CHAPTER - 2
# CHAPTER - 2

## HISTORY OF THE RELIGIOUS CENTRES

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2.1 POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE REGION:

To understand the history of the religious centre of Hajo it is very much essential to have a study of the historical background of the region. The present Hajo revenue circle falls under the jurisdiction of ancient Praghyotishpur or Kamrupa. So before initiating the study of the medieval period it is logical to have a glimpse of historical background of ancient Kamrupa.

The political history of the region had long begun before the establishment of Varman dynasty\(^1\). The mythological and traditional ruler ruled the country until the reliable history is available. *Yogini Tantra* referred Kamrupa which is said to extend from Karatoya river on the west to the Dikhou river on the east and from mountain Kanjagiri on the north to the Brahmaputra on the south\(^2\). Legendary kings like Ghatak, Narak, Bhagadatta, Bana, Raghu, Arimatta etc. ruled Kamrupa for quite a long time. However, the story of the legendary figures are fixious, it is probable that there must be some basis of actual facts\(^3\). On the other hand, the region witness some smaller principalities ruled by petty chiefs.

The first reliable source in which the Kamrupa has reference is the *Arthashatra* of Kautilya in which Kamrupa is referred as *Suvamakudya* and *Parallauhitya* in connection with the economic products of Kamrupa\(^4\).
The chronological history is available from the period of the Varman dynasty, founded by Pusyavarman, who traced his descent from the Bhauma dynasty of Narak-Bhagadatta. The historians suggest the beginning of the dynasty as 1st century A.D. The dynasty had altogether 13 rulers and the 2nd ruler Samudra Barman, (380-405 A.D.) ruled for 25 years and consolidated the state. Kumar Bhaskarvarman was the last and most celebrated king of Kamrupa who ruled the country since 594-650 A.D. During his long career of 50 years he had diplomatic relations with Harshavardhan of Kanauj who fought against Sasanka of Gauda. *Dubi grant* of Bhaskarvarman proved his genius in the field of poetic verse and sweet wordings. On the other hand, the narrative of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-tsang who visited Kamrupa, about 640 A.D., described about the reign of Bhaskarvarman and found that the kingdom was occupied by a race of yellow complexion and the king Bhaskarvarman followed Brahmanical religion.

Though in Chinese sources Kamrupa is mentioned in connection with the visit of Hiuen Tsang during the 7th century A.D., commercial and cultural relations between Kamrupa and China through Burma and other routes are testified by earlier sources. According to P.C. Choudhury, Tsang Kien, the Chinese scholar of 2nd century B.C., referred about Kamrupa. Another scholar, Shung Shu (420-479 A.D.) record the sending of two embassies to China from India of which one was sent by Yu Chai from the Kapilee Valley (Nowgaon). Hiuen Tsang's association with Bhaskarvarman and his visit to Kamrupa and the accounts he left on the
people and the country are of special importance for the political and cultural history of the region.

After the death of Bhaskarvarman Kamrupa was ruled by the Salastambha dynasty, which was known in the history of Kamrupa as the second power of political aspiration and strength. Reference of Salastambha is found in the *Pasupati* epigraph of Jaya Deva II of Nepal and described Sriharsha Deva, the famous ruler of Salastambha, as the lord of Gauda, Odra, Kalinga, Kosala and other lands. Balavarman III of this dynasty donated land through the *Nowgong Grant* to one Syamdeva, in present Barpeta district.

After Salastambha the Pala dynasty, founded by Brahmapala, ruled Kamrupa. King Ratnapala was the powerful king of the dynasty, he issued many grants. The *Caratbari* copper-plate grant of Ratnapala is a document of great historical value. The inscription revealed that the extension of the kingdom of Kamrupa was at least up to North-Lakhimpur in the northeast side during the reign of Ratnapala. The *Sualkuchi grant* of Ratnapala revealed many aspects of the study area.

The *Gauhati Grant* of Indrapala recovered at Barpanara, Darrang, *Guakuchi Grant* found in Nalbari, *Pushpa Bhadra Grant* of Dharmapala found at Northern Bank of Brahmaputra near North Guwahati signifies the rule of Pala dynasty in Kamrupa. During the reign of Dharmapala Kamrup was conquered by a Gauda king Rampala and started the Gauda influence in the political affairs of Kamrupa. Rampala appointed one Tinga
Deva as his associate ruler. But Tinga Deva soon revolted against Rampala, who sent his general Vaidyadeva to put the rebellion end. Slowly Vaidyadeva also become independent and his *Kamuli Grant* (1142 A.D.) found in Banaras records the donation of lands to Brahman in two villages of Santipataka and Mandara which constitute the present district of Kamrup. After Vaidyadeva's rule Kamrupa kingdom became weak and small states arises in different parts of the region, hence, in real sense it was the beginning of ending of political influence of ancient Kamrupa.

In the beginning of the 13th century the Brahmaputra valley witnessed two important events, that is (i) foundation of the Ahom kingdom in the east Assam and (ii) Muslim invasion taken place from the west. The Ahom, a group of the Tai people from south China in 1228 A.D. entered the Brahmaputra valley and established their kingdom. They gradually expanded their kingdom especially on the west side of Assam and by the end of the 16th century they reached upto Kamrup. The first invasion of the Muslim led by general Bakhtiyar Khaliji had took place in 1205-06 A.D. and was overthrown by Kamrupa king Prithu. Bakhtiyar was compelled to took shelter in a nearby temple and later managed to escape to Dinajpur of Bengal. After this incident in 1227 A.D. Kamrupa king Prithu ordered one Chandrakanta to repair the damaged temple caused by the Muslim invader. The second invasion was taken place in 1227 A.D. by Ghiyasuddin, the Governor of Bengal. The next invasion was taken place in the year 1255-56 A.D. by Ikhtiyaruddin-Yuzback Tughril Khan and he defeated the Kamrupa king Sandhya and occupied Kamrupa.
The important feature of this invasion was the introduction of Islamic readings of *Khutbah* and introduction of Friday religious services. It was the first impact of organised implementation of Islamic law in Kamrupa. Although a few years latter it was reoccupied by Kamrupa king and shifted his capital to Kamatapur. Hence, thereafter the kingdom was known as Kamrup-Kamata\(^{16}\).

Emergence of Koch power in the west side of Assam is another significant event in the history of the region in the 16\(^{th}\) century. At this juncture the Ahom power also tried to expand its territory further towards western Assam and hereby lead to the direct confrontation between the Ahom and Koches. The Mughals, who occupied Bengal in the later part of 16\(^{th}\) century also tried to launch their movement towards the Brahmaputra valley and hence the present Kamrup district became the hot bed for political upheavals. In 1581 A.D. Naranarayana divided the Koch kingdom into two parts. The western part was known as Koch-Behar and eastern part as Koch Hajo. Koch-Behar was occupied by Naranarayana and Koch Hajo was given to Raghudeva, the son of Cilarai, as tributary to the former\(^{17}\). The present Hajo area falls under the Koch Hajo kingdom.

The division of Koch kingdom increased the political activities of the royal powers in Kamrup region. It lead to the perpetual clashes between the two ruling houses in subsequent period, which brought the foreign intervention to the affairs of Koch-Behar and Koch Hajo by the Mughals
and the Ahoms. In the beginning of 17th century the Koch kingdom was brought as tributary of the domination of the Mughals, and it paved the way for the Mughals to enter the territory of Koch Hajo. During the region of Jahangir, Islam Khan, the Bengal Governor, defeated the ruler of Koch Hajo, Parikshitnarayan and brought him to Delhi in 1613 A.D., on his way back he died and Koch Hajo was annexed to the Mughal empire. His son Balinarayan fled to Ahom kingdom and sought the help of Ahom Swargadeos. Following these events Kamrup in the whole of 17th century became the bone of contention between the Mughals and the Ahoms. Soon after the annexation of Koch Hajo the Mughal introduced the Mughal system of administration there. Under this system the area was divided into administrative units like Sarkar, Pargana and Taluk, even after the collapse of Mughal rule this system was retained in the administration of Kamrup.

The Kamrup region reached its focus from the Ahoms when Pratap Singha (1603-1641 A.D.) entrusted Barphukan for the administration of western side of his kingdom. During the region of Jaydhvaj Singha Mughal general Mirjumla reoccupied Kamrup for a short period, and made the Ahom kingdom a tributary. The next king Chakradhvaj Singha (1663-1667 A.D.) refused to pay tribute to the Mughals and the battle of Saraighat took place in 1671 A.D. in which the Mughals were given crushing defeat by the Ahom general Lachit Barphukan. River Manaha was regarded the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom by the end of the war, and Kamrup became a part of Ahom kingdom till the end of
their rule in 1826 A.D.

The Ahom king Gadadhar Singha (1681-1696 A.D.) applied a policy of appeasement towards the society of Kamrup and started the process of royal patronages to the religious institutions probably due to the rising influence of the Brahmanical faith. He reconstructed the Siva temple of Umananda and his son Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.), who was a great follower of Hinduism, granted donations to the Brahmanas and temples. He invited a Bengalee Brahmin, Krishnaram Nyaybagis, who was made the incharge of the Kamakhya temple. Thus, Saktism gained favouritism from the royal power. The son and successor of Rudra Sungha, Siva Singha (1714-1744 A.D.) became the disciple of Krishnaram Nyaybagis. He was highly associated with erection of large number of Siva and Devi temples in Kamrup and these temples received royal grants of land and people. After Siva Singha his brothers Pramatta Singha (1744-1751 A.D.), Rajeswar Singha (1751-1769 A.D.) and Lakshmi Singha (1769-1780 A.D.) continued the same trend in and around Kamrup.

After the demise of Lakshmi Singha trouble caused by Moamaria uprising in upper Assam marked religious troubles in Kamrup also. The political system was degenerated and it was totally shattered by the Burmese invasion from 1817 A.D. to 1826 A.D. The Burmese invasion brought the country in total ruin and the British finally occupied Assam. In the course of time under the British administration the ancient kingdom of Kamrupa became merely a district of Assam.
2.2 THE RELIGIOUS CENTRES OF HAJO

2.2. (A) Hayagriva Madhava Temple:

Hayagriva Madhava temple of Manikuta Hill of Hajo is a religious site and its antiquity goes back to distant past (Plate No.-1). It has other four satellite temples viz. Kedaresvar, Kamesvar, Kamalesvar and Ganesa. All these five temples are collectively known as *Hayagrivamadhavadi Panchatirtha* (Figure-2). Historically all these temples are lead by Hayagriva Madhava temple in all respect. Ancient Assamese literature *Kalika Purana* and *Yogini Tantra* mentioned about the existence of this temple. *Kalika Purana* also refers that the hillock where Hayagriva Madhava resides is called *Manikuta*²⁴. However, as far the construction of the Hayagriva Madhava temple is concern, historical references indicates that king Naranarayana first discovered the temple in deserted condition in a jungle. He later restored it and endowed it with land, priests, musicians and dancing girls in 1550 A.D.²⁵. According to the rock inscription inscribed on the temple of Hayagriva Madhava the present temple was reconstructed by the Koch king Raghudeva, son of Cilarai and nephew of Koch king Narnarayana in *Saka* 1605 (1583 A.D.)²⁶. After the reconstruction of the Hayagriva Madhava temple, king of Koch Hajo Raghudeva made a large endowment of utensils of gold, silver, copper and other valuable required for daily and regular worship in the temple premises²⁷. For the smooth running of the rituals of the temples *Sevaits* (officers) of different communities, such as *Brahman, Ganak, Tanti, Sonari, Teli, Mali, Dhoba,*
HAJO CIRCLE
DISTRIBUTION OF RELIGIOUS CENTRES

Fig.2: Distribution of Religious Centres
Bahari, Kumar, Kahar, Napit, Gayan and Vyas were also granted to the Hayagriva Madhava temple. It was the beginning of the proper maintenance of the shrines through the service of the Sevaits (officers) whose duties were fixed by the royal charter. It is also learnt that the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb also granted land and people for the service of the temple.

Regarding the Hayagriva Madhava temple the local people has a popular belief that this temple has an intimate connection with the Jagannath temple of Puri. The devotees offers prayers to the Jagannath temple from the Hayagriva Madhava temple premises. According to Devi Bhagavata the Hayagriva is connected with Visnu. In Yogini Tantra it is recorded that Hayagriva image has a close connection with that of Jagannath in Puri of Orissa. According to the record the king of Orissa Indradumna had a dream that a big tree would come floating on the sea and he was told to cut the wood into seven pieces from which he was to make idols. Two pieces were brought to Kamrupa and the image of Hayagriva was made out of two pieces of sacred wood. This popular belief signifies the relation of Hayagriva Madhava with Jagannath temple which is also a Visnu temple.

From the Ahom record, it is found that the temple was visited not only by the people of Brahmanical faith but also the Buddhist people from Bhutan and Nepal used to come and offered prayer there. In 1855, E.T. Dalton says that the people belonging to Buddhism from Nepal,
Tibet, Bhutan and China annually came here and offered their homage\textsuperscript{31}. Even today Buddhist people from Bhutan come to the temple in winter season and worship the Hayagriva. They have a belief that Gautam Buddha, the Mahamuni had *Mahaparinirvana* here.

Ahom king Rudra Singha in his survey report made special mentioned about Madhava of Manikuta hillock, Kedar of Madanachal hillock, Kamesvar on Gokorna hillock and *Mokam* (Poa-Macca) on Garurachal hillock\textsuperscript{32}. By dint of his patronisation Hayagriva Madhava received a large number of utensils which included water jar, vessels, cups etc. in the month of *Caitra* in *Saka* 1633 (1711 A.D.)\textsuperscript{33}. It was the beginning of the royal influence and patronage of the Ahom kings to the temple. With the royal patronage this temple group became the most "frequented and celebrated of the shrines of Kamrupa\textsuperscript{34}". In 1742 A.D. King Siva Singha granted copper-plate for the welfare of the temple by giving land grants to the temple by issuing a copper-plate. The Charter makes renewal of a grant of *nankar* gift to one Mohanrai of Pubpar Pargana\textsuperscript{35}. In the later part of 19\textsuperscript{th} century, Hayagriva Madhava temple has land in 22 Mouza measuring altogether 70,000 *Bighas* and covered the area upto the Bajali sub-division of present Barpeta district\textsuperscript{36}. It really signifies the influence and richness of the Hayagriva Madhava temple and it became the most influential temple among the all groups of temples in Assam\textsuperscript{37}.

In the premises of the Hayagriva Madhava temple there is a *Daulagriha* which was constructed by king Pramatta Singha in 1750 A.D. (Plate
No.-2) for the celebration of holi festival in the temple premises. Tarun Duvara Barphukan, the Barphukan of Guwahati, completed the brick mounds. Presently also holi is celebrated in the Daulagriha with pomp and ceremony. According to the popular belief after the construction of the Daulagriha, Pramatta Singha started the Bulbuli Juj in the platform of the griha during the time of Magha Sankranti for amusement. Keeping this tradition alive Bulbuli Juj is also in use in the temple of Hayagriva Madhava as well as Govinda Daul or Raja Daul (holi festival) in the temple.

Hayagriva Madhava temple has a big pond known as Madhav Pukhuri covering of 15 Bighas of land (Plate No.-3). In Yogini Tantra it was known as Visnu Puskar. The fish and tortoise of Mahdav Pukhuri was offered as Bhoga in the temple of Kedaresvar from early times. Hayagriva Madhava temple has two important platforms. One is known as Jogmohan in which the Buddhist people burn their instant stick and another is Nat Mandir in which once Devadasi dance was going on.

2.2. (B) Kedaresvar Temple:

Next to Hayagriva Madhava temple of Hajo, the Kedaresvar, variently Kedar, situated on the Madanachal hillock is the most celebrated Siva temple among the Panchatirthas (Plate No.-11). The antiquity of the Kedaresvar temple goes back to 11th century, the Kalika Purana has references to the ancient temple of Kedar and Yogini Tantra also references about the temple. As per the available literary evidence this temple
was reconstructed by king Rajeswar Singha. In 1758 A.D. king Rajeswar Singha ordered Tarun Duvara Barphukan to construct the brick wall of the stone temple in present site (Plate No.-12).

Like Rajeswar Singha, king Lakshmi Singha also shown keen interest in the temple affairs. He donated land and people to the shrine for proper maintenance of the daily rituals. In Saka 1678 Lakshmi Singha granted land and man to the Bardeuri, Sivadatta by name, of the temple in village Khopanikuchi in Ramdia. In 1783 A.D. king Gaurinath Singha too donated many ornaments and utensils to the Kedar temple with many paiks for the temple services. The paiks of the shrine were given 69 Puras of land who were to supply rice for Paramanna, (a variety of sweet dish used in temple) to the shrine on 18 festive occasions in a year. They were to managed these rituals from the production gained from the land given by king Gaurinath Singha. As the Kedaresvar temple was brought under the same management with other temples under the Hayagriva Madhava temple, the royal attention was given equally to the Kedaresvar temple also. The Ahom kings and officers, were very keen in smooth functioning of the shrines and had personally monitored the daily activities of the Sevait and paiks who were allotted for special duties.

Being the leading Siva temple of Hajo, Kedar temple observes the Sivaratri, the main rituals of the temple, for which people offer milk and Bilvapatra. Apart from Sivaratri another main festivals are Madan Chaitrali.
and Madan Bhanji. On both the festivals the main image of the temple is brought out for a get together with the icons of Hayagriva Madhava and Kamesvar temple, they are offered a holy bath at the Lakhaitara river. The oral tradition says that from the days of Siva Singha, Durga Puja is also celebrated in the temple which is still in practice. To accommodate the devotee Jagmohangriha, Bulonighar, Bhogghar, Topghar, Charaghar etc. were used who offered prayer in the temple complex. Devotees of distant places are accommodated in the Charaghar. Being the Sakti shrine goat and fish is offered in the temple as Bhoga. Kedaresvar temple has a holy pond known as Madan Puskar in which devotees wash their hand and feet for salvation.

2.2. (C) Kamalesvar Temple:

Kamalesvar temple is located at the same complex where Kedaresvar temple is and fifty metre away to the north of Kedar at Madanachal hillock. This Siva temple constructed in the same time with the Kedar temple, and refers to the Kamalesvar and named the city as Puspaknagar. Yogini Tantra rightly refers this temple with other temples like-Kalbhairav Tirtha, Brisabhakriti Krishna, Kapodisvar, Kapilesvar, Banesvar, Mahalinga etc. in the Pushpakanagar. Kamrupar Buranji also indicates the existence of Kamalesvar temple. The temple is relatively small but its holiness and purity is signifies by its holy water of the pond of Kamalesvar. Before entering the Kedar temple one has to purify
himself by the water of Kamalesvar pond. The water level of the pond of Kamalesvar remains same in the winter and rainy season because it is constructed on a big stone. The temple received royal patronage from the period of Siva Singha to Rajeswar Singha, as the temple group of Hajo get royal attention from 1714-1774 A.D. Siva Singha donated and established the idols alongwith the alter of Siva. Not only Siva Singha, Pramatta Singha, Lakshmi Singha, Rajeswar Singha and Chandra Kanta Singha paid tribute to the shrine with great devotion. One significant aspect of this temple is that no devotees can offer Bhoga (offerings) in this temple, instead they can offer Bhoga (offerings) in the name of Kamalesvar at the Kedaresvar temple. Apart from the local devotees, the Buddhist people specially from Bhutan and Tibet visit this temple and offer prayers in the 'Ganesa icon' in the temple premises. As a whole the Kamalesvar temple bears the antiquity of ancient shrines. Although it is not a big temple, it is very significant to note that being a Siva temple it celebrates the Sivaratri with great devotion. The earthquake of 1897 A.D. is responsible in destroying these temples to a great extent. Presently the temple authority has given the charge of rituals and religious activities to a Sevait belongs to Athporia group to look after the shrine.
2.2. (D) Kamesvar Temple:

Kamesvar temple is another important Siva temple among the Panchatirtha of Hajo. Situated at the Gokarna hillock, the temple is celebrated one with big 'Siva Linga'.\(^{54}\) Kalika Purana and Yogini Tantra referred Kamesvar temple as Kampeeth with the tradition of Madan Kamdeva. Oral traditions of the locality referred few story of Parvati and Siva with the ideology of sexual desire.\(^{55}\) The present structure of Kamesvar temple was constructed by king Pramatta Singha in 1751 A.D.\(^{56}\) (Plate No.-13). The temple though bears no inscriptive evidence separately, as a whole with other temples of Panchatirtha it has references in many ancient scriptures and literatures. It bears significant in many oral and folk traditions of the locality and the devotees visits the shrine with equal devotion as the temples of Kedar and Kamalesvar.

2.2. (E) Ganesa Temple:

Ganesa is another prominent temple of Hajo among the Panchatirthas. It is situated at Ganespara of Hajo near the Hayagriva Madhava temple. Entire Ganesa temple is constructed on an elephant shaped rock which is 30 feet long, 15 feet high and 18 feet breadth. It is an icon of sleepy elephant and the Ganesa Bifraha is cutted on the trumpet of the elephant.

Ganesa temple building was constructed by Ahom king Pramatta Singha in 1744 A.D. and inscribed a rock inscription at the door of the temple (Plate No.-15). The temple occasionally serves as the meeting
place of all the deities of the area and so it was popularly known as *Devabhavan* (assembly of deity). At the *Magha Sankranti* the deities of Hayagriva Madhava, Kedar and Kamesvar assembled in the *Devabhavan* of Ganesa temple. The temple has *Jagmohangriha, Charaghar* and *Bhogghar* for the assembly of the devotees. *Ganesa Chaturthi* is celebrated in the temple annually with high regards.

2.2. (F) Poa-Macca:

Poa-Macca is noted for the tomb, *Mazar* and *dargah of pir* Giassuddin Aulia. The *dargah* of Giassuddin Aulia is situated on the Garurachal hillock (Plate No.-16). It is a holy shrine of Muslim community in the entire north-east region and the locality of Hajo treat the same as most sacrosanct place of worship. The Hindu people of the locality also high regards for this holy shrine. A few scholars regards Giassuddin as a Sultan of Bengal and others regards him as a *pir*. At present there are *dargah* of Giassuddin Aulia and his associates and a Mosque. Noted Historian S.K. Bhuyan opines that during the occupation of Guwahati and Kamrup by the Mughals from 1639-1658 A.D. and from 1663-1667 A.D., Mughal officials interested themselves in the improvement of Mosque and of the nearby temples.

According to the stone inscription of Poa-Macca Mosque, the present Mosque was built in 1657 A.D. (1067 Hijri) by Muhammad Shah Suja, the then Governor of Bengal and son of Mughal emperor Shahjahan.
Prior to the construction of this Mosque there was an Islamic institution with a prayer hall, Mosque made of perishable goods, which was established by Giasuddin Aulia. After the death of Giasuddin Aulia, (he was buried there and the area was came to be known as the "dargah of Giasuddin Aulia") the Mosque continued to be a religious centre of the Islamic faith and could attract people irrespective of their faith. In the middle of the 17th century, the Mughal Thanadar, Lutfullah Siraji, wanted to build this Mosque by using bricks. Accordingly he took permission of Shah Suja and laid the foundation adjacent to the dargah. However, the construction was completed by his son Niamatulla in the month of Ramjan, 1067 Hijri (June, 1657 A.D.)\textsuperscript{59} (Plate No.-17).

Ahom king Rudra Singha in \textit{Saka} 1634 in his survey of religious centres and holy shrines of Guwahati referred Poa-Macca as \textit{Mokam of Garurachal} with others shrines of Hajo i.e. Hayagriva Madhava, Kedar and Kamesvara\textsuperscript{60}. Dr. John Peter Wade in his accounts on Assam records an instance of respect shown to Muslim priest at the court of king Rudra Singha. The priest who was resided near the capital was despatch by Rudra Singha to Hajo to pray at the \textit{Mokam} for the welfare of the state and royalty. The king always sent with considerable amount of presents to the shrine\textsuperscript{61}.

Many Hindus of Bengal has great respect for Giasuddin Aulia as their Guru and acknowledge him after god. In Assam his Hindu admirers worship him with their usual divinities\textsuperscript{62}. However, regarding Giasuddin nothing certain can be known from historical point of view. One section
of people believe that Giasuddin had a royal lineage, which another section of people tend to believe that he was a pir. However, the existence of Poa-Macca and the dargah proved the spread of Sufi movement to the north-eastern part of the country. Sufi scholar like Mohd. Yahya Tamizi has rightly stated that the Sufis had to travel a long way before coming to eastern India. The number of Sufis in this region is not meagre. The whole of eastern India hummed with Sufistic activities during the 13th and 14th centuries A.D. It should be noted that the Sufi monasteries which developed as an institution, were private in nature, no doubt they were patronised by the Sultan as they were highly educated and spiritual leader.

Poa-Macca as a religious centre has contributed a lot to the communal harmony of the locality and from the time of the Mughal and Ahom kings, it received royal attention as well as contribution for the daily rituals and well being of the centre. There are information that before the erection of the Mosque at Poa-Macca in 1657 A.D. emperor Aurangzeb granted land to one Morthuza, son of Halkhayal for the benefit of the Mokam. Accordingly Ahom king Lakshmi Singha granted land and disciples to one Anowar Fakir and share in the income of the four Mokam i.e - Mokam of Shah Madar in the Bausi Pargana, of Shah Fakir in Barnagar pargana, of five pirs in the Kshetri pargana and Bar Makam of Hajo (Poa-Macca). In such a way Poa-Macca has consolidates the cultural understanding with secular ideology reflecting from the medieval period till date.
2.2. (G) Dhoparguri Sattra:

Dhoparguri Sattra of Hajo was established by Lakhikanta Atoi under the supervision of great Mahapurusia saint Madhavdeva in 1587 A.D. The people of the area had great respect for Madhavdeva and they frequently visited Tatikuchi (Barpeta) and Madhavdeva responding to the devotion of the people started a Sattra in Hajo and accordingly deputed one of his disciples Lakhikanta Atoi to complete the construction of a Sattra there. In 1587 A.D. the Sattra was completed and Madhavdeva accompanied by his disciples inaugurated the Sattra in 1588 A.D., by performing the famous Ankiyanat 'Rukmini Haran', authored by Srimanta Sankardeva. Madhavdeva stayed a couple of months in Hajo and placed Lakhikanta Atoi as the Satradikar of Dhoparguri Sattra.

Katha Gurucharitra greatly dealt with the Dhoparguri Sattra. It has mentioned that king Lakshminarayana of Darrang had given assistance to the Sattra by granting manual labourer to run the affairs of the Sattra. It also mentioned that the Sattra has a close connection with the Hayagriva Madhava temple, situated near the Sattra, the devotees visited the Hayagriva Madhava temple and even when Madhavdeva visited the Sattra he also visited Hayagriva Madhava temple and offered prayer alongwith Lakhikanta. The Sattra became so popular in the locality that it constructed its branch in Dadhi, Ramdia, Sualkuchi, Burka etc. which are still exists with the devotees of Neo-vaishnavite movement. The Dhoparguri Sattra took the role of masterbuilder in the spreading Neo-Vaishnavite ideologies in the area.
Presently also the Sattra is preserving the *Mahapurusia* ideology and to some extent has assimilated with the temple ideology because the influence of the temples in the area is so deep rooted that even the devotees of the Sattra pay regular visit to the temples and worshipped there. That is why the Sattra has no such monasteries for the *Bhakatas* as the temple had these kind of arrangements. As a whole the influence of the Hayagriva Madhava in the locality is more frequent than the Sattra institution of the locality which has also proved by the *Katha Gurucharitra* also. Dhoparguri Sattra along with the temples of the locality has consolidated the society without any biasness of religious ideologies.

2.2.3 NATURE AND CHARACTERS OF THE CENTRES :

Hayagriva Madhava, the prime religious centres of Hajo is a *Visnu* temple, though the concept of Hayagriva is not much popular in Hindu text of the region. Being the *Visnu* temple it has five main images on the *Bedi* (Alter) of the temple. They are- 1) *Bura Madhava* or Hayagriva (elderly one) 2) *Dvitiya Madhava* (young one) 3) *Chalanta Madhava* (movable one of lord Krishna), 4) *Basudeva* and 5) *Garuda* (the Vahana of Krishna). *Bura Madhava* is placed in the middle with white claded clothes, the symbol of peace. *Ditiya Madhava* is placed left to him, the *Chalanta Madhava* is placed towards southern side of *Bura Madhava*. The image of *Basudeva* is towards the left side of *Chalanta Madhava* and the *Garuda* image is placed next to him (Plate No.-4). Before entering to the
main temple one has to crossed and worship the Narasimha image which is placed just in front of the main gate.

The Hayagriva Madhava temple represents the nature and character of a Visnu temple with all the iconic features of the complex which is full of images of Dasavatara (Ten incarnation of Visnu, Plate No.-5). A few of these kind of images available in the temple complex are - Varaha, Kuji, Karna, Ghatotkaca, Mahadeva, Durvasa, Surya, Bhima, Hirimba, Ram, Laxman, Sita, Agni, Parasuram, Boli, Basudeva, Indra, Kuber, Visnu, Lakshmi, Saraswati etc., Apart from these the temple has a giant Ashoka Stambha (Pillar) in the complex.

However, among the devotees of the temple there is a controversy whether it is a Visnu temple or a Buddhist one. Because the Buddhist people claimed the Hayagriva image as that of Mahamuni i.e Gautam Buddha. An early reference to a Buddhist shrine was made by E.T. Dalton, who noticed that the present temple of Hayagriva Madhava, was build with old materials upon an old Buddhist structure. Dalton also noticed figures of Buddha image along with Durga and Ganesa among the ruins, and, came to the conclusion that the site originally contained Buddhist shrines but slowly it formed a centre of the Hindu faith. He observed that stone door leading to the Hayagriva Madhava contains fine foliage decoration of Gupta art. The image of the elephants engraved at the base of the present Math are similar to those of Kailasa temple of caves of Ellora which indicates to the Buddhist art (Plate No.-6). The temple
ruins at Hajo like that of Kedar, contains beautifully executed sculptures with animal and floral designs. The nature of the remainings makes it clear that Hajo attained its worship of the sun, Hayagriva Madhava, the Buddha and deities of Shaktism and other faith\textsuperscript{73}. Whatever the past may be of the temple of Hayagriva, but in contemporary period it has a great social value in consolidating the society of Hajo. The entire society of Hajo is one way or other, interlink with the centre.

In the early morning the images of Hayagriva Madhava is given a holy bath and \textit{Tulsi Jallimala} and \textit{Dhukdhukimala} is offered to him and the proceeding of the day started by performing the \textit{Visnu homa} (Litting of fire) and it is followed by offering of \textit{Bhoga}\textsuperscript{74} containing vegetarian items like rice, pea nut etc. Regularly the image is brought out in certain festive occasion for holy bath and religious procession. Hayagriva Madhava temple is run by the classical code laid down by the medieval kings and nobles which are being carried out by the \textit{Sevaitis} (officers) of the temple and the appointed \textit{Dolois}, presently the temples are taken over by the Government.

\textit{Kedaresvar, Kamalesvar} and \textit{Kamesvar} are three Siva temples of Hajo. It falls under the same authority with the Hayagriva Madhava temple. Being the Siva temple all the three temple follows the same guidelines and bears same characteristics. Early in morning the days proceedings started with the holy bath of the images of Siva and Sivalinga. Daily non-vegetarian \textit{Bhoga} is offered with meat of goat and fish. In Hayagriva
Madhava Tulsipatra is offered in the Bedi (Alter), but in these three Siva temple Bilvapatra is used as offerings. Sivaratri is the main rituals of the temples which is observed in the Kamesvar temple. The three temple has their Chalanta Bigraha (movable images) and all of them are assembled on Asokastami in the Hayagriva Madhava premises and offered a holy bath at Sualkuchi and at the conclusion of the procession they are placed in their respective bedis (alter) again. 

Worship of Siva in and around Hajo is very popular and is worship in various forms. They are known differently in different festive seasons. This type of nature of the temples is confirmed by the extensive ruins of temples and icons of the deity found throughout the area. Moreover, Siva is worship by his iconographic representations in temples and the faith was popular among all classes of people.

Worship of Siva in his different manifestations has a great antiquity in throughout Assam is known by both literary and epigraphic evidences. It further testifies to the widespread prevalence of the faith and the worship of Siva is performed by his various names as Adideva (Khonamukhi grant), Paramaharesvara (Tezpur Rock inscription), Mahesvara (Doobi grant, Nidhanpur grant), Isvara (Tezpur grant, Kamauli grant), Mahadeva (Grant of Vallabhdeva), Siva (Tezpur grant, Kamauli grant), Mahavaraha (Guwahati grant), Sambhu (Guwahati grant), Sankara (Bangaon grant), Pasupati (Guwahati grant), Gauri Pati (Grant of Vallabhdeva), Hara (Bargaon grant) Kamesvara (Tezpur grant, Guakuchi
Grant), *Padmanatha* (Kamauli Grant), *Ardhanarisvara* (Khonamukhi grant) etc.77.

The Ganesa temple of Hajo is known as *Devabhavana* (assembly of deity), which is the meeting place of the images of the three temples namely Hayagriva Madhava, Kedaresvar and Kamesvar for a holly bath on *Maghi Sankranti* and *Asokastami*. The *Chalanta Bigraha* starts its journey from the premises of the Ganesa temple, In fact the rituals starts in the Ganesa temple itself. However, this temple has no *Chalanta Bigraha*. Vegetable *Bhoga* is offered in the temple with a *Homa Yajna* (litting of fire) during *Ekadasi* and *Sankranti*. Royal support and patronage can be testified by the rock inscription inscribed on the wall of the Ganesa temple by Ahom king Pramatta Singha in 1744 A.D.

Poa-Macca a holy shrine for Muslims was originally the centre of Giasuddin Aulia and was popularly known as *Mokam* of Hajo,78 which was later became important for the Mosque built by Shah Suja, the son of emperor Shahjahan in 1657 A.D. with the help of Lutfulla Siraji, the Thanader of Hajo. An important characteristics of the shrine is the patronage of the Ahom kings to the site, and the Hindu fraternity also treat the same as most sacrosanct79. The *Khadim* (head priest) of Poa-Macca is highly regarded in the affairs of Hayagriva Madhava Temple and its rituals. Poa-Macca locally known as *dargah* also has another four *Mazar of Kaludewan, Shah Kamal, Shah Gudur* and *Shah Bujurg*.

Regarding the Hindu Muslim fraternity in Poa-Macca there is an oral
tradition. During the time of establishment of the Mokam, Giasuddin Aulia recovered ninety images of Hindu deity in the Garurachal hillock which is highly regarded by the people of the Hindu fraternity. It is said that the pir collected one poa (one fourth of a kg.) of soil from Mecca, the holy place for Muslim community, hence the shrine was known as Poa-Macca. In the holy shrine Urus in celebrated on the first day of Magha and lasted up to the full moon of that month in which the Hindu people of the locality also pray to God.

For the welfare of the Mokam emperor Aurangzeb also granted land to one Halkhyal, caretaker of Poa-Macca in 1657 A.D. More than four thousand bighas of land were allotted for the income of the shrine. The most important characteristics of Poa-Macca is that its management system, which is in used, is the same line with Hayagriva Madhava temple. It had also the Sevaits (officers), and paiks who were responsible for the maintenance of the shrine. Some of the Sevaits were Kerani Fakir, Molla, Khadim Palla, Randhani Palla, Pachani etc. These people were the inhabitants of Fakirtola a nearby neighbourhood of Hayagriva Madhava temple. The Ahom kings and nobles regularly look after the Sevaits and their functions. This type of unique characteristics of Poa-Macca, Mazar and Mosque has consolidated the shrine a lot.
2.2.4 HAYAGRIVA MADHAVA TEMPLE AND BUDDHIST CONNECTION:

It has already been mentioned that the people of Buddhist faith has profound generation for Hajo in general and Hayagriva Madhava temple in particular. A section of Buddhist people has belief that Gautam Buddha achieved *Mahaparinirvana* at Hajo. In justification of their beliefs people from Bhutan, Tibet, China and Nepal come to Hajo in winter season to offer worship at Hayagriva Madhava temple. They consider Hayagriva image (*Bura Madhava*) as their *Mahamuni* (Gautam Buddha). Scholars like E.T. Dalton also testify the temple as a Buddhist structure. They believe that the Hayagriva Madhava temple was built over a Buddhist structure, when the influence of Buddhism was gradually decreased in the region. The Buddhist people called the Hayagriva as *Dorjee Dolo, Sakya Thuba* and *Censa* and they firmly believed that the temple is a Buddhist *Chaitya*.

Another scholar on Buddhism Waddel, incorporating tradition as found in Tibetan works, has opined that the *Mahaparinirvana* took place in west Assam near the temple of Hajo. L.T. Shakespeare, on the basis of Tibetan epic *Kahgyur* and *Tangyur* writes that not only the Buddha died in Kamrupa but also the second synod of the Buddhist was held in Kamrupa. However, scholars like Cunningham stated that actually the death of Buddha was taken place at Kusinagara of modern Gorakhpur. It is likely that some relics of the Buddha were carried to Assam and enshrined in a place near Guwahati over which a *Stupa* or *Chaitya* was
raised. This place may be Hajo or near to it. Tibetan epic Kahgyur and Tangyuar point out that the older shrine of Hajo was a great Buddhist Chaitya which were erected over the cremated relics of Buddha’s body. The main image of the Temple called Bura Madhava is regarded as Mahamuni and the minor images are also known by other names. As testimony the Buddhist scholars pointed out to the rock as the cremation ground of the Buddha where there is an image of a four armed Visnu which bears Tibetan inscription with the Buddhist mantra- Om moni padma hum. The Buddhist Lamas called this holy spot as Tsam-cho-duri. Not only the Hayagriva Madhava temple, the Buddhist linked themselves to the Kedaresvar temple also.

Whether Hayagriva Madhava temple had a Buddhist connection or not, the differences of opinion among the scholars still continue. Maheswar Neog strongly rejects the idea that Hayagriva Madhava temple was at any time a Buddhist shrine. Researchers also argue that the plinth of the temple is made of stone and consists of three chambers viz. Garbhagriha, Antarala and Mandapa, three features of ancient Indian temple. It appears that the upper portion of the temple has been reconstructed from old materials. From the architectural point of view the temple has similarity with Kailasa temple of Khajuraho, which suggests that the Hayagriva Madhava temple was built in 8th century A.D.

Whatever its origin may be, Hajo attained a great celebrity according to Mahayana Buddhism of Tibet. The sanctity of the place is also be
known by the fact that some monastery of Tibet is believed to have been built with mud and earth from Hajo\textsuperscript{91}. Keeping this tradition alive even today the Buddhist people apply mud to their bodies in the winter season when they come to visit Hayagriva Madhava temple. On the other hand from the distant past they had their own paid person stationed at Hajo who helped them in their worship in the temple. They were also the \textit{Sevait (Officer)} of the temple and called \textit{Hatkhowa},\textsuperscript{92} who are still exist in Hajo.

But prevalence of influence of Buddhism in Assam can not be ruled out. From the period of Bhaskarvarman Assam witnessed the influence of Buddhism. The Ahoms were also bears religious thoughts and ideology of Tibetan Buddhist which were partly Tantrick Buddhist and partly animist. It is argued that the Tai people accepted Buddhism before their advent to Assam\textsuperscript{93}. In such a way the land and the people come under the influence of later Buddhism and the existing ruins of temples and icons may bear some features of Buddha\textsuperscript{94}. 
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