting to note that few words of this incomplete sentence of the Diciyāḷ-sattra coll., are erased so as to make it unintelligible; the reason thereof, however, is not known to us. In the Bāli-sattra coll., we are informed that Kāntī Ai was divorced by her husband for reason unknown.
According to Katikānta, Caturuhuja is twenty years younger than Puruṣottama. But it seems that he held the charge of the Order for nearly twenty years. Caturbhuja spent his childhood at Pāt-bāusa and Sundarīdiyā up to the age of fourteen, but later on he moved to Gharasīyā and settled there. Dvārikā states that he lost his mother at the age of ten. He was educated under the supervision of Mādhavađeva. Caturbhuja married three wives, of whom, Kanakalatā was the first. Vidyañanda says that Thākur established the Vīṣṇupur-sattra and then married Kanakalatā.

85 v.161.
86 Śrī Caritra , i-6(a); Harbardā Vaisāvalī, i-6(b); CMIV., i-16(a); Bhakat-mālā of the Bāli-sattra and the MS preserved by Śāputi Nām-īagowā (last folio).
87 APVC., i-2(b).
88 Vidyañanda, vv.137-140; Harinarāyaṇa, v.388.
89 v.2505.
90 Dvārikā says that Hari Misra was the teacher, while Mādhavađeva administered him religious ordination (v.2504).
91 According to Vidyañanda, v.156, and the Bāli-sattra col., i-6(b), he had four wives of whom the first died leaving no issue.
daughter of Umāpati. To her, Subhadrā and Bhavapriya were born. Caturbhuja, like his elder brother Purusottama, was also unfortunate not to have any male issues. Because his son Devakīnandana, from his wife Mukundapriyā, died a premature death. We do not have any detailed account of Caturbhuja's two other wives—Revati and Mukundapriyā. The neo-Vaisnavite Movement and the Satra Institution of Assam states that Anantarayya was

92 vv.154–156; Bāli-sattra coll.,f.6(a). But the Āi Kanakalatar Caritra,p.49, gives the name Kānu Bhūnā of Phulabārī Behār, as Kanakalatar's father.
93 The spurious Santamālā,v.166, puts the name Abhayapriyā, but in v.782, the name Bhavapriya occurs.
94 The name Devahuti, instead of Revati, appears in the Sītā, p.150. We find the name Revati in the following works—Dvārikā,v.2610; Diciyāl-sattra coll.,f.4(a); Korcong-sattra coll.,f.11(b); Candracāru; MSS of Rupakanta Deva Goswami, Bāpūṭī Nām-ilagowā; Kujī-sattra coll.; Gurus-caritra,f.4(a); Uui Mahāpurusar Vamsāvai, f.4(b). Only the Śrī Caritra,f.3(a) and few other works give the name Devahuti instead of Revati. According to the Santamālā, vv.766–777, Thākur married Mukundapriyā, 'Ācur-duhitā' (daughter of one Ācu) and Revati, daughter of one Duriaha Caudnārī of Cengā, near Barpeya. Thus it mentions five wives of Caturbhuja.
95 p.94.
the son of Kanakalata. This seems to be a gross mistake as nowhere we find such statement. The author is silent about his sources of information. There is not the slightest controversy over the fact that Anantarāya was born to Subhadra, the daughter of Kanakalata. Subhadra was married to Rāmadeva Gābharugiri, son of Jagatānanda of Barnagar. Bhavapriya, the other daughter of Kanakalata, was married to Mohan Gābharugiri, son of Pauma Caundhāri. Revati, Caturbhuj's third wife, gave birth to Sumitrā and, in course of time, Sumitrā was married to Gadāhar Kāyastha. Thākur's second wife Mukundapriya had a son, Devakīnandana by name. The other wives had no male issues of their own and naturally Kanakalata and Revati became envious of Mukundapriya.

96 Dvārikā, vv.2605-2607; and Bhadraacāru,v.29. According to Santamāla,v.781, Rāmadeva was the son of Satānanda. 97 Dvārikā,v.2608; also Candraacāru; this is supported by all. 
98 Dvārikā,v.2511. 99 As Dvārikā states,(vv.2509-2510), Devakīnandana was not Revati's son but he was Mukundapriya's son.
At the age of three when Devakinandana was taken small pox, he was put to death by Kanakalata putting a 'poisoned-cloth' on him. In most of the biographies it is narrated that as a result of the premature death of his son, Devakinandana, Caturbhujā adopted his elder sister Govindapriyā's son, Dāmodara, as his son, and nominated him to be the religious head. On the other hand, he came to know the real cause of the death of his son and, therefore, divorced Kanakalata. Thus she had to live a solitary life for ten years. It was at the time

100 Dvārikā, vv.2512-2513. This is the only available record which supports the tradition still in vogue at Bardowā group of Narowā sattras. Some old monks even now cite some verses from memory of unknown authority to rebuke Kanakalata as 'Durghara Rākṣasi Tāi Bālaka Ghātinī' (a demoness she is, infanticide!).

101 Ratikānta, vv.166-167; Candraçāru; Naradeva, ff.2(b) & 3(a); Vidyānanda, vv.501-505, 615-616; Keśava Carita, v.142; Madan Ātā; Harinārāyanā, vv.392-395, 421, 428; Diciyāl-sattra coll., ff.4(a), 4(b); Śrī Caritra, ff.3(a), 3(b); Bāli-sattra coll., ff.6(b); Guru Caritra, ff.4; Dui Mahāpurusar Vansāvali, ff.4(a); MSS of Puspakanta Deva Goswami and Bāpuṭi Nāṁ-lagowā; Āi Kanakalatūr Caritra, pp.53-54; Koroonā-g-sattra coll., ff.11(n) and Dvārikā, vv.2626-2627, 2634-2636.

102 Dvārikā, vv.2618-2624.
of Caturbhuja's pilgrimage towards the last part of his life that Kanakalata came and tendered apology to Caturbhuja for her past activities.  

Controversy is not wanting as to the question of Caturbhuja's span of life. But it can be safely accepted that he lived for nearly fifty-five years. Aniruddha gives Saka 1570 = 1048 A.D., as his year of passing away. His is the last personality of the quadruplicate incarnation of the Saṃhati, generally called the two gurus and the two Thākurs (dujanā guru, dujanū Thākurdeva, meaning Śāṅkaradeva, Madhavadeva, Purusottama and Caturbhuja). Caturbhuja propagated the cult of bhakti at different places particularly at Barnagar where most of the people were Saktas. Here he made many converts,


104 Dvārika supports this year stating further that he passed away on the day of the bright fourth moon of the month of Kauśa, on the bank of the Ganges called Tulasī Gaṅgār-ghūṭ (v.2644). The Arvīc., gives this year as Saka 1598 = 1066 A.D., and puts the name of the place as Khūṭiya-jhūr where Caturbhuja breathed his last.

105 Viyūñanda,v.170.
spreading out the message of bhakti far and wide.
then he proceeded to Barubāg and then to Hājo, where
the king Vrajanārāyanā extended his full support to
him for the proselytising work.
Later on the Ṣāgākur established a sattra at Viṣṇupur, in the present district of Goalpara. One Murāri
Koc was administered initiation by Caturbhujā but
afterwards he met Mathurādāsa and declared Mādhava-
deva as his only guru. Caturbhujā was dissatisfied at
this and a difference of opinion on the question of
guruship arose between Mathurādāsa and Caturbhujā.106
Rāmacarāṅa Ṣākur, Caturbhujā's maternal uncle, tried
his best to settle the matter, but it was only temporari-
ly compromised. Caturbhujā decided to set out on a
pilgrimage along with Gaurikānta Baruwā Ātā and some
other monks. His sister Kānti Āi also accompanied him.
Dāmodara Ātā, Kamalalocana Ātai, Gopānātha of Asama and
Gopānātha Dvija and Sārāṅga Ojna also accompanied the
party. Caturbhujā first entered at Dnekenābarī. He was

106 Vidyānanda, vv.182-188.
received by Śīvū Laskar alias Bāṅg-guṭi, and also by
one Śhanānjaya Āṭai. Caturbhujā arrived at the bank
of the river Son-kosa where Balaī Maṇḍal received
him warmly. Crossing the river, the Ṭhākur arrived
at Govinda Āṭai’s place, Madhupur. Here only we come
to know from Govinda Āṭai’s word that it was his
second pilgrimage.107 Ṭuruśottama’s wife, who then
lived at Madhupur, intended to go with the Ṭhākur.
Caturbhujā is said to have asked her about a rare
book possessed by her. She is reported to have shown
her unwillingness to hand over the book and, therefore,
Ṭhākur proceeded on his own way108 taking a passport
from the king. Anantapriyā also joined the party
along with her mother. Caturbhujā reached the Nirjhar-
guṭi and crossing the river Yamunā he came to Vijaya-
nagar, Kanṭūtaia and Gopāl-pur. Staying at Mālā, the
party afterwards crossed the boundary of Gauda. Proceed-
ing further west, they crossed Mirzāpur, Medinīpur,
Narasimhapur and mahānādi-grāma. Thus the party arrived

108 Vidyānanda, vv. 245-246.
at the Jagannāṭha Temple of Puri. There Triakur met Sivārupūṇḍa, Narasimha, Dāmodara and Laksmaṇa. The Mādalāpāṇi, a chronicle preserved at the Jagannāṭha Temple, contains records of Pāṇḍās from the earliest time, where some of the names mentioned above appear in the list of Pāṇḍās. Caturbhuja performed his father's śrāddha ceremony there in the month of Phālguna. After witnessing the Daula-yāttra, Caturbhuja came back to Viśnupur. He also celebrated the Daula-yāttra festival afterwards at the Viśnupur-sattra.

Caturbhuja once again set out for the work of proselytisation and camped at Rūpsi, Āmaguri, Gévindapur and Barbhāg. Sundaranārāyaṇa, son of Raghudevanārāyaṇa, and Rūpanārāyaṇa received religious ordination from Caturbhuja. It is observed that during the time of Caturbhuja the Bengal Vaishnavism crept into Assam and attracted some Vaishnavas of Assam to its fold.

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109 Vidyananda, v.298.
110 Vidyananda, v.311.
111 Vidyananda, v.329.
112 Vidyananda, vv.344–346.
By this time the Ahom kingdom was invaded by the Mughals and in course of that invasion, they set the Viṣṇupur-sattra on fire. This might be the Muhammadan invasion of 1636 A.D., during the reign of Pratāpsimha. The kīrtan-ghar was newly built under the supervision of one Makarā Hijara. It is noteworthy that Vidyānanda refers to thirteen 'prasāṅga' instead of fourteen. The marriage ceremony of the Thākur's daughter, Subhaurā, was solemnised at that time and as soon as it was over, Gaurikānta Baruwa Ātā passed away. Once again Caturbhuja went to Behār at the request of Govinda Ātā and administered initiation to some people there. But the hostile group of Brāhmaṇs poluted the ear of the king reporting something against Caturbhujā. At this the king ordered for arrest of the Thākur but the latter left Behār by that time. Arriving at the Viṣṇupur-sattra, Daityārī Thākur held a debate

114 v. 375.
115 Vidyānanda, vv. 392-394.
on the question of guruship. The question arose whether Mādhavadeva was to be called the guru. Vidyānanda himself took part at this and Daityāri's view was totally discarded by Caturbhuja.\footnote{Vidyānanda, vv.409-412.}

Once again the Viṣṇupur-sattra was burnt on the 'Bihu'-day.\footnote{Vidyānanda, v.426.} The controversy that grew at the time of Purusottama between his followers and those of Mathurādāsa gained its firm ground in the time of Caturbhuja. The feeling was intensified to such an extent that a sharp distinction was made between the two groups.\footnote{Vidyānanda, vv.427-430.} In order to clarify whether Mādhavadeva was to be called the guru, Caturbhuja invited some of his chief disciples of different localities and directed them to go to his mother, Mādhavadeva's niece, to be apprised of the issue. At this, Caturbhuja's mother is said to have told
that her maternal uncle Mādhavadeva never declared himself to be a guru, admitting that Śāṅkaradeva alone could be called the guru. Further she narrated that Mādhavadeva declared Rāmacarana, his nephew, as his only disciple and none else, even though he administered ordination and initiation to many. On request, Caturbhujā gave permission to Gopaṇa Misra of Barpaṭa to administer initiation to the people at Barpaṭa and Madhupur, the two important places where Mādhavadeva's influence was great and, therefore, Mādhavadeva was called the guru at these sattras.

Caturbhujā lost his mother at the age of fifty-four. His mother died at the age of ninety. As Caturbhujā's only son Devakīnandana died a premature death, so he adopted his nephew Dāmodara Ātā as his son. Replying to the question put by his disciples

119 Vidyānanda, vv. 431-439.
120 Vidyānanda, vv. 440-442.
121 Vidyānanda, vv. 449-465.
122 Vidyānanda, vv. 483-494.
123 Ratikānta, cited in KKÌ., p. 234.
on the successor to the headship, Caturbhujā is said to have declared Dāmodara Ātā as his real and only successor. For the last time, Caturbhujā set out on a pilgrimage on a Saturday in the month of agra-
āyaṇa. Vidyananda gives a detailed description of the journey, in course of which, Caturbhujā is report-
ed to have met Caitanya's grandson. Accompanied by a considerable number of monks, Caturbhujā arrived at the holy Ganges and performed the rites of his deceased mother. Here the Ṭhākura breathed his last in Paṣa, 1649 A.D., at the age of fifty four. His funeral rites were performed by Mohangiri, Māmagiri, Gadādhara and Narayana, headed by Dāmodara Ātā.

Like his elder brother, Caturbhujā appointed twelve apostles. Of them, six were Brāhmans and the rest non-

124 Vidyananda, vv.501–505; Kesava Carita, vv.238–239; Madan Ātā; Ai Kanakalatār Caritra, pp.52–54; Harinārāyaṇa, vv.427–428; Korcong-sattra vol.11,9(a),(b); Māvīrīkā, v.2637 and Bhadračāru, vv.64–65.
125 vv.517–592.
126 Harinārāyaṇa, v.430; Diciyāl-sattra col., l.9(B); Korcong-sattra col., l.18(b); Madan Ātā and Candracāru.
Brahmans. They are known as 'Saru Dāra Janīyā' 'the junior twelve'. They propagated the cult of bhakti at different places of the state. When Caturūhuja died, the direct line of Saṅkaradeva virtually came to an end. The descendants of Puruṣottama and Caturbhujā's daughters and the latter's adopted son Dāmodara established some sattras, commonly known as 'nāti-sattra' "grandsons' establishments", 'Thākur-naptā sattra' "establishments of the two Thākurs" or 'jīyart-vamsār sattra' "establishments belonging to the line of Saṅkaradeva on the female side". Of these, four sattras acquired position of distinction and were, therefore, regarded as the four principal sattras of Puruṣa Samhati, viz., Narowā, Kowāmarā, Dīgナル and Cāmaguri.

127 SHT., p.151.
The 'able and shrewd lady' Kanakalatā alias Lakṣmī Āi was a dominating figure in the Assam Vaisnavism of the post-Sāṅkarite period. Possibly nowhere in the history of religion in India a woman acted as a religious head like Kanakalatā, the first wife of Caturbhujā Thākur. From that point of view, it will not be out of place to sketch her life and personality. The history of Assam Vaisnavism of this particular period is full of intrigues. For that reason, most of the biographical works are anonymous. Even in the biography ascribed to Rāmacarana Thākur, Kanakalatā is alleged to have done something with the original scheme of the work.

After the death of Caturbhujā, her husband, Kanakalatā discharged her duties as a religious head with remarkable success. From that time only, we have some account of her activities in different biographical works. Kanakalatā’s father Umāpati Cawaliyā was probably the same person who entertained Caturbhujā on his way to
The early part of Kanakalata's life is not described by any biographer. Her date of birth, the span of her life and the date of passing away are not recorded in most of the biographies. It is narrated that Caturbhuja nominated Damodara as his successor and asked him to take care of the family after the Thakur's death. Kanakalata's daughter Subhadra was married to Ramadeva alias Yadu Baruwa, son of one Jagatananda of Barnagar. Ramadeva used to stay with his father-in-law at the Visnupur-sattra.

In the biographical works of Subhadra's line, particularly the spurious works, it is said that Caturbhuja proposed Subhadra's son to take the charge of religious headship although Subhadra was a minor girl when Caturbhuja passed away. After Caturbhuja's death, Kanakalata came from Visnupur to Bardowā with

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128 Vidyānanda, vv.546,549.
129 SHT., p.151, gives the date of Kanakalata's death as 1658 A.D. (?). Dvārika has also given the same date.
130 Dvārika, v.2607; Vidyānanda, vv.379-381; Bhadraśāru, vv.16,29.
Hamodara Ata. At Bardowa Subhaurā gave birth to a female issue, Acyutapriyā. The baby died after six months. Again Subhaurā had given birth to six sons one after another but each died within a very short period after birth. The eighth issue was Anantarūya Ātā 131, the head of the Kowāmara group of sattras. He was born at Bardowa on the full-moon night of 'Kṛtika' Nakṣatra on Thursday in the month of Kṛtika. 132

It is said that Anantarūya lost his father when he was two years old. 133 He also lost his mother at the age of five. 134 Subhaurā died on the day of the tenth dark-moon of the month of Caitra. Kanakalata, therefore, had to take care of her grandson, Anantarūya.

It has been already indicated that of the three wives of Caturbhujā, Kanakalata was the only intelligent lady. She had her qualities—both good and evil. But only the bright side of her character is discussed

131 Bhadracaru, vv.79-82.
132 Bhadracaru, vv.101-103.
133 Bhadracaru, v.136. According to Santamāla,v.782, Anantarūya was only seven months old when his father died.
134 Dhārīka,v.2527. Bhadracaru, in v.157, says that he was then four years old. Santamāla,v.783, gives only one year.
so far by different scholars. Traditions say that as she had no male issues, she caused the death of Devakīnandana, son of Caturbhujā's second wife Mukunda-priyā. Dvārika describes the whole story which is full of thrill and pathos. Caturbhujā came to know the cruelty of Kanakalatā and, therefore, he divorced her. When Caturbhujā prepared to set out on his last pilgrimage, Kanakalatā came and tendered apology for her past deeds. It was after ten years that the Thākur again accepted her as his wife.

After the death of her husband Kanakalatā convened a meeting of the chief followers of Purusottama and Caturbhujā at the Visnupur-sattrā. Both the senior and the junior group of twelve Manantas assembled there and at her request the investiture ceremony of Dāmodara Āta to the vacant seat of Superiorship of Caturbhujā

135 vv.2508-2514.
136 Dvārika, v.2516.
137 Dvārika, v.2024.
138 Dvārika, vv.2655-2658.
was solemnised, in 1650 A.D., on the death anniversary of Caturbhuja. As Dāmodara was newly established to the direct line of Caturbhuja, his line came to be known as Narowā( the newly established).

Kanakalatā afterwards left the Visnupur-sattra and proceeded to the Ahom kingdom with Dāmodara Atā. The whole family came eastward on boat and arrived at Gauhati. Here they met Paḍhiyā Mādhava Atai, a disciple of Mādhava-deva. They decided to reclaim Bardowā, the original site of Sāṅkaradeva’s abode. Kanakalatā and Dāmodara approached Lilāvatī, wife of the Bar-phukan, who helped in finding out the place Bardowā which was so long a deserted place. The lady Lilāvatī was a daughter of Gobar Raja and Gadādhara’s (king Gadādharasimha) sister. As has been suggested by Dāmodara Atā, Kanakalatā is described to have handed

139 Al Kanakalatār Caritra, p.54; Dvārikā, v.2683-2685.
140 Dvārikā, v.2687.
141 Dvārikā, v.2686.
over a 'kusa mula-guti' (a piece of rare thing) to Lilavati for the Bar-phukan. This rare and valuable thing is reported to have been preserved by her family since Sankaradeva's time. It is narrated in the same context how the possessor of the 'kusa mula-guti' cannot be defeated in any contest and how a person possessing it in person can succeed in every effort. Being very much pleased at this, the bar-phukan accepted it; but later on he became proud of the same and did not care to commit sins. The bar-phukan was, therefore, put to death by Gudâchnara. Before his passing away, the bar-phukan is reported to have handed it over to his guru, the Anûti Gosâi, so that the 'kusa mula-guti' could be kept as a necklace on the Govinda image of the same sattra. However the Bar-phukan

143 Dvârika, vv.2697-2698.
144 Dvârika, vv.2710-2715.
146 At some places it is stated that the Bar-phukan was a disciple of the Dakhinapat-sattra; vide, Atan Bûrharanâin and His Times, p.214.
147 Dvârika, vv.2749-2750; It could not be determined what this particular thing 'kusa mula-guti' is. The whole story may perhaps be an attempt at magnifying the lady, Kanakalata.
oruered Solāl uohāi to reclaim the Bardowā Thān. It was
during the reign of Jayadhvajasimha (1648-1653 A.D.) that
kanakalatā and Dāmodara ātā succeeded with great difficulty
in finding out the Bardowā Thān under the royal patronage.148
Dvāriķa gives this date Saka 1515 = 1653 A.D.149

Before the party could find out the Bardowā Thān, Kanaka-
latā first camped at a place near it, which subsequently
came to be known after her name, viz., Āi-bheṭi (the plinth
of the mother, Kanakalatā). Later on the descendants of her
line established a sattra there. There are two Bilva trees
at that place, which were supposed to be planted by Kanaka-
latā herself. The place is situated five miles to the east
of Bardowā in the present district Nowgong (Assam). In 1658
A.D.,150 Kanakalatā arranged to perform her husband's annual
śrāddha ceremony at Bardowā. Accordingly she deputed one
Manpur ātā to invite the apostles appointed by Purusottama
and Caturdhruva. Arrangements were also made to entertain
them but the Manantas could not attend the function for

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148 Shr., p. 152.
149 vv. 2752-2753.
150 Dvāriķa, v. 2785.
some unavoidable reasons. As suggested by Kesava Ātā
of the Korçongan-sattra who was at that time living with
Dāmodara Ātā, Kanakalatā intended to appoint few more
apostles with the help of Dāmodara Ātā\textsuperscript{151}, so that the
function could be held smoothly. Therefore she appointed
six Brāhmaṇas and eight non-Brāhmaṇas as Superiors who came
to be known as 'Kanaka Bāra Janīyā'.

Kanakalatā and Dāmodara Ātā could not stay long at
Bardowā due to political disturbances. So she moved to
Cinātalī in 1655 A.D.\textsuperscript{152} near Narowā (in modern North Lakhim-
pur sub division) where Dāmodara Ātā already established a
sattra under the royal patronage.\textsuperscript{153} Kanakalatā stayed there
for about three years and performed the sacred thread cere-
mony of Anantarāyā, her grandson.\textsuperscript{154} After the death of

\textsuperscript{151} Ai Kanakalatār Caritra, p.87; Dvārīka, v.2767.
\textsuperscript{152} Dvārīka, v.2832; Santamālā, v.1300.
\textsuperscript{153} Bhadracāru, vv.174-175; Dvārīka, vv.2829-2835; 2839, 2866,
2870.
\textsuperscript{154} Dvārīka, vv.2877-2879. The NISIA, pp.94, and 150, wrongly
states that Anantarāyā was a son of Kanakalatā and that
he belonged to the Narowā-sattra.
king Jayadhvajasimha in 1663 A.D., Kanakalatā came back to Bardowā. But on her way back from Cinaṭalī, she stayed for a fortnight at Kaliyābar (Nowgong), where she was taken small pox. Here in 1668 A.D., on the fourteenth day of the dark-moon of the month of Paṣaṇḍ, Kanakalatā passed away on the bank of the river Brahma-pattra.

(D) DĀMODARA ĀṬĀ

As we have already seen, Śaṅkaradeva's youngest son Haricarana had two daughters - Govindapriyā and Kānti, and a son, Caturbhuja. Govindapriyā, the first daughter of Haricarana, was married to Gaurikānta Baruwa Āṭā and Dāmodara was born to Govindapriyā in 1604 A.D. (?).  

155 Bhadracāru, vv.223-230; Īvārikā, v.2880.
156 Īvārikā, v.2882; Santamālā, v.1306.
157 Santamālā, v.1317; Īvārikā, vv.2883-2884; Āṭi Kanakalatār Caritra, p.39. It is important to note that these verses have striking similarity with those of Īvārikā; cf. vv. 2881-2885.
158 Bhadracāru, vv.231-237; Santamālā, v.1317; Īvārikā, v.2884.
159 Shīl., p.152, gives this date. According to MMKI., p.234, Dāmodara was born in Śaka 1548= 1626 A.D. The sources of information in both the works, however, are wanting.
According to Dvarika, Damodara lost 160 Guru Caritra, 14(a), 14(b). But difficulty arises to accept this date on the following grounds. We have seen that Caturbhuj was born in 1594 A.D. According to Dvarika, v.2502, his sister Govindapriya was four years older than Caturbhuj. So Govindapriya was born in 1590 A.D., and Damodara was born to her at the age of fourteen. On the otherhand, it is said that Damodara was adopted by Caturbhuj as a son at the death of Devakīnandana, son of Caturbhuj from Mukundapriya's side. It is improbable that Caturbhuj adopted Damodara as a son, who was nearly ten years younger to him. Again Aniruddha gives Saka 1577= 1655 A.D., as the year of Damodara's passing away. The PKKI., p.235, states that Damodara was born in 1626 A.D. It also gives the date of Damodara's passing away as 1662 A.D. This is supported by Pavitra Assam, pp.101-103. Accordingly, Damodara's span of life becomes thirty six years, which of course, is not found anywhere. Different accounts show that he lived for more than fifty years.

According to Sri Caritra and Guru Caritra of the Bāli-sattra, Damodara held the charge of Superiorship at the age of forty. The PKKI., informs that in 1649 A.D., Damodara assumed the charge. But this was the year of Caturbhuj's passing away. Damodara held the Superiorship after few years of Caturbhuj's death in 1649 A.D. If we put the date of Damodara's assumption of the headship between 1651 and 1653 A.D., and accept the fact that he was at that time forty years old, his date of birth will fall in the initial part of the second decade of the seventeenth century A.D. Damodara, according to Naradeva and the Guru Caritra, afterwards acted as a religious head for eleven years. Accepting Saka 1584= 1662 A.D., as his date of passing away as already noted, it may, on the strength of the above calculation, possibly be concluded that Damodara was born in 1611 A.D., and assumed the Superiorship in 1651 A.D. 161 vv.2519, 2605.
his father Gaurīkānta Daruwa Ātā at the age of two.\textsuperscript{162} Mukundapriyā also passed away by that time.\textsuperscript{163} Vidyānanda states that as soon as Subhadṛā's marriage was over, Dāmodara's father Baruwa Ātā died.\textsuperscript{164} From that point of view, Subhadṛā was older than Dāmodara. During his pilgrimage, Caturbhujā gave a ring to both Dāmodara and Bhagavānā, adopted son\textsuperscript{165} of Kesava Ātā of the Koroṅg-sattra, so that it might serve as a token of friendship between Dāmodara and Bhagavānā.\textsuperscript{166}

In course of time Dāmodara married Śiśupriyā alias Rāndhāni Āi\textsuperscript{167} and to her Ramākānta Ātā alias Ratikānta Ātā and two daughters, Bhāgi and Bhāgyavatī by name, were born.

\'After Dāmodara had succeeded to Caturbhujā's place at

\textsuperscript{162} In folio 110(a), a side note appears supporting this statement which might be written by the copyist. In the last folio of the MS collected from the Bāli-sattra, it is stated that Baruwa Ātā died on the day of the fifth dark-moon of the month of Agraḥāyaṇa.

\textsuperscript{163} Dvārikā,\textit{v.} 2609.

\textsuperscript{164} \textit{vv.} 379-382.

\textsuperscript{165} Harinārāyaṇa,\textit{v.} 402.

\textsuperscript{166} Harinārāyaṇa,\textit{vv.} 421-422; Kesava Carita,\textit{vv.} 225-226; and Madan Ātā also.

\textsuperscript{167} Dvārikā,\textit{v.} 2793; Candraśāru; Naradeva,\textit{f.} 3(a).
Visnupur, the country was invaded by Muslims. He moved to Damarajär and built there a new sattwa, Vaikunthapur. So Dāmodara Ātā was also called Vaikunthapurīyā Ātā.

According to some account, Ramākānta Ātā was born at Damarajär. The two daughters of Dāmodara, Bhāgi and Bhāgyavatī, were married to Harirāma Gābharugiri and Rūparāma Gābharugiri respectively. At Damarajär, Dāmodara could not stay long due to the disturbances created by the invading Mughals. So he migrated to the Āhom kingdom. The Āhom monarch Jayadhvajasimha was at that time much dissatisfied with the Vaisnavas of his kingdom because of their petty differences and put some of their leaders in jail. Dāmodara made his appearance at court and the king was so much pleased at his words and general behaviour that the gaoled Vaisnavas were all released, and Dāmodara

168 Sūt., p. 152.
169 Bāli-sattra coll., last folio.
170 Santamālā, v. 1009.
171 Harinārāyaṇa, v. 444; Santamālā, v. 1022; Ai Kanakalatār Caritra, p. 55.
was promised royal patronage. With royal aid Damodara established the Narowa-sattra in the valley of the river, Suvanśirī (in North Lakhimpur). He is said to have set up two other monasteries in the locality, Lāumurī and Čāribhāgī.\textsuperscript{172} Later on with the help of Taṅgeu Phukan\textsuperscript{173} and Bhagavāna Ātā, Damodara succeeded in finding out the Bardowa Thān and with royal aid made a sattra there.

Dvārikā puts this date Saka 1575= 1653 A.D., of the month of Phālguna.\textsuperscript{174} Kanakalatā and other members of the family also came with him. In order to find out Bardowa, Damodara first arrived at Vaiṣṇavapur or commonly called Kujī and at Bārapūjīyā in Nowgong. Here a Mikir king, Ĉetuwa by name, was administered ordination by Damodara Ātā\textsuperscript{175} and the king made to him a gift of a big plot of land.

\textsuperscript{172} Reproduced from the SIT., p.152.
\textsuperscript{173} It was during the reign of Cakradhvajasiṃha(1663-1670 A.D.), that Taṅgeu Phukan was administered initiation by Ramā-kānta Ātā. A big gong and a bell donated by the Phukan are preserved at the Bāli-sattra, PKKI., p.237. But according to Harinarayana, v.477, Taṅgeu was initiated by Damodara. This is supported by Āi Kanakalatār Caritra, p.65, wherein it is said that Raṅgācilā Phukan, along with his son, was also initiated by Damodara Ātā.
\textsuperscript{174} vv.2752-2753.
\textsuperscript{175} Pavitra Asama, p.148; PKKI., p.235, and also the article 'Nāti gurur sattra aru vamsa paramparā'. 
Damodara afterwards built a sattra there which came to be known as the KujI-sattra. During the time of Saṅkaradeva, some of his relatives are reported to have resided at KujI. Damodara met one Banavasī Jayarāma and took him as his guide to find out the actual site. He then camped at a spot on the river Brāhma-puttra. Later on this also became a famous sattra called the Bāli-sattra. It is noteworthy that like Purusottama and Caturbhuj, Damodara on the advice of Keśava Ātā and Kanakalatā, selected fourteen chief disciples and asked them to establish in different places of the state in order to propagate the faith of Saṅkaradeva. According to Dvārikā, it was in Saka 1580= 1658 A.D., that the

176 'Bardowā: Vivartanar Mājedi' by Harendra Deva Goswami, pub. in three issues of Asam Bānī, an Assamese weekly, on August 21, 28 and September 4, 1959.
178 Harinārāyaṇa, vv. 438-442; Dewan, f. 14(b); Āi Kanakalatār Caritra, pp. 54-55, 87; Guru Caritra, f. 16(b); Diciyāl-sattra coll., f. 10(a); MSS of Puskanta Deva Goswami and Bāpuṭi Nām-lagowā; Candracāru; KujI-sattra coll.; Korcong-sattra coll., f. 16(b) and Dvārikā, vv. 2764-2789.
179 v. 2785.
above apostles were appointed at Bardowā. Damodara Atā constructed a straight road from Bālisattra to Bardowā and that came to be known as the 'jor dharā āli' (the road constructed on the line directed by two torches at the two extremities). This road, of nearly four kilometre long, is the only means of communication between Bardowā and the Bāli-sattra even today. Damodara afterwards moved to the eastern part of the Āhom state and stayed there for about three years. Dvārika states that in 1656 A.D., the name Narowā-sattra came to be known. Damodara again came back to Bardowā and used to live at the Bāli-sattra where he breathed his last on the day of the fifth bright moon of the month of Kārtika, in Saka 1584 = 1662 A.D. Anantarāya was born to Subhadra at

181 PKKI., p.235.
182 v.2851; but in v.2687, he gives this date Saka 1572.
183 Pavitra Asama, pp.101-103; PKKI., p.235. According to Aniruddhā, he passed away in 1655 A.D.
Bardowā. It is said that at the time of Dāmodara's death, his son Ramākānta was a minor.

Immediately after the death of Dāmodara, Kanakalatā had a quarrel and tried to establish Anantarāya, her own grandson, as the only successor of Dāmodara Ātā. Her endeavour to oust Ramākānta Ātā was, however, thwarted with the help of Bhagavāma Ātā of the Korcong-sattrā who brought the matter into the notice of the king Jayadhvajāsimha. Thus Kanakalatā may be held responsible for creating the difference between the two main groups of sattrās of Bardowā, which were subsequently bifurcated into two main divisions of the Puruṣa Samhāti. The animosity and bitterness of both the groups have gone to the extreme during the time of Dāmodara's grandson Rāmacandra Ātā. The conflict was settled by the Āhom Prime Minister, Purṇānanda Buḍhā Gohāi and Bhadrasen Bar Baruwa, the chief of the Judiciary, following an order of the King Kamaleswarasimha (1795-1810 A.D.).

184 Harinārāyaṇa, v. 474; Bhadraśāru, vv. 102-107; Dvārikā, v. 2794.
185 SHT., p. 152; Harinārāyaṇa, v. 486; According to Dvārikā, v. 2792, he was five years old; PKKI., p. 236, gives thirteen years. Santāmāla states three years. Here the confusion is probably made because of Devakīnandana, who died at the age of three years.
186 Harinārāyaṇa, v. 489; Dvārikā, vv. 2795-2801.
187 Harinārāyaṇa, vv. 490-493.