CHAPTER - VII

THE RELIGIOUS DISCONTENTMENT IN ASSAM UNDER THE AHOM RULES

THE CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS SCENERIO:

The medieval society of Assam maintained a tradition of a composite society of different religious sects. During the later part of the Ahom rule some important changes took place that led to the discontentment of the common people ultimately gave birth to an uprising. To understand the root of their dissatisfaction it is important to know the contemporary religious condition, the religious policy of the Ahom rulers and the impacts of the religious policy.

In the medieval Assamese society Brahmanism, saivism, saktism, were the most popular religious cult. Buddhism, Vaisnavism, Sikhism, Islam occupied the secondary status, as a religious practice. It was the development of Neo-Vaisnavism, which created a new wave in the existing religious scenario.

The term Brahmanism, refer to a religion consisting of Vedic sacrifices and other puranic rituals, which require the direct participation or supervision of a Brahmana priest\(^1\). In the epigraphical records and Vedic studies we have frequent reference of the performance of Asvamedha Yajna and other Vedic sacrifices by the kings of Kamrupa with the help of the Brahmans in ancient time.

In the ancient time, it was a regular activity of the king to issue land grants in the name of individual Brahmana donees. While in the medieval period; the usual practice was to grant land in the name of —

\(^1\) Barpujari H. K. CHA Vol I 305 f Ghy 1990
— deities of various temples. In the later period even if there were a few land grants in the name of individual Brahmans there is no references in any Vedic study or any performance of Vedic sacrifice by the concerned donee. However, in “Darrang Rajavamsavali” references are made that the royal priest of Koch monarch Visvasimha named Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya was a scholar having knowledge of the four Vedas, fourteen sastra, srutis, smritis and the Vedangas.

In Kathagurucharit, it is referred that the curriculum of study meant for Sankaradeva in the school (Pathsala) of Mahendra Kandli also included four Vedas, fourteen sastras and six vedangas besides many other courses. The same source also provide that a grandson of Sankaradeva named Purusottama, had lessons on Vedas from one scholar named Jaibara (Jayavara) Adhyapaka of a place called Patkai.

In “Darrang Rajavamsavali” it is found that Malladeva and Sukladhvaja, sons of Visvasimha had their education in Varanasi where curriculum of study included the Vedas (Sruti) besides Vyakarana, Purana Smriti and Mimamsa.

It is also believed by scholars that Vedic sacrifices (Yajnas) also continued to be performed, comparatively in a smaller scale in the royal –

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3. V V 173 f In V V 216 and 218 there are references to the chanting of vedic mantras by the Brahmans: CHA Vol IV 212.
4. KGC section 60 CHA III 212.
5. Ibid section 1123 a scholar named Ananta Kandali, who was a contemporary of Sankaradeva is said to have been an expert in Purana, Bharata, Bhagavata, Veda and Jyotisa(section 79) CHA III 212.
families and well to do Brahmana families either under the style of a Vishnujajna, a Rudrasti or in the form of a homa connected with worshipping of a puranic deity, or in connection with some sacrament (Samskara) like Upanayana (Initiation) and Vivaha (marriage)⁷.

The scholars argue in favour of prevalence of Vedic sacrifices in the form of homas. Pitambara Siddhanta Vagisa, the royal preceptor cum priest (Rajguru) of king Naranarayana of Koch Behar is known to have written a book entitled “Homa-Paddhati”. It was obviously connected with the procedure of performing homas.⁸ Tungkhungia Buranji (in section 41) also refer that king Gadadhar Simha in 1690 got a series of “japa and homa” performed by 108 Brahmanas in the Visvanath temple⁹.

The Neo-Vaisnavite movement and its doctrine laid greater emphasis on nama-Kirtan pushed the Brahminical rites and rituals to a secondary position in Assam.¹⁰ In KathaGurucarita there is a reference to one Mukundarama Misra Goswami a teacher of a traditional school (toI) who abandoned all the Vedic code and conducts and performed ceremonies like Upanayana and marriage simply by nama-kirtana in around 1607 A.D.¹¹

During the period under review, the importance of Vedic Brahmanism reduced to a considerable extent among the common people.¹²

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⁷. CHA V III P 212 Article VII
⁹. CHA V-III p 212. ¹⁰. Ibid.
¹¹. B Sharma in Daksinpat Satra, 35 the same matter is related also in the Assam Buranji obtained from the family of Sukumar Mahanta p 148 CHA Vol III p 212-213.
¹². Ibid
— Yet Brahmanism could find a place of honour in the royal families and some of the Brahmana preceptors took part in certain political matters of the Ahom Kingdom. 13.

Gradually Brahmanism in Assam largely ceased to be directly and solely based on Vedic Brahmana literature 14, instead depended for guidance on the Puranas, tantras and Smritis. 15.

From the beginning of the thirteenth century, the ancient Kingdom of Kamrupa was slowly undergoing a process of disintegration. The whole of Assam from the eastern most Dikkaravasini region to the river Karatoya in the west disintegrated into several Kingdoms, some of which did not survive more than a few decades. From materials supplied by the Ahom chronicles and the medieval biographies of saints (Carit Puthis) it appears that, a line of Chutiya King ruled in the easternmost tract of Assam at present known as Lakhimpur district. The Chutiya kings were reigning at Sadiya from the beginning of the thirteenth Century until the subversion of their Kingdom by the Ahoms in the early part of the sixteenth century. The chutiyas worshipped various forms of Goddess Kali under the guidance of their tribal priests. The important form, in which they worshipped this deity, was that of Kecalhati (the eater of raw flesh) to whom human sacrifices were also offered. 16.

14. Ibid.
15. Ibid
Further west, there was the Kachari Kingdom to the south of the river Brahmaputra and it probably extended at least half-way across the modern Nowgong district.

The Kachari were a Tibeto Burman tribe who followed their own tribal customs and religion. The Kachari king in this period may have professed Hinduism, but there is no evidence to support that bulk of the Kachari population followed Hinduism. Sir Edward Gait is, therefore of opinion that "at this time, the Kachari were free from all Hindu influence". Toward the closing decades of the sixteenth century the Kachari King formally accepted the Hindu cult, and this is known from a silver coin issued in 1583 A. D. by Yasonarayanadeva (Jaso Narayan Deb*) from Maibong. The coin speaks of Yasonarayanadeva as "a worshipper of Hara-Gauri, Siva-Durga and of the line of Hacenga". The pretty chiefs Bhuyan also did not practice a common religion. There were Brahmins including Kayasthas and Kalita. However, according to the medieval biographies most of them were Saktas 17

The western part of Assam comprising the modern districts of Kamrupa, Goalpara and parts of Cooch Behar was ruled by a few dynasties during the course of the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries and the Kingdom was known as Kamatarajya. The Kamata Kingdom, which emerged after the fall of the Palas, witnessed the rise and fall of several royal dynasties in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries of Christian era. By the end of the fifteenth century A. D. however, a new power; the Koche, under the leadership of Visva Simha,

17. As quoted by SNS p 2-3 (NVN and SIA). *Gait E AHA 1983 P 240
became to be the dominant political power in western Assam. They followed their tribal religion until they were finally absorbed in Hinduism in course of succeeding centuries.

The constant friction and conflict for supremacy amongst the divergent powers were the order of the day, which caused an unstable political condition of the country during that period.

The political instability brought about a chaotic condition in the religious sphere also. Assam in the fifteenth century presented a mixed cultural make up. The majority of the people belonged to non-Aryan tribes having distinct manners customs and religious beliefs. Those who professed Hinduism loosely adhered to Vaisnaism, Saivism, or Tranticism.

It is amply warranted by epigraphical evidences that all the royal families of ancient Kamrupa were devotees of Siva. Saivism continued to be prevalent in the twelfth century as a religious cult and became popular during the thirteenth century A.D.

18. SNS p 3 (NVM and SIA).
19. SNS p 3 (NVM and SIA). Elaborate discussion regarding the condition of Assam in ancient times have been done in Mother Goddess Kamakhaya (1938) by B. kakoti Cultural History of Assam 91950) B. K. Barua; Early History of Kamru (1936) by K. L.Barua; Kirata-Jana-Kriti (1951) by S. K. Chatterji and in the History and Civilization of Assam by Dr. P. Choudhry.
22. Sarma, Asamiya Sahityar Samiksatsatmat Ittivrata 66 also SMAB (Asma Buranji obtained from the family of Sukumar Mahanta CHA Vol III edit H. K. Barpujari p 214.
Siva is often referred to as Bhairava. Ramananda Dvija in his Sri Guru-carita gives a description of the state of religious affairs immediately before the advent of Neo-Vaisnasm. Accordingly, people in those days used to worship Bhairava as supreme deity.

The Bodo – Kachari believe that they have originated from Bathausivraj identical with Siva. Siva is recognized by the Kacharis as their supreme father. The ruling family of Tripura claims its origin from Siva. Thus until the coming of the Neo-Vaisnava cult worshiping of Siva was a very important aspect of Hinduism in Assam.

The Worship of Siva was prevalent in Assam from ancient times. Siva was the tutelary God of ancient Kings of Kamrupa from the seventh to the twelfth centuries. The Kalika-Purana and the Yogini-tantra have mentioned several sacred places of Lord Siva. Still in Darrang and Kamrup district, many Saiva temples are existed. Some of which have been in existence of the time of composition of the Kalika Purana. The Saviat temple at Hajo (Kedaresvara and Kamalesvara), Bisvanath, Singari (Gopesvara), Negheriting and Dobi (Parinaresvara) are famous from ancient times. Moreover, every Devi temple invariably attached to a temple dedicated to Siva in the form of Bhairva. Siva is worshipped in these temples in two forms viz Bhogi Siva and Yogi Siva.

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25. CHA Vol III p 217 (ed) HKB.
26. Kachari 1 f Tripura 34 f Cha Vol III p 217 (ed) HKB.
— The former in the form of "Arddhanarisvara' is worshipped with offering consisting of Samisa victuals and the later, in the Yogin form is worshipped with offerings consisting of rice and vegetable, i.e Niramisa victuals. Bhogi Siva worshipped according to trantric rites, while Yogi Siva is worshipped according to Pauranic rites.  

The first copper plate inscription of Dhamapala begins with an adoration to Arddha -Yuvatisavara. According to late K.L. Barua, the later kings of the Brahampaia dynasty were votaries of trantricism. The trantric mode of worship to Arddha -Yuvatisavara was probably introduced during that time.Dhampala himself in his inscription salutes Arddha -Yuvatisavara.

However, the non-Aryan tribes, mainly the Kacharis practiced a form of primitive Saivism where the worship was carried out by sacrifice of buffalo, he goats, pigeons, ducks and cocks along with rice and liquor. Bathau Brai the God of the Bodo Kachari can be equated to Siva of the Hindus. He possessed the same characteristics as those of Siva.

Maniram Dewan wrote that the worship of Mahadeva (Siva), set up by the sage Aurva at Dergaon, was administered under the care of the Kachari Kings with the offerings of wine and flesh. Later on a magnificent temple was built at that place by Ahom king Pratap Simha who used to describe himself as ——

29. Ibid p 4
30. KL Barua EHK p 340
31. SNS (NVM and SIA) p 4
32. Dewan M. Buranji- Veveka- Ratna; f 1 b. Neog M. Sankardeva and his times p 81
— hari-hara-carana parayana in a coin dated 1570 saka / 1648 A.D. 33

Saivism was a dominant religion when Sankardeva. (The great neo-Vaisnavite priest of Assam) was born 34. “People did not worship Krishna or perform the deeds sacred to Hari. They on the other hand, would fain worship Bhairava and consider it to be the greater of religions. They made offerings of blood of tortoises and goats to that deity and drank of it as a sacred drink (Prasad)” 35

Sankara father kusumvara who had no issue till an advance age is said to have worshipped Siva. It was believed that the God was pleased and a son was born to kusumvara and the child was called Sankara or Sankara-vara on that account. 36

In fact, Siva appears as “Bhairava” in the Yogini Tantra, as in the earlier Kalika Purana than as normal deity; and he could therefore, be adored with extreme left handed Vamacara practices. 37

Saktism is the cult of worshipping a female goddess as the Supreme deity who is variously called ;Devi, Durga, Kali, Kalika, Candi, and Kamakhya and so on. Such different names imply different manifestations on different aspects of the same goddess. Yet the name Devi and Sakti are commonly used to refer to any of the various —

33 “Orunodoi” Assamese monthly Vol IX 4 April 1854 p-57. Neog M. Sankardeva and his times p-81  
34. Neog M Sankaradeva and His times p 81  
35. Ramananda v 28 Neog M (SAHT) p 81 (as quoted)  
36. Dailiari; 27-34 Bhusana, 16 says that the God was worshipped in the form of a Linga (UL) KGC 15f, States that Kusum a worshipped Gopeswara Sadasiva Sadasiva  
37. The mother Goddess kamakhya p 22; Neog M. SAHT p 81
— manifestation or aspects of this supreme mother goddess.\textsuperscript{38}

Very often Saktism are Trantricism are supposed to be synonymous but not identical. In practice both are found to be concerned with kindred forms of religion. “Trantricism is a mystic esoteric system of worshipping the supreme deity or the supreme reality with the muttering Mantras (i.e. Magic incarnation and invocations), practice of meditation (mostly on Yantras, i.e. Mystic diagrams) and Yogic exercises leading to the realization of an identity of the \textit{Microcosm with the Macrocosm} and the oneness of the individual self and the supreme self in a popular sense. Trantricism is the type of religion described and prescribed in \textit{Tantras} which are non-Vedic works on meditation, rituals and mystical formularies and things of the sort”\textsuperscript{39}.

According to Sharma Kalikapurna and Yogini Tantra, which are dealt with Saktism, both are \textit{Tantra} as well on \textit{Purana}.\textsuperscript{40}

Saktism as Eliot defines it, “the worship of a goddess of many names and forms, who is adored with sexual rites and sacrifices of animals, or —

\textsuperscript{38} CHA Voll IV (ed) HKB Article MM Sharma 222

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid; p 222

\textsuperscript{40} Hindustan and Buddhism; intro p XXXVI Eliot draws a distinction between Saktism and tantrums “The essence of Saktism is the worship of a Goddess with certain rites Trantric means rather the use of spells gestures, diagrams and various magical or sacramental rites which accompanies Saktism, but many exists without it (loc. cit. footnote also op cit II p 275, p 275). It may also be added that tantrism had been principal ramifications; Sakta, Saiva, Vaisnava and Buddhist. The specific literature of the first three varieties are known as Tantra agamas and samhitas respectively. Neog M. Sankaradeva and his times p 82
— when the law permits, of men is considered to have been born in the north eastern region of India (Assam and Bengal), where it still holds some ground.

Saktism was a dominant cult of Assam in ancient and medieval times up to the advent of neo-vaisnavism and even today, it holds a place next to Vaisnavism. The Kalika-Purana and the Yogini Tantra, the two Sanskrit works composed in Assam have mainly dealt with the Sakti cult. Sakti in her various forms was worshipped in different temples dedicated to her. However, the radiating centers of Saktism had been the shrines dedicated to kamakhya and Dikkaravasini. The former is situated in Western Assam and the latter in the North-Eastern Region of Assam.

Dr. Kakati has identified *Dikkaravasini* of Kalika Purana with goddess *Tamresvari* or *Kecaikhati* (eater of raw flesh). In the two Shrines situated in the Western and Eastern parts of the Country, the Sakti was worshipped according to Trantric rites and sacrifices. In the temple of *kecaikhati* human sacrifices were performed. Human sacrifice was also performed in the Jayantesvari Temple of Jayantapura located in modern Jayantia hills. According to Kalika Purana and Yoginitantra, besides these three main seats of Sakti cult, there were many other shrines dedicated to Sakti in different parts of Assam. In some of these shrines, terrible and gruesome trantric practices were also observed.

41. Eliot II p 278 Winternitz History of Indian Literature; i. p 52a; Gait Religion Census of India 1901 I, i. p 360; Neog M (SAHT) p 82 (as quoted.)

42. SNS (NVM and SIA) p4

43. Kakati B. Mother Goddess Kamakhya p 35-70

44. SNS p 4-5 (NVM and SIA)
Both the chief scriptures of Assam Saktism the Kalika Purana and the Yogini Tantra belong to the left hand school of Saktism and enjoin blood sacrifices and various esoteric rites. The ritual consisting of the five elements (*tattva*) better known on five M’s (*Panca-Makara*) namely madya (wine), Mamsa (meat), matsya (fish), mudra ( parched grain) and maithuna (sexual union) form a prominent feature.\(^{45}\)

The first three of these have to be offered in as oblations in five in the course of some rites.\(^ {46}\)

The Kalika-Purana makes a comprehensive list of objects of sacrifices to Candika and Bhairav; birds, tortoises, fish, nine species of deer, buffaloes, bulls, he goats, boar, rhinoceros, lion, panthers, men etc and with the blood drawn from one’s own body during worship.\(^ {47}\)

The Yogini-tantra\(^ {48}\) gives a similar list of sacrificial animals.

Below the principal shrine of Kamakhya and to its West is the smaller temple of Bhairavi of Tripura Bhairavi. This is pointed out as the spot where human sacrifices were once held.

As late as 1615, karamcand (son of Satrajita a commander of an invading Muhammadan army) was sacrificed to the goddess ——

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45. Yogini 1.6.14 (Tantra of Great liberation written by Arthur Avalon. 6.1-14); Neog M. SAHT 83

46. Yogini 1.4.21; Neog M SAHT 83 (as quoted)

47. Kalikapurna 71 3-5 as quoted in Neog M (SAHT)

48. Yogini Tantra II.7.156.170 (as quoted in SAHT BY Neog .M),In the conservation of shrine of Kamakhaya animals like buffaloes, goats, ducks, fish, pigeons, deer, and tortoises were scarified. (Darrang Raj Vamsavali 547f)
Kamakhaya. Another place where human sacrifices seems to have been held from ancient up to modern times (end of the 18th century) in the Tamresvari temple near Sadiya in the North Eastern frontiers. Here the ruling Chutiya administered worship under their Dories or tribal priests with animal and human scarifies. This temple seems to have been taken over by the Ahoms after the subjugation of the Chutiyas in about 1523.

The blood chapter of the Kalikapurna makes provision for the offering of the votorays of own blood and flesh in small quantities. The blood is to be cut out from any part of the body above the navel and then offered to Mahamaya Durga.

Most of the Bara Bhuyan and the ancestors of both Sankardeva and Madhavdeva were staunch Saktas. The name of Sankardeva's great grandfather (Candivara) was a worshipper of Sakta one and for his adherence to the Devi, the epithet Devidasa was conferred to him by Durlabhanarayana.

49. Gait p 108; Assam Buranji S.M. article 109 for human sacrifices to the Devi: also Hopkins, p 490; Farquhar, Religious literature of India, pp 203 ff; Barth, p 203; Kakati,article. 55, 58. That Gait statements (pp 58 63) regarding the immolation of human victims on the occasions of the consecration of the Kamakhya and Hayagriva-Madhava Temples in 1565 and 1583 are not correct which has been pointed out by more than one scholar. Neog M (SAHT) p 84

50. Kashi Nath Tamuli Phukan, Assam Buranji; p 20 Gunabhiram Baruah; Assam Buranji p 95; Gait p 42; Gait; Human sacrifices in Ancient Assam, JASB XVIII; New Series June 1848 pp 465 f Neog M SAHA p 84.

51. Kalikapurna 71. 155-162 see also Yogini p 1.6.53; Neog M SAHT.

52. Sankardeva, Rukmini-harana (Kavya) v. 527; Daityari 12; Bhusana, 9; Neog M SAHT p.84-85.
Madhavdeva in his first encounter with Sankardeva offered quite a number of arguments in defence of Saktism.⁵³ (Both the ten-armed and the eight-armed forms of the Devi are mentioned in the Caritas.)⁵⁴

A stone image of Candi was the object of worship in the house of Sankara’s father, kusumbara.⁵⁶ Again, Mahandra Kondali sought to teach his student Sankardeva some Mantras of Candi or Durga.⁵⁶ Goats are very often mentioned as sacrificial animals.⁵⁷ Madava before meeting with Sankaraveda argued with Ramadasa on the latter’s refusal to bring sacrificial goats, that a house holder’s religious duties could not go without sacrifices.⁵⁸ Innumerable innocent lives were thus destroyed in the form of sacrifices to the deities.⁵⁹

The worship of the snake goddess Manasa who is considered as a manifestation of Sakti in Assamese Kavyas was very popular, especially in western part of Assam. Goats, pigeons and ducks were killed to propitiate her. The Padma-Purana and the Beula-Upakhyana , the two important Assamese Kavyas composed by Mankar and Durgabara during the closing decades of the fifteenth century definitely prove the existence and popularity of this cult on the eve of the Neo-Vaisnavite movement.⁶⁰

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⁵³ Ramananda 459 ff; Neog M (SAHT) p 85
⁵⁴ Bhusana 200, 748; Neog M (SAHT) p 85
⁵⁵ Lakheru. J., Katha Guru Carit, P 20; Neog M (SAHT) p 85
⁵⁶ Lakheru. J. Katha Guru Carit P, 27 in the Assam Buranji (SM) that are references to Tara-Devi(art-33) Syama-Devi(art-46) and the trantric work Tantra-Sara-Samuceaya; Neog M. SAHT p 85
⁵⁷ Daityari, 146; Ramananda 432; KGC 65 as quoted by Neog M SAHT p 85
⁵⁸ Ramananda 441 f (Neog M. SAHT) p 85
⁵⁹ Daityari 9 as quoted in, Neog M. SAHT p 85
⁶⁰ SNS (NVIV and SIA) p 5
The Baraganga rock inscription of Mahabhuti Varman (554 A.D.) which refers to the king as Parama- Bhagavata is the earliest recorded evidence of the existence of Vaisnavism. The Kalika-Purana (C 12th) mention five manifestations of Vasudeva with their pithas, of which Hayagriva-madhava at Manikesta and Vasudeva in the Dikkaravasini region are most important. This Vaisnavism also known on Pancaratna Vaisnavism or Trantric vaisnavism is quite different from the Neo-Vaisnavism introduced by Sankaradeva and his followers.

According to S.N. Sharma, Vaisnavism prevalent in Assam before the advent of Sankaradeva was mainly Vasudevaism affiliated to the Pancaratna Cult.

"The Kalika Purana mentions that Hayagriva Madhava, Matsya Madhava, Pandunatha Madhava and Vasudeva and Varaha Madhava were worshipped at different place of kamrupa".

Kalika Purana also refers eight, twelve and eighteen syllable mantras of the Pancaratna system for the worship of Vasudeva and Hayagriva-Madhava. The Pancaratna Vasudevaism was a form of trantric Vaisnavism where mantra, yantra and other trantric procedures were employed.

61. Kakati B; Mother Goddess Kamakhya p 71-72; SNS; NVM and SIA p 5
62. Ibid.
63. Neog m. SAHT p 86
64. SNS Article Vaisnavism in CHA edited by HKB VolII p 229
65. Kalikapurana chs 81-82 CHA VolIII p 229
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid; 57, 78, 80, 87-186 and CHA - 229
An account of the origin of the stone image of Hayagriva Madhava of Hajo is given in Yogini Tantra. 68 “The present temple of Madhava was built in 1583 by Raghudevanarayana (1581-1593) over the ruins of an earlier shrine of which the basement still remains with a row of sculptured elephants ....” 69 Madhavdeva before his indoctrination to Neo-Vaisnavism visited the Madhava temple and recited slokas in salutation to deity enshrined there. 70

“Hayagriva is to be worshipped with various mantras and the Purusasulka. 71 In nyasa three (Vasudeva, Sam Karsana and Pradyumma) of the four form of deity (caturvyuha) of the Pancaratna” code, along with Trivikrama (Possibly wrong substitute for Aniruddha of the Vyuha group who appears in the corresponding ‘sloka’ of the Brahma-Puma). 72

It is believed that the “Garuda, Bhumi, Lakshmi, Pusti, some of the weapons and ornaments of Vishnu Isanti of the Pithas and his Saktas, and other deities are to be medicated upon. 73

Cow’s milk, fish and venison, goat, Salinas (porcupine) and hare, among different offerings are delectable to Vishnu. 74 The Pancaratna, it may be noted, do not stick to strictly Vegetarians offerings. 75

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68 Yoginitantra II 9.219-243; Neog M. p 86 (SAHT)
69 JARS II p 42; Neog M. p 86 (SAHT)
70 Daityari 1096-98; Neog M. SAHT P86
71 Il 9. 168 ff; Neog M. SAHT p 86
72 61.39; Neog M. SAHT p 86
73 (Il 9.185-91); Neog M. SAHT p 86
74 (Il 9. 255 f); Neog M. p 87 SAHT
75 Schrader O. Introduction to Pancaratna and Ahirbudhaya Samhitai Madras 1916 p 97; Neog M. p 87 SAHT.
It is already mention that the Yoginitantra refers to a Vishnu pitha among nine sacred regions Yoni (in Kamrupa)\(^76\)

The doctrine of Mantra and Yantra in the Samhitas of Pancaratna Vaisnavism are indistinguishable from Sakta teachings. Magic in all its form, with innumerable spells and rites and talisman is carefully described and eagerly commanded.\(^77\)

The continuation of Vasudevaism cult after Purana also proved by prevalence of some other evidences; (a) two copperplate grant dating 1392 and 1401 (in the subdivision of North Lakhimpur)\(^78\)

Where mention is made about gift of land by king Satyanarayana it Sadhayapuri to one Narayan Dvija begin with invocations to Vasudeva, Isana and Amba. The sacred grant by king Laksminarayana to Ravideva as the devout worshipper of Vasudeva.\(^79\)

(b) Visnu images of various dates have been discovered in different parts of Assam\(^80\). (c) In the late group of Caritas Sankara is described a having discovered a four-armed Vasudeva image of shining black stone.\(^81\)

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76 Yogini Tantra I II 24 f.; Neog M. SAHT 87
78 Sarveswar Barua; some ancient relics found in North Lakhimpur JARS III p 40-46; Neog M. Pracya Sasanavali, Sankaradeva and his times p 87; SNS; NVM and SIA p 5; CHA Voi III (ed) HKB p 229
79. Yogini Tantra I II 24F Neog M SAHT 87
80. Epigraphica Indica XVIII pp 329 f; ARASI 1923-24 p 80; 1927-28 pp 112-6; 1936-37 p 60; R.M. Nath Antiquities of the Kapili and the Jamuna Valleys JARS v p 35; Eearly History of Kamrupa p 146 Neog M.SAHT P87
81. Ramacarana 1515 ff; KathaGuruCarit, 34; Neog M. SAHT p 87
(d) It is mentioned, that, Sankara's father Kusumbara worshipped Gopesvara Visnu at Singari to obtain a son.\textsuperscript{82} (e) The prevalence of Vasudeva cult also proved by the personal names which are found in the land grants of early Kamrupa kings and the genealogies of a fact early Vaisnava reformers.\textsuperscript{83}

(f) Similarly the list of the name of ancestor of Gopala Ata, a Vaisnava proselytizer of the 16\textsuperscript{th} Century includes among other such names as Vasudeva, Pradyumna, Sankarasana and Aniruddha\textsuperscript{84} which signify the popularity of the Vasudeva. (g) Another noteworthy evidence of the existence of the Vasudeva cult in the post Sankarite period of Assam is furnished by the prevalence of the worship of Vasudeva in Smartta rites like Sraddha and Pravana. Brahmins who used to worship Vasudeva were known as Pracina-Panthi, while those whose forefathers came to Assam later and adopted the modes of Smartta practices modified by Raghunandana (15\textsuperscript{th} C) of Bengal are not required to worship Vasudeva.\textsuperscript{85}

The Bhagavata literature also seems to have penetrated into this land prior to the Sankardeva movement.\textsuperscript{86} The Assamese Translation of Ramayana by Madhav Kandali, and popular translation of Mahabharata by Harihara Vipra, Kaviratna Sarasvati and Rudra Kandali all belonging to

\textsuperscript{82}.VV 94 ff; Neog M. SAHT p 87

\textsuperscript{83}.SNS NVM and SIA p 5; Barua B.K. a cultural history of Assam p 50.

\textsuperscript{84}.Kakati B Mother Goddess Kamakhya p 75; SNS NVM and SIA p 6; KGC Edit, UC Lekharu.

\textsuperscript{85}.ibid.

\textsuperscript{86}.Daityari 104 f; Ramananda 176 ff; Neog M. SAHT 87
— fourteenth century A.D. established that Vaisnavism as found in the two epic was not unknown to a section of people.  

Regarding the prevalence of Buddhism in Assam: Sankardeva described in Kirtana-ghosa “Buddha avatara veda patha Kar chana vamanaya astre muhi acta sarvajna sadaya pramatta loka pasanda acara (Kirtana 1.13) means the Buddha incarnation as leading to the desertion of the Vedic culture, cheating of the people with Sastras advocating vamacara and to peoples remaining deluded to the extent of indulging in the practices of the heretics. “The description given by Sankardeva tends to imply that during his own time there were people in the Society who followed a degenerated buddhist Trantricism of Vajrayana form. In the biography of Sankardeva Katha Guruu Carit is describe how he had encountered with some Buddhist magicians (baudhamatriya tatakiya).  

K. L. Barua and Dr. B.K. Barua are of opinion that thought Huien-Tsang did not notice any trace of Buddhism in Assam in the seventh century A.D. Esoteric Buddhism in the form of Vajrayana gradually began to gain ground secretly from the ninth century onward, till it was practically obliterated by the surging wave of Vaisnavism.

87. Kakati B (edit) Aspects of Early Assamese Literature CHA II pp 16ff; SNS NVM and SIA f
88. Kirtana 1.13
89. Neog M. SAHT 88
90. CHA ed HKB V-III; Art VII. p 241
91. Ibid and Neog M. SAHT p 88
92. B.K. Barua; A cultural history of Assam p 162 f; SNS (NVM and SIA) p 78
In the Vamsigopaladevas Carita by Ramanandha Dvija it is mentioned that, Vamsigopaladeva during his proselytizing activities in eastern Assam received stiff opposition from a section of people called Baudhas, probably adherents of the debased trantric Buddhism. They claimed themselves as devotees of twelve gurus (bara-Guru) and in practice made no discrimination as regard caste creed and sex rules in their conduct of life. The references also available about the excess of Trantric or Vajrayana Buddhist. “The Vajrayana Buddhism” a queer mixture of monistic philosophy, magic and erotic, with a small admixture of Buddhist ideas.

The Vajrayana scripture Sadhanamala mentions its four Pithas — Kamakhya or Kamrupa, Sirihatta, Purnagiri and Oddiyana. The Scholar opines that the first two places being evidently in Kamrupa.

The references are available in Madhavdeva to such creed (pasanda raya), which had no discrimination in matter of food and sex (anna-yoni-vicara) and administered Mantras to people in secret.

In Vyasascama of Rama Saraswati references of Buddha cult are made in connection with the plight of the Brahmana (when people —

93. Ramananda Dvija; Vamsigopaladevar Charita pp 27, 141 f, SNS NVNM and SIA p7
94. KGC 13; Neog M. SAHT p 88
95. Winteritz IIP388; Buddhist Tantrism is practically Buddhist Hinduism, Hinduism or Saivism in Buddhist Grab (L. de la Vallee Poussin; Tantrism (Buddhist) ER. E XII, p 193b; Neog M. SAHT p 88
96. pp 453 455 Edited by Benoytosh Bhattacharjya 1; Neog M. SAHT p 88
97. Neog M. SAHT p 88
98. MS v v 294-350; Neog M. SAHT p 89 CHA Vol-Ill p 241 ch 7
— indulge in sin) in the Kali age who would take to the left handed rites and scriptures (Vamayana Sastra)⁹⁹ and adopt Buddhism as a source of income with the performance of sorcery and assert the irreligion as religion with a loud voice.¹⁰⁰

About the middle of the 18th C the khamtis (numbering 5000) who professed Hinayana Buddhism migrated from Burma to Assam and settled on the bank of the Tengapani River south of Sadiya at the consent of Ahom king¹⁰¹.

Another Buddhist tribal group Singphos also migrated from Burma around 1793 and settled in the bank of Tangapani and Budhi Dihing river¹⁰².

Agoni Phakiyals or Tai Phakes another group of Buddhist came from Burma in about 1760. The Naras, the turungs and Aitaniyas are other Buddhist trickling into Assam. Some Burmese who left after the Burmese expulsion from Assam were settled at Singimari in the Garo Hills and Districts of Goalpara and Kamrup. Who later on identified as Bhuddist. In Tibetan Buddhist group the Sherdukpan Monpas and Khamtis are predominant who at present inhabitant of Arunachal Pradesh.¹⁰³

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⁹⁹. Ibid
¹⁰⁰. Ibid
¹⁰¹. M cosh 145; CHA V-ill (art 7) p 242
¹⁰². Neog Living Buddhism in Assam; Pragjyotisa Souvenir 133412If; CHA; Ibid
¹⁰³. CHA V-ill ibid
The Sikhism also prevalent in a minor way in medieval Assam. The Sikh strongly believed that in 1505 Guru Nanak the founder of Sikhism came to Kamrupa and visited Garhgaon and the Kamakhya temple and for some time halted at Dhubri in course of his first missionary tour\textsuperscript{104}. When many persons embraced Sikhism.\textsuperscript{105} Guru Teg Bahadur – the ninth Guru of Sikh also visited Dhubri in 1666 that came along with Raja Ram Singh of Amber. It is said that he constructed a Gurudwara known as Damdama Gurudwara\textsuperscript{106}. He also visited the Kamakhya temple and left behind many disciples in Assam among whom Raja Ram Rai of Gouripur is noteworthy.\textsuperscript{107} The Sikh settlers of Barkola, Chaparmukh, Nithipara and Lanka in the district of Nagaon, Assam also believe that they are the descendent of those Sikh soldiers came from Punjab in 1820 at the instance of Ranjit Singha for fighting against the Burmese in favour of King Chandrakanta Simha\textsuperscript{108}.

Regarding the Islam, the seeds of Islam in Assam were shown by the soldiers of earliest known Muslim invasion\textsuperscript{109} of Assam who settled in Assam after their complete defeat\textsuperscript{110}.

\textsuperscript{104} Barpujari HK Presidential Address Punjabi History Congress, Patiala, modern Section 1979, 1-9; Sardar Kirpal Singha (Assamese Sikh) Smritigrantha Inaugural ceremony of Gurudwara Mataji Chaparmukh 1982. 8; CHA III (art 7) p 242
\textsuperscript{105} CHA p 242 (III)
\textsuperscript{106} Pavitra Assam 292f; CHA p 242-243 III (art 7); Assam in the days of the Company HKB 295
\textsuperscript{107} Sarder Kirpal Sing,CHA Voll III p 243
\textsuperscript{108} CHA Voll III p 243
\textsuperscript{109} Kanai-brasi-bowa Rack inscription 1127 Saka; prachya Sasanawali edited by M. Neog; plate 1, CHA 243 (Voll-III)
\textsuperscript{110} CHA Voll-III, p 243
Tughril Khan who led an army against Assam in 1256-57 built the first Mosque in the soil of Assam. The Shah Badan, the first Muslim saint who visited Assam during the fourteenth century. He was the contemporary of Iban Batuta - the famous traveller who also visited Assam during that time. "Shah Baden was immediately followed by many other Muslim Saints". The Powa Mecca, the holy tomb (dargah) of Abu Bakar's saint son Ghiyasuddin Aulia was constructed in 1614. Sayed Hatim, Satrajit and Abu Bakar jointly invaded Assam where Ghiyasuddin lost the life in battle field. Another invader Mirjumla also constructed a mosque in Mankachar.

Shihab-Uddin-Talish who also visited along with Mirjumla left an interesting note on Muslims and medieval Assam.

The references of "the Dargah" of the five pirs viz. Shah Akhan, Shah Bagmar, Jhah Saran, Shah Surfi and Shah Kamal of Dhubri district of Assam also available.

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111 Ibid
112 Ibid
113 Ibid
114 Ibid
115 Ibid
116 Ibid
117. Pavitra 295 f, SK Bhuyan Annals of the Delhi Badshahate, 101 Shah Akbar is said to be only saint to expire in Assam. There is a dargah in the Garo Hills Districts in the name of Shah Kamal, who is likely to be one of the five Pir connected with the dargah at Dhubri; Ibid 296 n 301; CHA III (Art 7) p 244.
For the spread of Islam the most important contributory factor was perhaps the coming of the four pirs particularly Shah Milan, commonly known in Ajan pir.\footnote{CHA V-III p 24}

He was first punished by Gadadhar Simha, but, later on the king patronized him in 1686, after being convinced of his exceptional Spiritual attainments. He continued to preach the message of Islam up to 1738 after being settled in the Saragua Chapari of Sibsagar accompanied with his disciples. The Pir compiled devotional songs known as \textit{Zikirs and Jaris} in Assamese having a lot of similarity with the devotional songs of the Assamese Vaisnavism in respect of diction as well as content.

Regarding the other grant of patron of Ahom kings to Islamic Saints, "In 1760 king Rajesvar Simha issued a Copper plate in the name of one Ajana Khandakar granting land and eleven families of Paiks for offering regular services to an Islamic holy place called Bibir Mokam. The land so granted was situated in the Bajali area now belonging to the Barpeta District.\footnote{PS Prachya Sasanavali edited by M. Neog; Bhumi 117} In 1780 Lakshmi Simha issued land grant to Anwar Faquir, who was known as Guwahatliya Farcchi Pada Anwar Haji Faquir. The Land was granted by the king after his acknowledgement of his spiritual attainments. This Charter also contains references to four holy places, Bar Makam of Shah Mada (Bausi Paragana) Makam of Shah Faquir Bade-nagar Pargana, Makan of the five Pirs (Ksetri Paragana) and Bar Makan of Hajo.\footnote{Ibid place 83; CHA Ibid.}
Two minor cults particularly the Nathism and cult of Dharma were also prevalent in Assam. The Nathism seems to have been prevalent in Assam from before the time Sankaradeva. The Nath, are also known as Yogis, - because of the practices of various form of Yoga. (They work as Kataris as their profession)*. They are a branch of the Saiva sect, although it is asserted that “Nathism derived its inspiration from the Vajrayana. (Or in other words, “the Progenitors of the Natha School Hinduised the teaching of the Buddhist Tantras.”) Nathism today is scarcely traceable in Assam, but some influences of Natha legends are still felt in Assam folk songs.

Ananta Cult, the cult of Dharma found reference in the Katha Guru Carita where it is said that before the conversion to the Vaisnavite faith poet Ananta Kandali was a worshippers of Dharma. “The cult of Dharma seems to have been long dead ,although the deity is worshipped along with the worship of the Snake Goddess Monasa, with the certain songs”. The prevalence of the cult of Monasa a Marai the mother (small pox deity, Sitala) also got adequate reference in scholar’s works and ancient text.

* Cast profession of the rearing of silk cocoon and springing of silk yarn.

121 Benoytosh Bhattacharya; Trantric culture among the Buddhist. The cultural heritage of India II p 218; CHA Vol Ill p 89

122 M. Neog, Serpent love and Serpent worship in Assam, The Eastern Anthropologists IV 1951, pp 150ff.; Neog M. SAHT p 89

123 Neog; The worship of Dharma in Assam; JASB 1951 XVII no. 3 pp 219 ff.

124 Sankara Madhava, p 128; Saivism, Neog M. Ai the small pox Goddess of Assam; Man in India XXXI 1951 pp 72ff; Descriptive catalogue of Assamese Manuscripts p 189; Neog M. SAHT p 90.
The movement, which termed as the neo-vaisnavite movement enriched the Assamese life morally-socially and educationally and contributed a great deal to the realm of literature and art from its very inception. The highly ritualistic and priest-ridden religious rites of Brahminical religion were considered unsuitable for the majority of the people who belong to the non-Aryan ethnic groups with little or no knowledge of Sanskrit language in which Brahminical rites and ritual were conducted.

Sankaradeva who started the neo-vaisnavite movement in Assam and Koch Behar was born in such a crucial time in 1449 AD in the Siromoni Bhuyan family at Alipukhuri (Bordowa).

The simplicity and purity of the new faith opened its arm to all the communities and no discrimination whatever was made on the basis of caste and status while conferring initiation or ordination.

The religion of love and devotion preached by Sankaradeva and his followers was not a new religion. It was embedded in the Bhagavata-Purana, which is considered as an essence of Vedanta, Gita and other Vaisnavite literature. The entire credit goes to Sankaradeva for adopting that religion or faith to the need of the parables and democratizing the monotheistic Vaisnava cult, so long not accessible to the common person.

1. Details available; Dvija Bhusana Sri Sankaradeva edited by, D. Borkakati; Dvija Ramananda, Guru Charita; edited, H.V. Gupta Ram.. Thakuria; ed, Haliram Mahanta; B Kakati, life and Teaching of Sankaradeva; LN Bezbarua; Sri Sankaradeva; Neog Sankaradeva and his times; 98-122, SNS NVM and SIA.
2. Ibid
3. Ibid
Like other medieval schools of India, the neo-vaisnavite movement in Assam is essentially based on devotional elements.

Absolute self-surrender at the feet of the Lord Visnu-Narayana represented by Vasudeva-Krishna and the feeling of ecstatic joy and happiness in serving and worshipping him are the two main characteristic of Bhakti both as a means and as the end of human existence. It has been said that in Kaliyuga there is no better mode of serving God then Bhakti.

According to Sankaradeva the knowledge or Jnana without Bhakti is futile. Knowledge is considered essential in the process of self realization. "The highest ideal of a true devotee according to Sankara ... an eternal continuity with God which offers unique advantage for serving the lord. His attitude towards karma is disireless action performed in the name of God - on the pattern of the Gita.

"Of the three types ceremomial actions viz. Nitya (daily) naimittiaka (occasional) and Kamya (motivated or having attachment), the reformer speaks vehemently against the performance of the last where the selfish motives predominates. The other two are tolerated but they must be conducive to the development of the two types of Bhakti viz. Sakarna having desire and niskarma (desireless), the latter has been highly extolled and discussed in detail in all devotional works of the vaisnavite period.

4. SNS Neo-Vaisnavite Movement and Sattra Institution of Assam 100-18; CHA Vol. III p 234
5. Ibid, p 234; CHA p 234, SNS (art 7)
6. Ibid 234-35
Out of the nine fold or modes of practicing bhakti, "Assamese Vaisnavism especially extolled of first two, viz. Sarvana and Kirtana as highly efficacious for the inculcation of the devotional attitude of mind. They are not subjected to the restriction of time place and persons."  

In this connection, Sankaradeva says, "Although there are nine ways of devotion to Madhava, Sarvana and Kirtana are considered to be the best among them." The Samarana also given due importance next to that as it is not circumscribed by any restriction or circumstance. Thus the Vaisnavite literature comprising of songs, plays verse translation and Kavyas is mainly intended for the purpose of Sarvana, Kirtana and Smarana.

For awakening and development of devotional sensibility, Assamese Vaisnavism laid stress on the indispensability of four fundamental principles; Nama (names and glories of deity—Vishnu), Deva (God), Guru (Special guide) and Bhakta (holy association). Regarding the Sankaradeva's view about the other Gods, he admitted the existence of other Gods; he considered them as off shoots or partial manifestations of the supreme God Narayana who incarnated himself as Gopala Krishna with all his glory.

The liberalization of cast system along with the equality and spirituality was the characteristic feature of the neo-vaishnavite ---

7. Sankaradeva, Bhagavata Vol I 38; CHA III 235, SNS (Art 7)
8. Sankaradeva Bhagavata Vol 38; CHA Vol-III, p 235
9. CHA Vol-III; 235 SNS (Art 7)
10. Ibid
11. Ibid
— movement in Assam. "He preached equality in the spiritual
domain. To him a Candala who remembered God with heart and soul is
superior to a Brahmana".  

As a result of this liberal policy in respect of religion, the
vaisnavite movement succeeded in initiating into Hinduism a large
number of non-Arya inhabitants in the medieval period, making them
devoted, righteous and refined in their manners and customs.

The various scholars point out that, Sankaradeva were primarily
a religious and social reformer and a speculative thinker. His purpose was
not to propound a philosophy based on religion supported by discursive
reasoning and abstract thinking, but, to propagate a simple system of
faith based on devotion. He could rightly perceive that the society of his
time was in need of a reformed religion rather than a well-formulated
philosophical system.

The neo-vaisnavite movement brought a renaissance in all the
aspects of life of the people of Assam. It brought a spirit of nationalism
and harmony among the people of diverse ethnic group of Assam. It had
rendered the reformatory service to the people of Assam.

The illiteracy of the common people did not act as obstacle to the
acquisition of this knowledge, as there were arrangements ——

12. Bhagavata X V 12622; SNS (Art 7) 236; CHA p 236, Voll. Ill
14. Neog SAHT, 222-44; SNS NVM and SIA 25f; CHAArticle 7 p237.
15. Art 7, p 237, VolIll; CHA 237
16. Rajguru S. Medieval Assamese Society, p278
17. Ibid
— everywhere for reading aloud portions of the scriptures and explaining their purpose to audience of household members and large congregations of villagers. This development may be conveniently term as illiterate literacy\(^{18}\).

One of the most important teachings of vaisnavism is that one should not only respect and be non-violent to the fellow beings but sould show kindness and pity to all beings because the soul of is God living in the heart of all\(^{19}\).

Another teaching of neo-vaisnavism is that the both ends and mean must be justified as it laid stress on honest earning and honest living\(^{20}\).

Sankaradeva nominated Madhavdeva as his successor. After the deaths of Sankardeva, Damodaradeva (1489-1598) and Harideva (1493-1568) ceded from the section led by Madhavadeva and formed a new section commonly known as *Brahma Samhati*\(^ {21}\).

Satras affiliated to this Samhati are more numerous and some of them were patronized by the latter Ahom rulers. These Satras became very affulent and prosperous being recipients of thousand of acre revenue free grant\(^ {22}\). Bhattadeva, Vanamalideva, Gopala Deva, Yadumonideva and Vamisgopala deva (1548-1668 A) belong to this section.

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22. Barpujari H.K. Comprehensive History of Assam vol III p 239
The principal Sattras of upper Assam viz Auniati, Dakhinpat, Garmur, Karuabahi and Patbausi at Barpeta old Vaikutapur at Koch Behar are of Brahma Samhati. These were known as the royal Sattras.

Again, towards the second half of the Seventeenth century the Mahapurisiya sect (Neo-Vaisnavite) branched off into three groups known as Samhatis viz, Purasamhati, Nikasamhati and Kalasamhati. This division into Samhati neither did take place during lifetime of Sankaradeva non-during the time of his immediate successor.

Sattras owing allegiance to the two grandson of Sankaradeva came to be known as Parusa Samhati because Purusttama Thakur is said to have initiated this branch.

The branch sprung from Gopala Ata who emphasised the importance and supremacy of Guru came to be known as Kalasamhati on account of the fact that Gopala Ata’s Seat of propagation was Kaljhar. The Sattras affiliated to this samhati are democratic in outlook and activities.

Mathuradeva Budha Ata, Padma Ata and Kesavacarana Ata are regarded as initiators of Nika Samhati because of the fact that this branch believed that purity and neatness of the original neo-vaisnavism preached by Sankaradeva and Madavdeva are retained to this

23. Barpujari H.K.Comprehensive History of Assam vol III p 239
25. SNS, ASECHA p 212
26. SNS, ASECHA p 212 213; NVM SIA CHAP IV
27. Ibid, Neog M. SAHT p 151-155
— Samhati. The word Nika means clean or pure. It emphasized on the holly association of devotees.

However, these branches (Parusa Samhati, Kalasamhati and Nika Samhati) differ very little in respect of the fundamental doctrine of the sect.

The Brahma Samhati's subjects of Damodor Deva and Harideva have given equal importance to Brahminical and devotional rites which was against the Sankarite School which laid greater emphasis on devotional aspects. Thus by the second half of the Seventeenth century whole Neo-Vaisnavite movement of Assam was divided in different Samhatis; Bramha Samhati, Parusa Samhati, Kalasamhati and Nika Samhati.

28. Ibid
29. Ibid
30. Ibid
THE RELIGION OF THE AHOM AND SOME ASPECTS OF THEIR RELIGIOUS POLICY

There is no definite statement regarding the religion of the Ahoms who had ruled the valley of the Brahmaputra for six centuries. Hiteswar Barbarua opines that the Ahoms were the creed of Buddhist religion of non-violence, based on some religious works. These are –


It has been observed from their religious thought that, they were partly Hinayana Buddhist, partly Trantric Buddhist, partly animistic and finally they had their own form of ancestor-worship along with many gods and spirits. The influence of Tao religious thought also discernible in the Ahom religion.

According to P. Gogoi, though the Buddhist elements were prevalent in Ahom rituals their religious belief is mainly based on the ‘supernatural powers’; formless spirits or nats invoked with rice, eggs, and flowers and sometimes with animal sacrifices but without the icons of Gods for the purpose of worship.

According to B. J. Terwiel, it is difficult to assign any particular stamp to the Ahoms to any religious system, that the Ahoms

1. Besides there exists religious book written in Sandri-bark and preserved in the most sacred manner in many hearths and homes of Ahoms in upper Assam. There are yet to be brought to light Barbarua H. Ahomar Din 1981, p-389.
were Buddhist arise out of the fact that they performed Phur Lung puja, which is largely identified with the Buddhist traditions. While, those deny influence of Buddhism are emphasis more on the celebration of the religious ceremonies like the Umpha, Saipha, Rikkhawa, Me-Dam-Me-Phi etc.

The worship of the Somdeo or Chumpha, said to be an icon of Ahom God, the prerogative of the reigning Ahom Kings in an exclusive form appears to be an enigma. In the religious behaviors of Ahom, there is no trace of image worship at least no such evidence has become known so far. Ahom system of propitiation, oblations to the Gods generally begin with the prayer Cao-phra, Chao-Tra, Chao-Nu-Ru, Chao-kao with head high towards the sky and not bowing down before the image of any deity. It appears Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism and even Hinduism had some influence over Tai religious culture in Southeast Asia prior to the advent to the Ahoms to Assam.

In the beginning of their rule, the Ahom priests known as Deodhais acted a political advisers but they were gradually relegated to priestly functions and to divining of events. The Deodhai continued to perform all ceremonial occasions and sacrifices in the orthodox Ahom fashion even up to the end of their rule.

6. Better known as Chumpa-rungmung said to have been an image of a heron put in a Casket. Langdon gave it to his great grandsons Khunlung and Khunlai when they were sent down to earth to rule over the Ahoms who claimed their descents. This might have been also a metal. At best, it could have been symbolic.
These sacrifices were calculated to secure the welfare of the kings and the people, or were performed for bringing victory to Ahom arms, or to celebrate successes in war.

The association of Ahom priests was indispensable in the coronation of a Monarch, whom they blessed uttering old time verses in a musical tone reminding him of the primordial Gods Phena-tara as creator, Langdon as Indra, Taringpha or the God of learning, Phai as God of fire and Kao-kham as God of water; and their own royal ancestors Khunlung and Khunlai, who were attributed a divine origin.

The image of Chom-Chang, which Sukapha had brought with him from his ancestral home, was the tutelary deity of the Ahom rulers until the end of their rule and there were regular provision from the state for the maintenance of the worship of this image.

The Ahoms also looked upon Charaideo, their first capital as the most sacred place of their faith. It subsequently became their necropolis, and there were many shrines where Ahom worship was regularly maintained.

From Pali Chronicles collaborated by archeological finds, it is learnt that the Thais had come under Buddhist Hindu influence and the Ahom being members of the Thais race, had also come under these influence.


9. According to orthodox Ahom tradition Chom and Cheng were two images. The former was with Hkun-tai who founded a kingdom in Assam, and latter was with younger prince Hkun-lai who established a kingdom among the Nara tribes (Mung-Hkwan) Rev. W.W. Cochrane's 'The Northern Shan' in Shans at Home, by Mrs. Leslie Milne, London, 1910, p-19.

— Yunan, the most powerful Thai principality was called Nan-Chao by the Chinese and Gandhara by the Indo-Chinese; its capital was known as Videha-rajya. Yunan adopted Buddhism through the preaching of an Indian saint named Avalokiteswara. In the 19th century A.D. an Indian monk visited it from Magadha named Chandragupta. The Hinduised Thai kingdom of Gandhara or Yunan flourished till 1253 when it was overrun and conquered by the great Mangol chief Kublai Khan.11

It is believed that, their states to the west and south of Yunan and to the east of the mountain ranges, which border on Manipur and Assam had colonies or settlements of Hindus in large numbers. Thus, the main spring of the civilization of most of the Thai states lay in India and not in China.12

Definite traces of Buddhist-Hindu influence are found in the Ahom scripture including Phura-Tara-Ahom (or Phura-Along or Mimmmang Phuralung), which is the most important and venerated by the Ahom priests even up to this day. The book expounds the virtue of non-violence in deed and thought. The Almighty God Sikia exhorts Lengdon and others deities to rule the earth according to the principle of Ahimsa, in violation of teacher's injunction, a disciple partakes of the flesh of a fowl. Consequently the teacher dilates the virtue of Ahimsa of which non-slaughter and non-participation in animal flesh constitute the first step. According to the Ahom traditions Minmang Pheralung, the Bible of the Ahoms, was brought to Assembly the priest who accompanied the —

12. R. C. Majumdar, Hindu Colonies in the Far East, 1944, p-225 to 229.
— conqueror of Sukapha. Another Classic Pung-Gao-Kham, also known as the Ahom Ramayana, which contain an account of Ramchandra, called by the Ahom as Chang-gao-kham.\footnote{Bhuyan S.K. Anglo Assamese Relation 13}

From this tradition and chronicles it is fairly certain that the Tai as a nation were animistic, worshipping the beneficent spirit of the hills, forests, and water and propitiating numerous God with sacrifices and offerings.\footnote{Wood W AR. A History of Siam, Bangkok 1933 p 39 Reginald Le May.}

C. Dodd, from his personal experience in Laos stated that the religious belief and practices of the Tai people, like those of their neighbour in people were far from being homogenous or self consistent. He further pointed out that the Tai followed and practiced two systems such as the worship of the disembodied spirits and Buddhism.\footnote{Ibid p 39 Trui Chi A Short History of Chinese Civilization London 1947 p 112/115}

Thus the Ahoms who came to Assam from upper Burma in A.D1228 were familiar with both the forms of Buddhism- Mahayana and Hinyanism with the Trantric system.\footnote{Hall DGE; Burma p.8 John Stuart; Burma through the Centuries London 1909 p28 Phra Sarasas; My Country Thailand 1950.p.184.Graham W. op cit p 125} It may be noted that the Tai could not get rid themselves of the influence of their earlier animistic cult.\footnote{The Journal of Asiatic Society of Great Britain and London 1912 p.491/492}

Thus it is evident that the Ahoms in the time of their arrival maintained a kind of religion which was an admixture of some element of Buddhism, traditional animism along with the priesthood of Deodhai.
The penetration of the Hinduism to the Ahoms was possible due to the royal favour shown as a token of gratitude to the members of a Brahmin family among whom Sudangpha (A.D. 1398-1407) passed his early life.\(^{18}\) The prince was born and brought in a Brahmin family and naturally he patronized the Brahman who looked after him in his childhood. He was the first Ahom king to adopt the coronation rights by ascending the Singarighar. It is said that, the socio-political and linguistic as exigencies actuated them gradually to lean toward Hinduism. This was not concisely or because of the Hindu religion as such, but in the wake of a plural society which was slowly emerging out of the Ahom conquest, expansion and absorptions. Thus, the process Ahomisation gave way to Hinduisation\(^{19}\).

It is observed that, prior to their conversation to Hinduism; the Ahom monarchs were not attached to any particular faith in the orthodox sense. Hence, they were not cut off socially from the people professing tribal cults. Most of their religious functions were of the nature of state ceremonies\(^{20}\).

The first 200 years, in their domination in Assam the Ahom continued to follow their traditional religion with sacrifices in their —

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— religious performances. It is also observed that their Hinduisation process was due to both accidental circumstances and deliberate policy. It may be a deliberate policy by the rulers, which may be coincidental with some significant accidents in true sense, may be termed as such with an interpretation of so-called matter or accident with a required projection by the priestly class for their own motives.

After his accession to the throne, Sudangpha who was brought up in a Brahmin family brought the old Brahmin along with his seven sons and established in Dihing with princely status. The reign of Sudangpha marked the first stage in the growth of Brahminical influence among the Ahoms. As he was born and brought up in a Brahmin family of Habung country, at the time of enthronement, he installed a Salagram or a sacred stone worshipped by the Brahmin as a form of Lord Vishnu.

From this time Hindu's rites and ceremonies began to be observed and the Salagram was given a place with the Ahom idol Somdeo.

King Susenpha (1439-1488) was the first one who involved directly with Saivism as an aspect of Hinduism by rebuilding the Nagasankara (Shiva) temple of modern Sonitpur district in 1480.

In the time of Dihingiya Raja (1495-1541) allies Suhungmung a battle took place between the Ahoms and the Kacharis. To decide the fate of the battle both the parties agreed that whichever party would be able to cut the neck of an animal offered to God Mahadeva (Shiva)

at Devagrama (modern Dergaon) with one stroke of the sword would be accepted to be the winner, where the Ahom succeeded. This episode definitely is a proof, which proves that the worshiping of Shiva with sacrifices was already in the habit of Kachari and Ahom, though, not converse with the Brahminical way of worshiping Shiva.25.

The first Ahom king who appointed a Brahmin priest for worshiping a deity (Shiva) was Pratap Simha allies Susenpha (1603-1664).26 It is said that the place of worship is now come to known as the temple of Mehesvara (Mahesvaraghara).27

The Shiva temple of Negheriting was constructed by Pratap Simha. It had considerable importance to the Ahom Monarchy. The Ahom Monarch used to take the nirmalya from this temple every morning.28 The Brahminical influence increased in such an extent that, when the excavation of Misagarh tank was completed, the Brahmins were called into consecrate it.29 Thus, it appears that Saivism became a popular religion by 15th century of the Ahom rule.

The Neo-Vaisnavite religion during that time obtains a strong footing in the country. The policy of the Ahom ruler toward Neo-Vaisnavite movement will be discussed subsequently.

26. Ibid 118, SMAB p81
27. Ibid
28. Bhuyan S. K. (Edit) Tung Khungia Buranjil, p-44. Lamkuri is an Ahom name for Shiva. Maniram Dewan finds an occasion to say – Caraidevete sakalo devatara puja haita, matra ahoma bhasate deo hankare arthat sivake panikarideo kahe. Burunji Vivek Ratna folio 2A, 4B.
Gadadhar Simha (1681-1696) appointed Brahmana priest for the Visvesvera temple, which is yet to be identified. He constructed the Shiva temple of Umananda in 1694. He is described as a devotee of Shiva in the concerned inscription. He also issued another land grant in the following year to the above mentioned temple. The monarch also constructed the Bisvanath temple in 1685. For the upkeep of the temple he granted land and provided priests, servitors and dancers. In 1690, he performed a series of *japa* and *homa* with 108 Brahmans at the same temple.

Rudra Simha (1696-1714) was a devotee of Shiva and Devi as well as Vishnu and did a lot for the promotion of the Hindu religion. It is said that he introduced some manners and customs in conformity with the Vedic tradition by prohibiting some. He is described as the devotee of 'Umananda', and of 'Hara Gauri'. References are also available that he donated a plot of land to Agamacharya Brahmana and appointed four Brahmans as priests. There is a significant statement that the dictates of the Veda should not be transgressed by a king (*rajana vedalanganam anucitam iti*). Even on the body of the canon, Rudra Simha was described as a devotee of Hara and Gauri.

29. Contemporary History of Assam Vol-III p218/219
32. BhuyanS.K.(Edit)TungKhungiaBurunji,p41.lbid
33. Buranji Vivekratna 143A.
34. Neog M. Prachya Sasanawali Text,8/9,20F,10F,20F,1104F,110,154.
* Contemporary History of Assam Vol-III p-219
The significant contribution in the area of Saivism was the composition of a Sivapurana in 351 Assamese verse. Siva Simha period brought the Brahminical Hinduism to a remarkable position. "In the area of Saivism, there are epigraphical records of the construction the Kamesvara temple at Nilachal (1718) and Siddhesvara temple in the same year, getting the image of Umananda consecrated (1719), constructing the Kamalesvara (Siva) temple of Nilachal (1728), granting land (along with queen Ambika) for the Siva temple of Dergoan (1734), appointing a priest and Paiks for the Dhanesvara temple (1738) and granting land for the Umananda temple in 1739 and 1741." Further same king built the most imposing Siva temple of Sivasagar in 1734, granted land for the Vilvesvar temple and for the Gopesvara temple in 1725 and constructed the Siddhesvara temple.

King Prammata Simha (1744-1751) also uplifted the cause of Saivism. He constructed the Sukresvara Siva temple of Guwahati (1744) and the Rudresvara temple in North Guwahati (1749). In the same way Rajesvar Simha (1751-1769) constructed the Manikarnesvara temple (1755) assisted Sukresvara financially (1759) and constructed in 1764 the Siddhesvara temple at Sualkuchi. The famous temple Navagraha also built upon the Citracala hill in Guwahati.

36. Neog M. Prachya Sasanawali Plates 19-21,24,26,30,38,40,42.Ibid.
38. Neog M. Prachya Sasanawali Plates nos 48, 53,60,65,70-71. Ibid.
The characteristic feature of Navagraha temple is that it connected with the cult of Siva in so far on the Grahas, here the “Lingas based on Yoni Pithas” instead of the usual icon based on Dhyana mantra. Rajesvar Simha was responsible for the construction of two doors of Kedara Siva temple of Hajo. 39 Lakshmi Simha (1769-80) followed the same Saivite/Sakta philosophy. He reconstructed Vilvesvara Siva Temple, reconstructed Gaurivallabha Temple at Rangpur appointed Brahmin priest at Biswanath Temple. Pahumariya Saruiana Gossain - a devotee of Siva who received the servites from the king Chandrakanta Simha (1816) 40.

Thus, it appears that the devotees of Siva were almost invisibly the worshipper of Devi as well 41. The Saktism and the story of Candradhara the father-in-law of Beula also confirmed the ultimate compromise of the two sects 42.

The Saktism and the Saivism were the main form of Brahminical form of Hinduism, which was adopted by the Ahom rulers after their Hinduization.

As far as the attitude towards Saktism by the Ahom Monarchs, some specific mentions can be made.

King Pratap Simha, who is recorded to have sent one Marongiya Khanikar to Koach Behar to learn the art of making earthan image of—

40. Ibid
41. Ibid
42. Barua B.K. Cultural History of Assam p193
Durga and since then the Goddess was worshipped at the royal temple (Devighar).  

Goadhar Simha used to perform the Durga Puja regularly. Rurdra Simha is said to brought goddess Jayantewari and later on Budi Gossain by replacing former one from Jayantia. He also brought Krishnaram Bhattacharyya Nyayavagisa from Bengal - a Sakta Gossain later on known as Parvatiya Gossain.

Phuleswari took the initiation and became staunch followers of the Sakta cult. The Nayavagisa composed a digest entitled Durgotasvavidhi which dealing with the procedure for the worshipping in all temples in and around Guwahati.

Siva Simha being a great follower and patron of the Sakta cult granted land to the priests of Kamakhya and Ugratara Temple. He also constructed Dirghesvari temple.

Phuleswari constructed Gaurisagar tank in 1734 for Goddess Durga (Gauri) and three temples on its banks viz. Devi, Siva and Vishnu.

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43. SMAB Section 84f According to Maniram Dewan since the days of Sukapha to Gadadhar Simha annual puja was performed only by the Ahom priest Deodhais Bailung. The Durga puja had been started from the time of Dihingia Raja [i.e. Suhungmung].Since the days of Rudra Simha [1696-1714] both Ahom and Brahmincal from of puja were introduced . ADB 54n.CHA VOLiii p 225

44. ADB 54 Cha. Ibid

45 BVR Folio 124A. Kashinath .T.P 42 CHA vol .III p 226


47 CHA voll III. p. 226

48 CHA. III p 227 (Ps Plate 39, 45, 31, 37, 18, 16, 32-3, 130)

49 Kashinath .T.P p 43, Pavitra Asom, 37f
Ambika who assumed the legal power after Phuleswari Constructed the tank Sivasagar in 1733 and the temples of Devis, Siva and Vishnu on its bank.\textsuperscript{50}

Pramatta Simha (1744-51) excavated Durgasarvarovara at the foot of the Nilachal hill at Guwahati.\textsuperscript{51} He also constructed Kamakhya temple of Silghat and Durga temple of Hatimura hill Kaliabor\textsuperscript{52}.

Rajesvar Simha (1751-69) offered a Silver umbrella for the Dirgheswari temple and constructed Natamandira Kamakhya temple and granted land and servitors for the Dirgheswari temple. Gaurinath Simha was initiated from another Pahumaria Gossain Gangadhara and granted land for the Bhuvaneswari temple, Guwahati and the Durga temple of Morangi.\textsuperscript{53} Kamaleswara Simha (1795-1810) continued to patronize the different cults by constructing temple of Mangalachandika Siva as well as Vishnu\textsuperscript{54} Chandrakanta (1810-18) who a staunch devotee of Siva\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid
\textsuperscript{51} Ps Plate 49, 50-1, 66, 69, 77, 185; CHA vol, Ill-Ibid
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid
\textsuperscript{53} PSS Plate 49, 50-1, 66, 69, 77, 185 f; CHA vol, Ill-Ibid
\textsuperscript{54} P.S plate 93-4, CHA ,vol. III ,p 228
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid plates 152 , Ibid.
THE ATTITUDES OF THE AHOM RULERS TOWARDS THE NEO-VAISHNAVITE MOVEMENT

The neo-Vaisnavism, which was initiated by Sri Sri Sankardeva became popular by the end of the 15\textsuperscript{th} C. The simplicity and purity of the new faith in contrast to the ritual dominated Brahminical cult was the prime factor in attracting unsophisticated masses to the devotional path. The portal of the new faith soon kept wide open to all communities and no discrimination whatever was made based on castes and status while conferring initiation or ordination.\textsuperscript{56}

The Vaishnava reformation in India, which had its counterpart in the teachings of Sankardeva, was a protest against the monopoly of the Brahman caste and against the exclusive spirit of the caste domination.\textsuperscript{57}

The Brahmans vehemently opposed Sankardeva’s democratic teachings. First of all Sankardeva was dispersed with the rites and ceremonies including the worship of images, which constituted the principal occupation of the priests,\textsuperscript{58}

Secondly, he translated the scriptures into the vernacular language and then rendered them comprehensible to all people, whereas the privileged of reading and interpreting them had hitherto been virtual monopoly of Brahanamas.\textsuperscript{59}

The Brahmanas then lodged complaint before the Ahom Monarch Suhungmung Dihingia Raja alleging the Sankardeva was bringing —

\textsuperscript{56} Barpujari.H.K (edit) CHA vol III p232
\textsuperscript{57} Bhuyan SK AAR p 192 Neog M, SAHT p111
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, \textsuperscript{59} Bhuyan SK AAR p 193
— disaster to the country by the prohibition of the time honoured Vedic rituals. Sankardeva defeated the Brahmanas in arguments, and the Ahom King appreciating the forceful logic of his doctrines dismissed him from the charge with honour.  

The fact was that the hostility of the Brahman incurred day by day and they took every opportunity to insult Sankardeva’s followers. Even Sankardeva was incurred the displeasure of the Ahom king for alleged neglect in keeping watch over the royal elephants entrusted to his caste. He fled from his village before the arrival of the royal messengers despatched for his arrest.  

They arrested Sankardeva apostle Madhabdeva and his son-in-law, Hori Charan. The latter was executed, but Madhabdeva was released as he was a bachelor and there would be no one to weep for him if he was killed according to the justice of the Ahom.  

As a result, Sankardeva left Assam and retired to Coach Bihar where he continued to live under patronage of Maharaja Naranarayana (1540-1584). The reformers could not peacefully pursue his proselytizing work for long in Coch Kingdom also. He was misrepresented several times before Naranarayana by the priestly section. Once he was saved from being molested at the hands of the king’s officers but the timely intervention of prince Sukladhwaja, who at the critical moment had removed him to his own home.

60.Ibid  
61.Ibid  
62.Ibid
63.Sharma.S.N. Neo-Vaisnavite Movement p178
The officers, failing in their attempt to arrest Sankardeva subjected two of his disciples to untold humiliations. Of course, Sankardeva came out with flying colours of all the religion disputation arranged by the king. They alleged him of prohibiting the observance of the established practices of the Hindu religion. 64

Similarly, Madhavdeva and Damodaradeva were expelled once from eastern Koch kingdom by Raghunarayana and Parikshitnarayana, for their alleged revolutionary religious ideas and belief. 65 However, when the new faith and the true nature of the faiths became firmly established, the Koch monarch both the eastern and western kamrupa began to take a kind view. Lakshminarayana (1584-1622), Viranarayana (1622-1635) and Prananarayana (1633-1666) of western Koch kingdom and Dharmanarayana (1615-1637) and Mahendranarayana (1637-1643) of the eastern Koch kingdom encouraged and patronized the Vaisnavite by granting land and money toward the establishment of Sattras. 66

As far as the policy is concerned by the Ahom Monarch towards the neo-Vaisnavite movement characterized by the "inconsistency". Thus the religious policy of the state towards the Vaisnavite movement was more or less determined by the temperament of the different kings and exigencies of time. 67

64. Ibid
65. SNS NVM p, 178
66. Ibid
67. Ibid
Burha-Raja Pratap Simha took a very hostile attitude towards the neo-vaishnavism. Because of his repressive policy, the pioneer reformer Vamsigopaladeva had to live in concealment for several years and his Sattra at kalabari was set on fire. Mukunda Gosain and Balabhadra the preacher of neo-vaishnavite movement, (apostles of Dadhabdeva) were beheaded. Gopaladeva's successor Misradeva also died in the prison and his Sattra at Kuruwabahi was demolished at the instance of Pratap Simha.  

At the instigation of the interested Brahmans, the Mahapurusia (i.e. Vaishnavite) were subjected to prosecution. Several of this Gossains were put to death.

The Vaishnava repression continued during the reign of Pratap Simha's successors. The fourth adhikara Nityanandadeva, of the Mayamara Sattra was put to death by Surampha (1641-1644). Several attempts were made to kill Bar-Yadumani of Bahbari Sattra suspecting his loyalty to the king. 

Subsequently his three sons including Sanatandeva the Satradhikara of the Dihing Sattra, were either killed or tortured at the instance of the then king Nariya Raja for their alleged conspiracy against the king without proper inquiry into the truth of the allegation.

68. Sarma S.N. NVM. p 180
69. Gait E.H.A p 121
70. Sarma S.N. NVM. p 181
71. Sarma S.N. NVM. p 181
King Jayadhvaj Simha (1648-1663) who was instrumental in establishing the four great Brahminical Satras at eastern Assam was not free from persecuting the Vaisnavas. He persecuted the Mahapurusiya sect and killed some of their leading members. It is also said that the king was very much under the influence of the Brahmana.

The preoccupation of the kings and nobles in wars with the Muhammadan from Chakradhvaj Simha (1663-1669) up to the accession of Gadadhar Simha in 1681 provided somewhat peaceful time to the Neo-Vaisnavite.

The royal persecution of the innocent Neo-Vaisnavite reached its climax with the accession of Tungkhungia Prince Gadadhar Simha. He was a staunch follower of Saktism. King's inclination towards Saktism was combined with a grudge against the Vaishnavite. This uniformly given in all the chronicles is that while Gadadhar Simha was moving from place to place in disguise to save himself from being killed by the agents of the king, he was maltreated by some of the devotees of the Dakhinpat Sattra. Gadadhar Simha, thus, waited for an opportunity to wreak vengeance upon them. During this period, he noticed the wealth pomp and grandeurs of the Dakhinpat Sattra and he also observed that the Sattra was a miniature state with functionaries like Bora Saikia etc.

72. Ibid
74. Sarma S.N. NVM. p 182
He regarded the Sattra institution as a menace to the sovereignty of State. His thought was further confirmed by his experience in other Sattras. On coming to the power he immediately confiscated the properties of Sattras and idol of deities were either thrown away or melted down. The eyes of the Adhikara-Gosain of the Dakhinpat Sattra were pulling out, and the adhikara of the Auniati Sattra was exiled to Sadiya. Under his orders, most of the Gossains (heads of the Sattras) were sent to Namrup while other were subjected to such manual labour as were required in the construction of roads.\footnote{Ibid.}

Gait observes, "The neo-Vaishnava sect founded on the teaching of Sankardeva, had now attained remarkable dimension. The country was full of religious preceptors and their followers, who claimed exemption from the universal liability to fight and to assist in the construction of roads and tanks and other public works. This caused serious inconvenience, which the Sakta Brahmans who had the kings ear, lost no opportunity of exaggeration....He bore moreover a personal grudge against some of the leading Gossains for having refused to shelter him in the days when he was in hiding and for having endeavored to dissuade the Barphukan from his design to set him up as king in the place of Lora Raja. He therefore resolved to break their power for good and all. Under his order many of them were sent to Namrup and put to death...and gold and silver idols were melted down. Nor did their bhaktas or disciples, fare much better. Those belonging to the better castes, such as Gonaks, Kayasthas and Kalitas were left alone, but of low caste such as...\footnote{Gait.E, AHA, p160 1992}
— Kewats, Koches, Dooms, and Haris, were hunted down, robbed their property and forced to eat the flesh of Swine, Cows, and fowls. Many of them were departed to out of the way place and made to work as coolies on the roads. Others were mutilated; others were put to death and a few were offered as sacrifices to idols. The persecution spread far and wide and at last no one off any persuasion was safe if he had anything worth taking, when the king found that things reached this pass, he ordered the persecution to be stopped and restitution to be made in all cases where people had been wrongly despoiled.79

Gait also comments that “it is impossible to justify as palliate, the brutal severity of the measures which he adopted with a view to overthrow the Vaishnava sects ....”.80

According to SN Sarma the account of Gait born out by evidences of almost all the contemporary chronicles and Carita-puthis.81 Gadadhar suppressive attitude towards Vaishnava was guided by his inclination towards Saktism rather anything else. This is proved by his other policies for example, he executed those who supported and installed him as a king by convicting them as an conspirators and rebels, because they dared to install one new king when the another King Lara Raja was alive ——— 82

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79. Gadadhar Simha was a patron of Sakta Hinduism. The Temple of Umananda upon Peacock island opposite Guwahati, was built under his auspices, and his earliest known Copper plates recording grants of land by Ahom kings to Brahman or Hindu Temple, date from his reign Gait.E,HA ,p160 1992
81. Sarma S.N. NVM. p 183
82. Barbarua ,H, Ahomar Din p222-223
— but during his exile period some of the leading Vaishnava-Gossains refused to shelter him and endeavoured to dissuade the Bar Phukan from his design to set up on king in the place of Lara Raja.\textsuperscript{83} It is true that they were excess in power but still there were a remarkable sign of loyalty towards the king which Gadadhari Simha overlooked and persecuted them without having any example in this sort in this land.

Rudra Simha in the beginning showed a conciliatory spirit in his attitude towards the Vaisnavite sects. He recalled and reinstalled the exiled or departed Gossains in their former positions and allowed to resume their old avocations subject to certain limitation.\textsuperscript{84} He for the first time made a comprehensive list of Satras and gave official recognition to those that were included in the list\textsuperscript{85}. According to S.N Sharma, the tradition of \textit{Etaka Mahanta} probably originated from the time of Rudra Simha\textsuperscript{86}, but his policy towards Vaisnavism led to the wider rift among the Samhatis of the Vaisnavism and the Brahmin and the Sudra Gossain and their disciples.

It is said that he seemed to have developed under the influence of Brahmins certain prejudices against Non-Brahmin Gossains.\textsuperscript{87}

The Brahma Samhati Sattras gradually acquired the royal status, as they were more inclined towards the Brahminical rituals.

\textsuperscript{83} Gait, E.H.A p159 1992
\textsuperscript{84} Gait, E.H.A p161 1992, SNS, NVM p183
\textsuperscript{85} Govinda Dasa; Santa-Samprada MS No 128 DHAAS. Bazbarua (edited) Bahi, Vol v part I p 567 SNS NVM p183
\textsuperscript{86} SNS, NVM p183
\textsuperscript{87} Bhuyan SK (edited) T.B p. 33-34 1990, SNS NVM p. 183
The differences between the Brahma Samhati Sattras and the Sattras of other Samhaties widened from this time.

The Brahma-Samhati satras representing a Brahmanized form of the Mahapurshia faith.\(^{88}\)

This Samhati admitted Brahminical rites very liberally along with of the General devotional practices of Vaisnavism. However, they took a rigid view of the caste distinction. Some of the Damodariya Sattras like the Dakhinpat went so far as to administer trantric diksa.\(^{89}\)

The also not wanted to call themselves as *Mahapurusia*, - a general name by which the Assam Vaishnava are known.\(^{90}\)

The Auniati, Dakhinpat, Gadamur and kuruwabahi Sattras became richest and most influential institution of this Community and enjoyed the sufficient patronage of the Ahom kings from their inception.\(^{91}\) Bhaga Raja Surampha (1641-1644) before ascending the throne had constructed the Kuruwabahi Sattra with the help of his brother\(^{92}\) Sutyingpha, Nariya Raja (1644-1648) constructed the houses of Auniati Sattra\(^{93}\) Jayadhvaj enrolled himself as a disciple of Niranjan Bapu - Chief of Auniati Sattra.\(^{94}\)

\(^{88}\) Eliot, Hinduism and Buddhism II p. 260; Ibid.
\(^{92}\) Bhuyan (ed) Asom Buranji,(Sukumar) p. 64.
\(^{93}\) T.N. Sarma, Auniati Satrar Buranji p. 122.
\(^{94}\) Harakanta 47; A CBarua,Tai Ahom system of Administration p.305(GUthesis).
However, during the time of Rudra Simha the features of these Sattras changed gradually after their reinstallation. The gape between Brahma Samhati and the rest of Vaisnavite cult became wider than the before.

Rudra Simha strictly forbade initiating or ordaining Brahmins by Non-Brahmin Gossains. In that connection, he punished five Sudra preachers who supported the fact that a Sudra could offer initiation to a Brahman but they failed to provide script to support their view. The Vaishnava movement was based on equality of the cast. The whole movement was a reformative zeal. In such a situation greater emphasized was given ones spirituality. The Neo-Vaisnavite movement created a relatively open and progressive environment. The Ahom Monarchs in that related century instead of taking pivotal rule for the progressive environment acted in an orthodox way following the view of the orthodox and reactionary section.

In fact, the clash between the cast ridden Brahminical faith and liberal Neo-Vaisnavism faith became acute. It was the result of the increasing royal favour to the Brahmin Priestly class.

Another order issued by Rudra Simha to all the Sudra Medhis in the following - “The Brahmans who are now living in the Sattras should no longer be given shelter over there. The Brahmans of the neighboring villagers should not also be permitted to visit the sattras.”

95. Bhuyan.S.K. Tungkhungia Buranji, p 35
Any violation of this order will be attended by due punishment which will be extended to the Brahmins as well.\textsuperscript{96} As the effect of this order the king caused the arrest of the Moamariya Medhis and punished him along with others in the open courtyard on the charge of giving ordination of two Brahmins in 1625.\textsuperscript{97} The Brahmins who were formerly disciples of Sudra priests were initiated again by religious preachers of their own caste.\textsuperscript{98} The Gosain of the Kamalabari Sattra was publicly whipped for not offering worship to images.\textsuperscript{99}

The Neo-vaishnavite discarded Idol worship. They believed in sarvana, kirtana and samarana and prostrate before Bhagavata placed on the altar. Worshipping the Visnu images was the later development in Brahma Samhati who compromise with Brahmanism.

The imposition of restriction over mixing of Brahmana and Sudra, which was gradually forming a plural society based on equality, was a backward and unwise move.

Rudra Simha asked the Brahmins not to bend the knee before Sudra Medhis and the Sudra Medhis were compelled to wear as their distinctive badge - a small earthen jar hanging from string round the neck.\textsuperscript{100}

Being a staunch follower of Brahminical form of Hinduism Rudra Simha brought one Sakta Guru or Chief of Sakta sect from Bengal (shantipur). His name was Krisnaram Nayavagisa.

\textsuperscript{96} Bhuyan SK T.B. 1990 p 33
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid, p 34
\textsuperscript{100} Gait E.History of Assam ,162, 992.
It is already mentioned that he constructed temple for Siva, Durga, Vishnu and Ganesha in the bank of Jayasagar tank along with different temple in various places. Especially the Jaysagar tank was initiated by the Brahmana priest in a very lavish way, which exhibited the generosity towards the Brahmin Priest.\textsuperscript{101}

The policy of Siva Simha towards the Vaisnavite caused great discontent. Accordingly the Gait Siva Simha was completely under the influence of Brahmin priests and astrologers;\textsuperscript{102}

In 1722 Siva Simha was so alarmed by their prediction that his rule would shortly come to an end. Siva Simha in the hope of conciliating the gods and averting the threatened calamity made many lavish present to the temples and the Brahmans. He endeavored to satisfy the alleged decree of fate by a subterfuge, which greatly diminished his prestige in the eyes of his people. He declared his chief Queen Phulesvari, who assumed the name Pramatesvari (one of the names of Durga) to be the 'Bar Raja' or Chief Queen.\textsuperscript{103}

Siva Simha being a disciple of Krishnaram Bhattacharyya. (one brought by Rudra Simha) generally known as Parbatiya Gosain became a staunch followers of this sect. He gave him the management of the hill temple of Karnakhyta. King assigned to him large areas of land in various parts of the country. It is observed by the Gait that the modern Saktas of Assam are the disciples of this Gossain.\textsuperscript{104}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{101} Barbarua .H, Ahomar Din, p 236
\item \textsuperscript{102} Gait E.History of Assam ,1731992 .
\item \textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
These developments gradually helped the Sakta faith to have a firm grip over later Ahoms. That also happened in the time when the neo-vaishnavite movement became a mass religion of Assam. The era of Phuleswari who became the Bar Raja the clash between the two became acute. Phuleswari Konwari was even more under the influence of the Brahmins than her husband. Her consuming zeal for Sakta Hinduism, such as so often distinguishes neophytes.  

Phuleswari Konwari committed an act of oppression, which was destined to have far-reaching and disastrous consequence. Hearing that Sudra Mahanta of the Neo-Vaishnava persuasion refused to worship Durga, she ordered the Moamariya, and several other Gossains to be brought to a Sakta Shrine where sacrifices were being offered, and caused the distinguishing marks of the Sakta Sect to be smeared with the blood of the Victims upon their foreheads. The Moamariyas never forgave this insult to their spiritual leader, and half a century later, they broke out to open rebellion.  

The sources says that Siva Simha was himself the writer of a number of hymns. As a result of his effort the Hinduism of Sakta cult became the religion of royal favour, “The Ahom who persisted in holding to their old belief and tribal customers came to be regarded as a separate and degraded class.”  

The Tungkhungia Buranji records, “Phuleswari Konwari organized the assembly of the religious preacher of the Thakuria denomination.”

107. Ibid 173-74 1992
— and made them bow down before the heads of Auniati and Gormur monasteries109 (the sattras of Brahma Samiti who enjoyed royal favour). They were asked to offer worship to the Gods with the help of images, the Bhagavata and Salagram stone under the priesthood of Bhagavatis and Deowris. Besides, she perpetrated many more insult and misdeeds. She caused the images of all the temples including Phulbari to be thrown into the river Brahmputra. She personally conducted the desecration staying in her camp at Sonarijan. Then she substituted stone and brass images in all these temples.110

The traditional fraction of the Ahom population like Deodhais and Bailongs resisted the change with all their might, but the people gradually fell away from them, took Hindu Priests111.

Pramatta Simha, also a follower of Sakta Cult.112 The king constructed a temple at Dakhinpat Sattra by one *khamchangia dol bondha*113. He was also responsible for the construction of Rudresvar and Sukreswar temple.114 In place of some traditional practice also Queen Phuleswari introduced some practice which was contravention of the ancient customs of the Ahom. For example she introduced the customs of burning the dead.115

110. Ibid.
113. Sarma Benudhar Maniram Dewan, 1950 and 1956 Asom Jyoti, Ghy
114. Gait.E, History of Assam, p 175, 1992
115. H. Borbarua Ahomar Din ,p 253 / 54
During the time of Rajesvar Simha who got initiation by Sakta Guru recorded a conflict between the Ahom and Hindu astrologers regarding the place where the new king ought to reside. The former recommended Taimung, and the latter Rangpur the king listened to the advice of the Hindu astrologers and build his palace at Rangpur. Though later on he erected a second building at Taimung, the example became explanatory to show the absolute predomination of Brahminical Hindu form in the monarchy.  

On the other hand Kirti Chandra Bar Barua took another policy as he become the all in all to the incompetent King. Kirti Chandra tried to rift among the non-Brahmin Sattras particularly between Dihing and Moamariya by granting *vitarual* (special privileged) status to Dihing to use as a buffer against the growing power of Moamariya.  

As a result, the common people ultimately divided into two different religious blocks.  

Gait observers the people were already —priest-ridden, and sectarian disputes had begun to strangle their patriotic aspirations. The Moamariya Gossain was brooding over his wrongs and was secretly spreading disaffection amongst his disciples.  

Lakshmi Simha took the institution from a new Sakta priest imported from Bengal known as Na Gosain or Pahumaria Gossain.  

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116. Gait,E, History of Assam, p 175, 1992  
117. H. Borbarua Ahomar Din ,p 253 / 54  
119. Ibid, (Saivite according to Barbarua .H .Ahomar Din p255)
His reign recorded the Vaisnavite upheavals in the form of Moamariya uprising. The attitude of Kirti Chandra Barbarua and the royal policy towards them contributed as immediate cause.

The royal policy towards the Moamariya after the Moamariya uprising is marked with untold atrocities and humiliation. This ultimately created a great unrest in the country and led to the arrival of English to resume the monarchy from this turmoil. In fact there development which started with the religion sphere led to mass discontentment and responsible for the ruination of Ahom Monarchy.
Thus, an analysis can be made, based on above discussion of the Ahom religious policy, which acted as the main source of discontent of the subjects. The religion policy of the Ahom in their political domination in Assam can be marked with three phases; (a) Period of traditional religion and co-existence with existing different sects. The Ahom maintained this policy in their first two hundred years in Assam. They continued to follow their traditional religion along with sacrifices in their religion performance, (b) period of Hinduisation along with traditional policy, Characterized by inclination toward the Brahminical form of Hinduism, (c) period of reactionary policy started from the end of the 16th century characterized by extreme neophyte Brahminical act.

As the result of the religious policy of the Ahom rulers, the discontentments arouse among the different sects, particularly among the Non-Brahmin fraction of the Neo-Vaisnavite sects.

The early religious policy of the Ahom characterized by the period of traditional religion and co-existence of other existing sects of different ethnic groups of the land. They were primarily concern about the defense and means of sustenance, and hardly had anything to do with the religion. They identified themselves completely with the indigenous groups because of their adaptability in the matters of culture and religion in that period. The loyal groups with whom the Ahoms came in contact, the Morans, the Barahies and the Kacharies had dominant animistic beliefs. It synchronized with their political socializations with identical practices.
—The process of Hinduisation among the Ahom started after the first two hundred years of the political domination in Assam. “The Brahman gratified the Ahom kings by grafting the Hindu Myths on Ahom legends and deified the sovereign by attributing a sacred status to them. An image of inviolability of the Ahom King was created by giving him divine descent.” Again, “the Brahminical influence added substance to the ‘Divine Right theory”, “as a means to their legitimised consolidation. They adopted some elaborate rituals to project the image of the kingship to justify the despotic and absolute nature of the monarchy.

This policy directly clashed with the Neo-Vaisnavite movement, which was based on equality and Sarvan, Kirtan and Samaran with non-violence. The Brahmanic cult was not only cast oriented but also class dominated. It was in fact prone to social inequalities, and its unfounded liberal patronization by the despotic Ahom rulers added new dimensions in the Socio Political spheres. The Neo-Vaisnavite movement launched by Sankardeva (1449-1568) was the product of the Social circumstances of that time. In challenging the over jealousness of Brahmanism, Sankardeva adopted the most simple but a very noble means- the Bhakti cult. It was caste-less; it attracted the general population against the caste dominated Brahminical cult. Moreover, the new Vaisnavite movement contained some democratic elements as against the authoritarian rule. The movement as such could draw large number of followers since all men are equal in the eyes of God.

1. Barpujari H.K (edited) CHA III A article- 7 p 248
2. Ibid; p 249. 3. Ibid p 248.
Therefore, the movement gained ground amongst the divergent ethnic population. It drew some of the ruling Ahom and even some Brahmans magnetically to it fold. The emergence of the Bhakti cult with the theory of “equality” rudely shook the “Divine Right Theory” concept of Ahom sovereign. In the same time it posed a threat to the Brahminical Influence over it.4

The Neo-Vaisnavite cult with its Sattra institution became popular in entire Assam. It became the religion of the masses. The increasing number of Sattras during the time of Rudra Simha exhibited the popularity of the sect.

However, the later Ahom rulers instead of appreciating the popular move and initiating new dimension to the administration nourished the reactionary section and gradually rooted the dissatisfaction among the common people.

The scholars held the view that “The later Ahom rules lacked sagacity and foresight and failed to handle this new situation since the Sattras were already becoming powerful organization. Instead of attempting at a solution through reconciliation by bringing in meaningful reforms in the feudal structure of the state. The Ahom rules complicated the matter by giving an official status to the Sakta faith. This Policy of putting Saktism against Neo-Vaisnavism in the religious milieu leading to ‘Persecute and patronize’ failed to deliver goods. The Neo-Vaisnavism and Saktism, entangled in the race for political power and influence, the spiritual nobility became conterminous with the feudalistic elements.

4 CHAVol III HKB p 250
This manifested itself during the reign of Siva Simha (1714-1744) and culminated in the outbreak of the Moamariya Mahanta. The entanglement got momentum between the two prominent faiths due to the religious policy of the later Ahoms.

"The initiation of the Ahom rulers and nobles into Sakta faith and enthusiastic patronage of Sakta Priests and their ceremonial instead the non-Sakta sections of the community, the Vaisnava felt aggrieved. The Vaisnava Gossains lived detached lives and did not interfere in state affairs. The opposite was the case with the Sakta priests who lived close to their royal converts and maintained constant contacts with them through Sakta Sacrifices and did not hesitate to meddle in matters of political consequence. Vaisnavism had evolved out of the peculiar requirement of the Assamese temperament and Society had become a part of the life of the people. The Vaisnava no longer felt safe and secure because they found to their utter dismay that the policy of religions neutrality was being given up by the Ahom rulers in their zeal for the Sakta cult."

The Ahom traditional religion was also neglected in the wake of Saktism. "The Ahom priests were deeply aggrieved. They looked upon the Ahom government as their own handiwork sustained by their spiritual ministration."

— The spread of the Sakta influence and the preference given to
the Sakta priests and their practices and counsel, hurt the feelings of the
Ahom priests. They resented that Rajesvar Simha's corpse was cremated
in violation of Ahom customs. They said “The Raven has plucked out the
eyes of Garuda; his wings have dropped off into the sea. What can he do
now with the mutilated remnant of his body”.7 It must be mentioned here
that the custom of burning the dead body introduced by Queen Phulesvari
in contravention of the ancient customs of the Ahoms. 8

Again, during the reign of Rajesvar Simha (1751-1769) there was
a conflict9 of opinion between the Ahom and Hindu astrologers about the
place of residence of the new king. The former recommended Taimung
and the later at Rangpur. The King listened to the advice of the Hindu
astrologers and built his palace at Rongpur. Though he afterward built a
second residence at Taimung. The entire episode hurts the feelings of the
Ahom astrologer as they were losing their ancestral position.

As Gait remark, "The people gradually fell away from them, took
Hindu priests. By accepting a subordinate place in the hierarchy of
Hinduism, the Ahom lose their pride of race and martial spirit"10

The Brahminical Hinduism was highly cast ridden with class
distinction. The strict adherence to it by the later Ahom monarch brought
the casteism and class distinction to the Ahoms. For instance Rudra
Simha who was highly influenced by ——

7. Basu NK, Assam in the Ahom Age; 348 (1970)
10. Gait, Ibid p 174
the Brahminical faith forbidden the Sudra Mahanta to initiate or shelter any Brahman.\textsuperscript{11}

Even within the Ahom, casteism and class distinction rooted gradually. Hiteswar Barbarua held the view that the formation of ‘Satgharia Ahom’ and class distinction is the result of the adherence of Brahminical form of Hinduism.\textsuperscript{12}

There were schism and rivalry in the Sakta Camp. The Bengali Priest Parvatia Gosain, the Guru of Siva Simha, Pramatta Simha and Rajesvar Simha, refused to give initiation to Prince Kalsila Gohain because of his dark complexion and alleged illegitimacy. An Assamese Brahman Ramananda Acharyya initiated the prince into Saktism. The prince became King taking the name Lakshmi Simha and bestowed favours on his Guru who came to be known as Na-Gossain or Pahumaria Gossain; many nobles became disciples of the Na-Gosain. The Parvatia Gossain supported conspiracies against the king and was expelled from the kingdom. There was considerable acrimony between the followers of the two Gossains. Thus, there were internal dissensions all around.\textsuperscript{13}

S.K. Bhuyan holds the view that the orthodox Ahom priests and the Vaishnava Mahantas were averse to the conversion of the Ahom king and his nobles to Saktism. Siva Simha, Pramatta Simha and Rajesvar Simha had accepted initiation from Krishnaram Nayavagisa or his descendants and many nobles had followed that ———

\textsuperscript{11} Bhuyan, S.K. (edited) Tungkhungia Buranj, p32/33, Gait E.P. 162 1992
\textsuperscript{12} Barbaura H. Ahomar Din p. 506/07 1981
\textsuperscript{13} Basu, N.K, Assam in the Ahom Age; p 348, 197
— It already been mentioned that Lakshmi Simha took initiation from on Assamese Gossain named Ramananda. On Ramananda's death, his sons Gangaballak, Gangadhar and Gangasekhar became known as Na-Gossains. The changes led to the formation of schism in the Sakta Camp between the followers of the Parvatia Gossain and the Na-Gossain. The Parvatia Gossain thus slighted by the king, who had supported the conspiracy of Bhudhar Simha and Malou Tipamia Gohain. The king expelled the Parvatia Gosain from the land and promulgated an order that acceptance of Mantras from the Parvatia Gosain would amount to treason. However, the order of expulsion was subsequently withdrawn.  

It is already discussed about the official status to the Sakta faith by the late Ahom monarch, and the inclination to the Brahma Samhati Sattra particularly to those of the royal sattras of Auniati, kuruwabahi, Dakhinpat and Gadamur.

Since the Ahom Monarchs became the stern follower of Brahminical form of Hinduism, the Brahmana could obtain a very high position in Ahom monarchy from the late 16th century. However, the process was started much earlier from Bamuni konwar onwards. The attitude toward the Brahma Samhati Sattra became different from those non-Brahmins Sattra or Samhaties from Rudra Simha onward. This view is affirmed by the attitude and different order of Rudra Simha relating to Sudra Mahanta and by the view of Kirti Chandra Barbarua. ———

To counter the growing popularity of Moamariya Sattra the Dihing Sattra (another Sattra of Sudra Mahanta) was given *vitual* (*internal importance*) status with some privileges during the reign of Rajesvar Simha. When the matter reached to the four royal Sattra they also wanted to get those privileges but Barbarua divided them by saying that, the king wear the garlands sent from them (Brahma-Sattra) on his head but the matter related to other (Sudra mahanta) not even get access in the royal palace.  

Thus, the historians are of the opinion that decaying of the Ahom power started with the conflict between the ruling Sakta circle and mass based Neo-Vaisnavite elements. From Siva Simha onwards the kings and some of the nobles were ardent followers of Saktism. Naturally, the ruling circle and the mases were not on the same wave in religious beliefs and practices. When the faith of the ruling circle differs from that of the subjects, the possibility of conflict between them became inevitable. When the Moamariya sect raised the banner of revolt many people belonging to the lower rank of the social hierarchy, professing the Neo-vaisnavite faith sided with the rebellious group.  

Because of the biased attitude of the later Ahom monarchs toward the Vaisnavism, led to the wider gap between the Brahma Samhati Sattra and non-Brahmin Samhati Sattra and their discipline. Their policies were responsible for development of rift between two schisms as those four Sattras were given the royal status pushing those Sudra Mahantas back.  

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15. Barbarua .H. Ahomor Din, p 254  
Again, Rudra Simha's order forbidding the Sudra Mahantas to initiate or shelter to any Brahmana made their distinction clearly.\footnote{Ibid p 30}

This was indeed a backward move when the people looked the Vaisnava religion as a mass religion. They got enlightenment by the idea of casteless society based on equality and emphasized on individualism. This was against the monarchical belief of 'divine origin of kingship' and despotism with rigid class distinction. Thus, the Monarchy tried to sail their boat against the wave by taking the Brahminical priest on their gudial or kandari (sailor).

The people at that time became conscious about their personal dignity by the teaching of their Guru of which we get frequent reference in all the religions and other sources of that time. They spiritually became much more advance then the traditional royal house and the orthodox Brahminical or Sakta cult. In that case, conciliatory not suppressive policy was required to handle the religious life of the people. However, the royal house took the side of the orthodox and reactionary section and resulted the uprising in the form of the Moamariya.

The royal house supporting the Saktism or Brahminical cult and religious heads of the royal Sattras, knowingly or unknowingly contributed to the dissatisfactions among the people. As the neophyte activist of Brahminical cult they created discontent among the traditional religious man of Ahom viz Bailung, Deodhai also.

Secondly, they contributed for the division of the Neo-Vaisnavite cult between Brahmin and Sudra Mahanta group.
Thirdly, in Sudra Mahanta group they tried to bring clash between Moamariya Sattra and the Dihing Sattra by giving Dihing Sattra as a vitarual status to counter the popularity of the former.

The marital vigour and old status of the Ahom gradually declined because of too much indulgence of religious affairs.

Hitherto the Assamese had been a warlike and enterprising race. While their prince had preserved an uncommon vigour for so many generations but their subjugation to the Brahmans soon produced the usual imbecility, which led into internal confusion and turbulence.¹⁸

The religious affairs dominated the Ahom kingdom in whole of the 17th century. The culmination of the vaisnavite faith with its different sections and the Saktism along with it different sects dominated the whole century. The religious matter in fact pushed back the other matters. All their policy was percolated with religious view.

S.K. Bhuyan, rightly points out that, “The adoption of Sakta Hinduism by the Ahom monarch followed by the conversion to that faith of his principal nobles introduced a new factor in the social and political life of the people tending towards the acceleration of that decline which had already commenced. State obligations began to play a secondary part. The king and his nobles cherished in ambition of becoming devout Sakta worshippers spent more time in religious observances, ——

— patronized Brahmans, made endowments and erected temples, and became direct and indirect propagandists of Saktism to increase their fold. The over zealous Saktism of the Ahoms brought an estrangement not only with the Vaisnavas but also with the orthodox Ahom priests, Deodhais and Bailungs, who were custodians of the ancient traditions of the Ahoms or Tais had kept the rulers in their martial ardour and outlook. The effects of this innovation were soon felt. 19

The Ahom monarch became more like an uplifter of their respective religious faith viz, Sakti, or Saiva rather than a pure administrator. In contrast to the vaisnavite, who established numerous Sattras, the Ahom monarchs generally took the task of constructing temples of Siva or Sakti, which brought two parallel religious lines in the kingdom; one professed the vaisnavite philosophy another by the Brahminical philosophy.

Though they recognized the former, the royal house undoubtedly gave the official status to the later. These reduced the royal domination to a considerable extent and created dissatisfaction among the common people because of biased nature of the monarch.

To look after the matter of the different Sattras the Sattriya Barua was appointed. The provision of Sattriya Barua sometimes seen not as representative of the king but also agent of the king to keep a vigil eye on the affairs of the Sattras.

20. Except Jayadhvaj Simha and reinstallation of vaisnavas during Rudra Simha
The redeeming feature in that age of political and religious acrimony was the solitary voice of the Barpatra Gohain, one of the three Principal Counselors. The Gohain foresaw that over indulgence in religious matters would divert people’s minds from their duties towards the State. The Kalita Phukan had once sent a messenger to the Barpatra Gohain to persuade the latter to accept initiation into Saktism like the other Gohains and Principal nobles. The Barpatra Gohain who was a Vaishnava following the teaching of the Bhagavata, regarded Saktism as an encumbrance to officials who had to always remain ready for state duties. He rebuked the Kalita Phukan for taking part in religious propaganda at a time when the affairs of the kingdom demanded his undivided attention. (This is what the Barpatra Gohain told the Brahman messenger of Kalita Phukan).

"I am the son of an Ahom. What mantras (Sakta initiations) hence we got? We are all bewildered by the bait of worldliness. If we accept mantras and sit down to shunt the same the children will cry the womenfolk of the house will break the silence of the atmosphere by their gossip and the shout of our retainers and tenants will give out a vociferous howl, and commands will come from the king to proceed to his presence at once. So, how one will bring his mantras in perfection? So we, the son of the Ahom, have all agreed to cherish the religion as propounded in the Bhagavata. Hence we should not be offered the Mantra."21

21. MS, Chronicle of Lakhsmi Simha's reign
Bhuyan .S K. Assamese Historical Literature in Indian Historical Quarterly – September, 1929.
This was a solitary voice but represented all the possible elements of a discontent as the possible effect of religions trend of the later Ahom.

The Casteism got deep root in the Ahom monarchy as the result of their religious policy. That attitude we can see in the sphere of his religious policy of Gadadhar Simha who persecuted the Vaishnava sect.\(^{22}\)

Gait writes, “Those belonging to the better castes, such as Ganakas, Kayasthas and Kalita were left alone, but those of low caste, such as kewats, Koches, Domes and Harris, were hunted down, robbed of their properly and forced to eat the flesh of swine, cow and flows. Many of them were departed to out of the way places and mad to work as coolies on the roads other were mutilated. Others were put to death and a few were offered for scarifies to idols”.\(^{23}\)

The same attitude we find in the Policies of Rudra Simha. He forbade the Sudra Medhi or Gossain to initiate or shelter any Brahman, and compelled the Sudra Mahanta to wear their distinctive badge - a small earthen jar hanging from a string round the neck. (as the sign of their caste.)\(^{24}\) The Brahmans who were formerly disciples of Sudra priests, were initiated again by religious preachers of their own castes.\(^{25}\)

\(^{22}\) Rambapu, Dakhinpat. Gait H.A. p 159/160 1992;
\(^{23}\) Gait, Ibid
\(^{24}\) Gait .E, History of Assam, p 161/162, Bhuyan .S.K (edit) Tungkhungia Buranji p34
\(^{25}\) Bhuyan .S.K (edit) Tungkhungia Buranji p34
Thus, their policies strongly exhibited the division of cast distinction whereas the common people were acquainted with the philosophy of equality as the result of Neo-Vaisnavite teaching.

Making the things worse, Queen Phulesvari organized an Assembly of the religious preachers of the Thakuria denomination and made them bow down before the heads of the royal monestaries such as Auniati and Gadamura, these were run by the Brahman religious heads as a follower of Brahma-Samhati- the Brahmanized sect of Sankarite School. This act highly aggrieved the Sudra-Medhies.

Their discontentment which arising out from the above policies further approved by the fact that they did in and after the uprising. During the revolt, they attacked the royalist Brahma Samhati Sattras and after the revolt when they got the power for a short duration; they tried to curb the power of those four royal Sattas. They imposed fine on them, from the Auniati Gossain Rs. 8,000 from Kurabahi Rs. 400; the Auniati Bagi Bapu was punished by being derived of his nose, ears and eyes and initiated their disciples to Sudra Sattras.

The Moamariya uprising which paralyzed the Ahom monarchy for some time, opened the way for the foreign intervention and ultimately caused the ruination of the Ahom Monarchy got it root in the religion discontentment of the people.

26. Ibid p41
S.K. Bhuyan, rightly point out that “To understand fully the story of the Moamariya uprising one has to go to the very foundation of the Vaisnavite movement in Assam.”

As we have mentioned before about the formation of different Samhaties and their affiliated Sattras in different part of Assam. The Moamariya Sattra belonged to the Kala Samhati Sattra, which was more liberal and democratic and gave autonomy to each Sattra affiliated to them. In reference to the Sattra or the Guru, the word Moamariya had used, for that name by which the Mahantas wanted their Sattra to be called. The term Moamariya is universally applied to all the disciples.

The Dihing Sattra and the Moamariya Sattra were the most prominent of the Six Sudra minorities of upper Assam, associated with Gopaldeva.

Both the Sattras, which belong to Kala-Samhati, became extremely popular as they admitted converters from the non-Aryan tribes and placed the disciples on an elevated footing. However, they had caste Hindu in their fold, such a Brahmans, Kayasthas and Kalitas. Their disciples consisted also of Kacharies, Ahoms, Kaivartas and Brittials. In Moamariya Sattra Chutiyas and Morans were dominant groups. The democratic base of the Sattras were drew new converters to their fold from the influence of the Cast ridden Brahma Samhati Sattras.

29. Bhuyan .SK Anglo Assamese Relation. p 190, 1974
30. Ibid, p 194, 195
31. Ibid;
In course of time, the Dihing and the Moamariya Satras of Kala-Samhati grew as strong holds of Sudra Vaisnavism in upper Assam opposing Brahminical monasteries.  

The message of the Kala-Samhati Sattra reached the very masses of the Assamese nation. Those castes, which are now denominated as 'depressed', were freely admitted into the fold of these Sattras, and they gradually imbibed refined and enlightened way of living.

According to Gait, the adherents of the Moamariya sect "were mainly persons of low social rank, such as Doms, Morans, Kacharies, Haris and Chutias."

The liberal policy of the Kala samhati Sattras endowed them with a source of self-respect and individual value. These Sattras made a great appeal to the unsophisticated Assamese people and thus they commanded unprecedented popularity. The kala-Samhati Sattras because of their great popularity became the special target of attack of the reactionary group.

During the reign of Pratap Simha, the first clash between the Moamariya Mahanta and the Ahom Government was recorded. Pratap Simha ordered a prominent disciple of the Mahanta to be executed for having — said of the King's great hall that it would make a commodious place for religious recital and Prayer. Again, four disciples of the Mahanta refused to bow their heads before the king including Barpatra Gohains —

32. Ibid;
33. Ibid;
34. Gait .E History of Assam, IInd ed. p 59
35. Bhuyan .SK Anglo Assamese Relation.p 196 / 197, 1974
— and Neog Phukan. It is said that according to their belief they only bow their heads before their Guru. “The king in order to test the sincerity of the devotion of the officers to their Mahanta and asked them to gallop their horses under a sword fixed horizontally between two posts at the height of a mounted man's neck. The Neog-Phukan was the first to try the ordeal. He galloped his horse towards the swords which severed his head from his Body”. The king also investigated the matter sending his messengers that affirmed the view that all the Moamariyas were of one mind in respect of their refusal to prostrate before any one except their Guru.  

During the reign of Surampha (Jayaditya Bhaga Raja), the Moamariya Mahanta Nityananda was killed by the order of the Monarch in the charge of excessive of his power. The Moamariya disciples, indignant at the ruthless slaughter of their spiritual leader took a vow to avenge their Guru's murder. However, it could not immediately take the shape of rebellion, as they had to live without Guru for four years as Nityananda's brother Jaipramdeva lived in exile out of fear of the king. By 1654 he was installed as Mahanta through the intervention of the mother of King Jayadhwaj Simha.  

During the reign of Gadadhar Simha who followed a policy of persecution against the Vaisnavite Mahanta, killed Balkunthanathdeva, — the Mahanta of the Moamariya Sattra, in 1691. Thus again Sattra remained without a head for five years. ——

37. Ibid;
— in the time of Rudra Simha Chaturbhuj brother of Baikunthanath became the Mahanta of Moamariya Sattra.  

As the Sakta faith got the deep root, the Brahminical faith became predominance in Ahom court and the Brahmans became aggressive. It has already mentioned that, the Brahmans questioned the authority of the Sudra Mahantas to initiate Brahmans, and submitted the petition to the royal court. Chaturbhuj Mahanta of Moamariya Sattra and four other Sudra Mahantas accepted the challenge and promised to point out the authority. However, they failed to do so in the royal presence. They were expelled from the court with earthen pitches painted with lime hung on their neck. Rudra Simha forbade the Sudra-Mahantas to initiate or offer shelter to any Brahman. The Brahmans who were formerly disciples of Sudra priests were initiated again by the preachers of their own castes.

Another severe humiliation was awaited for the Vaishnava Mahanta. Queen Phuleswari, during the reign of Siva Singh, did another injustice to them. The king and queen both were blind follower of Sakta faith. Queen Phuleswari was made Bar Raja or de-facto sovereign power to save king from untimely dethronement.

As a staunch devotee of Saktism, she invited the Vaishnava Mahanta to attend the celebrations connected with the worship of Durga. They were asked to bow before the image of the Goddess, which they obviously could not do by the articles of their faith.

38. Ibid;
40. Bhuyan .S.K (edit) Tungkhungia Buranji ,p 34.
The queen indignant at the disobedience of the Mahantas is said to have ordered their foreheads to be besmeared with the blood of the sacrificial goats and buffaloes. They were also forced to eat the offerings made to Durga. The other Mahantas being of a meek disposition could not do anything to avenge their grave insult and desecration. However, the powerful Moamariya Mahanta summoned his disciples and planned the scheme of vengeance.41

The Moamariya Mahanta again convicted by the Queen because of his prediction regarding her future offspring but got rescued by the intervention of the king and Krishnaram Nyayavagis.42

After the death of Chaturbhujeva his son, Astabhujadeva became the Adhikar of the Moamariya Sattra.

Siva Simha was succeeded by his brother Pramatta Simha during his reign the most powerful noble was Kirtichandra Barbarua, reportedly a disciple of Dihing Sattra which was almost as influential as the Moamariya Sattra.

Pramatta Simha was succeeded by his brother Rajesvar Simha by depriving the claim of Mohanmala Gohaindeo, commonly known as Barjana Gohain. Kirtichandra Barbarua contrived to set aside the Mohanmala claim on the flimsy pretext of his face being pockmarked. The Barbarua obviously foresaw the loss of his autocratic powers if Mohanmala with his influence on the nobles was allowed ———

41. Bhuyan .SK. Anglo Assamese Relation 1974 p 203/204
42.Ibid; 204
Kirtichandra raised his own Guru the Mahanta of Dihing Sattra to eminent position at the royal court as an effective measure to counter the growing influence of the Moamariya Mahanta. Kirtichandra inflicted deliberate humiliation on the Moamariya Mahanta by publicity acclaiming the superiority of the musicians of Dihing Sattra and depreciating those of Moamariya Sattra in performances held before the king and court.\(^{43}\)

These were maladministration of the royal house, which led to grow mutual distrust among the sattras in the same Samhati and strength. They had already decided them by granting those four Sattras of Brahma Samhati as royal status. The real motive to raise the Dihing Sattra of Kala-Samhati was create division among two Sattra of same Samhati.\(^{44}\)

Thus the reasons were two (i) divide the the Kala-Samhati to counter the rising of Moamariya , (ii) check any move by Barjana Gohain accompanied with the Moamariya to occupy the throne.

According S.K, Bhuyan “The greatest insult inflicted by Kirtichandra on the Moamariya Mahanta was on the occasion of the King’s journey from Dergaon to Rangpur. The king was followed at some distance by Kirtichandra. As the king reached the gate of the Moamariya Monastery the Mahanta’s eldest son Gagini Deka Mahanta alias Suptabhuj, —

43.Ibid; 204
44.Barbaru H. Ahomar Din,p 254
(When the Adhikaries of four Sattras wanted to have some privileges( like Dihing Sattra) Barbarua denied them by saying that the king set the garlands sent by them on the head but the matter concerned to these Dihing this things not even get access royal court)
— greeted the king with two hundreds trays of presents.

The usual procedure required the previous sanction of the Barbarua on every occasion when one proposed to offer presents to the king, but it could not be followed, as the king would pass the Mahanta's gate if one had to wait for the arrival of the Barbarua. The Deka Phukan obtained the permission of the Baruas and Phukan who formed the personal guard of the king. The Barbarua on reaching the monastery gate was greeted with 80 trays of presents. The Barbarua became highly incensed when he heard that the king had been approached without his permission and caused four blows to be inflicted on Gagini Deka Mahanta.45

As the effect of this humiliation, the Deka Mahanta summoned the Gaonburhas, or the headmen or Sirdars of Moamariya and explained to them the plane of revenge, which aimed at extermination of Kirtichandra Barbarua and the occupation of the Ahom throne. To measure the numerical strength of the Moamariyas the Deka-Mahanta employed the disciples in erecting a prayer hall and residence for the monks at the swamps known as Maloupathar. Each disciple was asked to throw a clod of earth on the site. After working for five days, they raised the high plinths necessary for the foundation of a building. The sight of such multitude of disciples, able-bodied and ardently devoted to their Guru inflamed the Deka Mahanta's passion for immediate action.46

45. Moniram Dewan’s Ms Assam Buranji as quoted by Bhuyan.S.K. Anglo Assamese Relation. p 205 (1975)
46. Moniram Dewan’s Ms Assam Buranji as quoted by Bhuyan.S.K. Anglo Assamese Relation. p 205 (1975)
— Astabhuj Moamariya Mahanta dissuaded his son and the Gaonburhas from involving themselves in such a move and asked them to wait for some better opportunities.  

Rajesvar Simha was succeeded by his brother Lakshmi Simha, who was greatly favoured by Barbarua. The king left the management of state affairs to Kirtichandra Barbarua who had been instrumental in raising him to the throne.  

Within a short span of time two provocations was given by Kirtichandra Barbarua to the Moamariya Mahanta and his disciples, which exceeded the limit of their forbearance. 

Kirtichandra mutilated and banished the sons of Rajesvar Simha to Namrup. The wives of Rajesvar Simha could not escape from the banishment. They were all placed in a boat with only two maids to attend on them on a few utensils. Their ornaments were all taken away under the orders of Kirtichandra. In their journey, the boat, which was piloted by a disciple of the Moamariya Gosain, was stopped near the monastery. The Moamariya Mahanta seeing the plight of the widowed Queen foresaw his own impending destruction at the hands of the autocratic Barbarua. He supplied to the ex-queens sufficient quantities of food, clothes and utensils and treated them with the utmost civility and respect during the two days when the boat had stopped at the Moamariya Sattra. The Mahanta provided his own escort to reach the women at Barkola. ——

47. Ibid, 205, 1974
48. Ibid, 206; Gait E, History of Assam. 1Ind Ed p179
— On receiving this news Kirtichandra became highly infuriated. He gave out a report that the hospitality accorded to the widows by the Mahanta and his son had been actuated by ulterior objects to which the ladies had been compelled to yield though still in their period of mourning. The usual monthly *nirmali* or presents of flowers sent by the Moamariya Mahanta to the king were returned, and the message taken to task for having brought such tokens from the unholy Mahanta. This was too much for the Mahanta to bear. He permitted the Deka Mahanta in July 1769 to summon his disciples, but instructed him to concentrate on the destruction of the Barbarua and to avoid precipitating a crisis.⁴⁹

In the meantime another fresh insult inflicted by Kirtichandra to this religious house.

King Lakshmi Simha along with Barbarua Kirtichandra halted for a few minutes in the Ghat of Moamariya Sattra is the course of a journey by boat. The Moamariya Mahanta saluted and blessed the king. The Moamariya Mahanta saluted and blessed the king, but he ignored the presence of the Barbarua altogether, who thereupon reprimanded the Mahanta severely in the presence of his disciples and the king’s attendants.⁵⁰

The immediate cause of this revolt however provided by the same autocratic Barbarua by an unfaundable punishment to a disciple of the Moamariya Mahanta.

"On September 15, 1769, Ragha Neog and Nahar Khora Salkia delivered to the Barbarua the usual supply of elephants. ———

⁴⁹. Bhuyan .SK. Anglo Assamese Relation 1974 ,p 206
— They knew the haughty and irritable character of the Barbarua and for his pacification; they brought this time the best elephants. The Barbarua was not a man to be easily satisfied. He found the elephants defective, and ordered Ragha Neog to be flogged. He was pressed to the ground with bamboos and given 20 lashes. Ragha fell prostrate with pain. ⁵¹

Gait observe that “when bringing elephant to the king, incurred the Barbarua’s wrath by going direct to the palace instead of first paying respect to him. The haughty official caused him to be sized and beaten, and ordered his ears to be cut off. “The unfortunate man, who happened to be a disciple of the Moamariya Gosain, hastened to him and invoked his aid.” ⁵²

However, the incident infuriated the Moamariyas and the Moamariya Mahanta. After a great deal of hesitation, the Mahanta accorded a qualified sanction for the revolt. ⁵³

Then the Moamariya as a religious house had their anger for a long time, successive heads of this Sattra wave subjected to constant royal persecution and two of them were killed in royal command. Disciples of the Sattra numbering several lakh were equally oppressed and suppressed because they never bowed their heads to any one other than their religious head whom they considered as the representative of God. —

⁵¹ Bhuyan .SK. Anglo Assamese Relation 1974 ,p 207
⁵³ Bhuyan .SK. Anglo Assamese Relation 1974 ,p 207
Thus, in addition to the dissatisfactions of the subjects in different sphere, the high handed and haughty behaviour of Kirtichandra Barbarua, and disaffected Prince Mohanmala Gohain's collusion, worked as the immediate cause of the Moamariya uprising. The immediate help and co-operation extended to the Moamariya Mahanta by a section of disgruntled officers and subjects led to Moamariya revolt which started in 1770 in the reign of Lakshmi Simha (1769-1780) and continued for more than a quarter of a century with varied intensity. It was finally brought to an end during the reign of Kamalesvar Simha (1795-1810). Although the rebellion at the initial stage was of the sectarian nature and confined to eastern Assam it gradually gained dimension and spread to Darrang, Nowgaong and parts of Kamrup also.  

S.N. Sarma, holds the view that, "the transformation of the Moamariya from a religious sect into a fighting and ruling body was not the outcome of accident or the successful enterprise of any individual adventurer. It was the culminations of an urge coming spontaneously from the heart of the people bound together by common sufferings at the hands of the enemy. There was never a tribe called the Moamariya but their unification for the purpose of resistance to the Ahom Government was so completed that they appeared to have possessed all the characteristics of a regular tribal organization. The solidarity of the Moamariya was kept by their common desire to avenge the insult heaped upon their Guru by Ahom sovereign and nobles to which several —

— new factors were added afterwards. Rajesvar Simha foresaw this danger from the quarter of the Moamariya disciples and therefore, as a counter that, he made friendship with Cikan Gosain of the Dihing Sattra an equally powerful Sattra belonging to the same sub-sect. However, this tactic did not work well.

In the reign of Lakshmi Simha, the Moamariyas thus rose into revolt under the leadership of Ragha Moran and Nahar Khora. They occupied Rangpur after defeating the royalists in many encounters. King Lakshmi Simha was kept confined in the temple of Jayanagar. Leader Nahar Khora's son Ramakanta installed as the king. The royalist four Sattras Adhikari-Gossain viz Auniati, Godmurr, Dakhsinpat and Kuruabahi was forced to submit before the Moamariya Gossain and to secure their release they had to pay ransom according to their status.

Lakshmi Simha was however, restored to the throne by a successful counter-revolution and the Moamariya including their Gossain was killed. The Moamariya though subdued temporarily soon gathered up their strength for a fresh rebellion during the reign of the next king Gaurinath Simha (1780-1795). The royal armies were overpowered at several encounters. The royalist were helped by the disciple of Dihing, Gadamur (and other royalist Sattras).

At different encounter against the Moamariyas but to no avail. Ultimately he left for Gauhati for the search of shelter.

55. SKB AAR 205-254 (1974) SNS NVM p 184
56. Bhuyan SK Asamor padya Buranji p 83 of quoted by SNS NVM p 184
57. SMS NVM p 185 from SKB TB p 66
58. Ibid;
As a result, the whole of Eastern Assam came practically under the domination of the Moamariya, the leading members of who proclaimed themselves kings of various part of the Country. At last, Gaurinath Simha with the help of the English regained his throne by overthrowing the Moamariyas regime in 1793. After the restoration, a ruthless policy was adopted against the Moamariyas and a large number of them were put to death.

Thus, twenty-five years of continuous civil war created an environment of anarchy, confusion and oppression in Assam. It totally shattered the peace and stopped any kind of progress. The kingdom as a whole reached the point of complete collapse of administrative machinery, degradation of morality and decline of economy. The glory of the Ahom power was gradually declined in the midst of chaos and anarchy. Infact, the glorious period of the Ahom reign ended with the death of Rajesvar Simha in 1769. The remaining years of this rule upto 1826 were nothing but last flickering and final extinction of the ruling power. Repeated Burmese invasion from 1816 to 1826 and their virtual occupation of the Country with large-scale violence, oppression and acts of inhuman cruelties brought the kingdom to the verge of total ruin. Thus the cause of the decline of the glory of the Ahom rule was the discontentment of the people against the ruling power.