CHAPTER- V

ORGANISATION, MANAGEMENT, FUNCTIONS 
AND FESTIVALS OF THE MAHĀPURUŚĪYĀ 
SATRAS OF SOUTH KAMRUP

The management of the Mahāpuruśīyā Satras of South Kamrup is another important point to be discussed along with the Satras. At present the condition of the many old Satras are very discouraging. The main reason of such discouraging is their financial hardships. Originally each of the Satras had sufficient landed properties on which the Satras depended on. The government had taken away the possession, i.e. ownership over the landed property of the Satras. As a result the Satra Bhakats and other associates faced many problems regarding the maintainence and various activities of the Satras.

Moreover, the Mahāpuruśīyā Satras established in South Kamrup have their own organisations and functions for the smooth running of the Satra affairs. After visiting these Satras, personally, a brief description has been added herewith in the following pages with a brief account of the main festivals of the Satras as a whole.
A. Organisation, management and functions:

Since the rules and regulations, customs and functions of most of the Mahāpuruṣiyā Satras of South Kamrup are same, hence without discussing all the Satras, the organisation, management and functions of some of the chief Satras only have been discussed here.

1. Chamarīyā Satra:

(i) Administration:

Bar-Visṇu Ātā, the first Satrādhikāra and architect of Chamarīyā Satra, introduced the democratic way of Satra administration creating the Mazlica Samuha or Samīha (community of devotees) which was the real source of administrative power. Bar-Visṇu Ātā appointed several functionaries from among the devotees to hold charge of different departments for efficient management and to conduct religious services systematically and regularly which is known as Mazlica Samuha or Samuha altogether. In Samuha consists the members of Satrādhikāra, Dekā Adhikarāra, Nām Lagowā Pāthak, Bharālī, Ghāideurī, Pālīdeurī, Ojāpālī, Bāyan, Gāyan and Mazumdāra. For managing the religious Activities there are the following office bearers as -
(a) The Satrādhikāra:

The *Satrādhikāra* is the Supreme authority of the Satra in all matters. He is the religious head and also the spiritual guide of the people having affiliation to the Satra. The formal initiation of the neophytes to Vaiṣṇavism called *Śarana* is conducted by him in *Kirtanghar*. The *Satrādhikāra* is to conduct and preside over the discussions held in the *Kirtanghar*. The office of the *Satrādhikāra* is hereditary. It has been enjoyed by the descendants of Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā from early times who was contemporary and chief disciple of Mahāpuruṣa Mādhavadeva. The chronology of the *Satrādhikāra* of Chamarīyā Satra are as follows:

1. **Śrī Śrī Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā**
2. **Jadumoni Ātoi**
3. **Jiban Ātoi**
4. **Rām Nārāyaṇ Satriyā Ātoi**
5. **Rām Nāth (Swargadew Lakṣmī Singha issued a Copper Plate charter granting land and built the Math during his time)**

Apart from the above mentioned Satrādhikāra, Late Bhim Kānta Mahanta (Pacu Satriyā), Late Umā Kānta Mahanta and Late Sathal Mahanta Adhikāry played the role of Satrādhikāras for the time being because of internal problems.

(b) Dekā Adhikāra:

Next to the Satrādhikāra, the Dekā Adhikāra in power and prestige. In the absence of the Satrādhikāra the Dekā Adhikāra performs the duties of the Satrādhikāra concerning the religious matters of the Satra.

(c) Pāthak:

The Pāthak put in charge of reciting scriptures is known as Pāthak (reader of scriptures). The office of the Pāthak is an indispensible part of Satra affairs even to-day.
(d) Bharalī (Store keeper):

The person put in charge of the store house (Bharal-ghar) of the Satra is known as Bharalī. He receives the things brought by the visitors for offering, giving blessings and offers Nirmāli from the decorated pot. He is the controller of all the articles and utensils of the Satra necessary for daily use and in time of festivals. occurs time to eime. He is also in charge of large number of sacred books written on Śānci barks.

(e) Ghai Deuri (Principal distributor):

Ghai (the principal) Deuri is to arrange for all the daily religious performances in the Satra including lighting of the earthen lamps. He is to place the scripture in the proper place for expounding every morning and evening and to take special care of the Akṣaya Banti (eternal lamp). The Ghai Deuri is to distribute Nirmāli (offered flowers, leaves etc.) to the visitors.

(f) Pali Deuri (Subordinate distributor):

He is the helper of the Ghai Deuri. His main duties are to distribute Prasāda (offerings of God) among the devotees.

(g) Ojapali:

The Ojapali chorus or the Vyās Kirtana is also another important performing art form of the Chamarīyā Satra. This particular form of choral song is related to the daily prayer
services (*prasāṅga*) in the Satra and also performed in times of festivals. The leader of the troupe is called *Ojā* and the assistants are known as *pālis*.

(h) Gāyan-Bāyan (Vocal and instrumental musician):

During the time of religious services and dramatic performances in a Satra musical representations are put in charge of some singers known as *Gāyan* accompanied by some instrumentalists, normally playing on the *Khol*, (a special kind of drum) and cymbals, known as *Bāyan*. This orchestral party, called *Gāyan-Bāyan* is a vital part of the Satra paraphernalia.

(i) Mazumdār (Cashier):

*Mazumdār* is the cashier of the Satra who maintains various day to day accounts of the Satra on behalf of the *Sanidha*.

Moreover, there is a managing committee (*Paricālanā Sanvīti*) headed by one President and one Secretary, who are selected (nominated) by the Satra villagers. The committee is entrusted with the selected persons of the village with different responsibilities, mainly, at the time of festival observations. But *Satrādhikāra* bears the Satra’s affairs. *Bharālī* is to take the entire burden of the Satra along with the stock of the store.

(ii) Nitya Prasaṅga (Daily prayer service):

In *Eka-Śaraṇa-Nāma-Dharma* there are two main religious
services performed by the devotees. They are known as Nitya-
(Daily) and Naimittika (Occasional or Special) services. Prasaṅga is given a position of primary importance in the Satra.
Different items of congregational services were introduced in
the daily religious routine of the Satra. The various items of
Prasaṅga are continued from early morning till the early hours
of night. The main features of that constitute Prasaṅga are
singing of hymns and devotional songs, the chanting of prayers
with the help of musical instruments, reading and explaining
the Bhāgavata and the Gītā. The entire scheme of Prasaṅga is
called Nāma-Prasaṅga comprising prayers and auxiliary func-
tions.

Though at the initial stage of Vaiṣṇava movement the number
of units and order of performances were not clearly determin-
yet it is stated in the Guru Carit Kathā that Mādhavadeva fixed
the number of units of Prasaṅga at fourteen (Caidhya Prasaṅga)
and determin the period of conducting the items in the morning,
afternoon and evening while he was at Sundaridīyā Satra. In
conducting daily prayer services, under 14 units divided the
day into three successive periods. The programme of Prasaṅga
are given below under three main heads:

* Neog, M.(ed), Guru Carit Ksthā, pp. 269, 417
A. Puwār Prasaṅga (Morning prayer services) :

2. Puwār Bhatimā
3. Prasaṅga : Nāma-Chanda and Śaraṇa-Chanda
4. Bhāgavata-Gītā pāṭh (Sanskrit)
5. Bhāgavata-Gītā pāṭh (Assamese)

B. Biyalir Prasaṅga (Afternoon prayer services) :

7. Prasaṅga : Nāma-Chanda and Śaraṇa-Chanda
8. Pāch Pāṭh : Bhāgavata Purāṇa or Gītā

C. Rātir Prasaṅga (Evening prayer services) :

9. Guna-Mālā
10. Līlā-Mālā
11. Guru-Bhatimā
12. Sevār-Kīrtana (chorus of Bargīt with musical instrument)
13. Nāma-Chanda and Śaraṇa-Chanda.
14. Dabā Kobowā (beating of Drum)

The Dabā sounded at 8 p.m. which marks the end of the day’s religious services of the Satra.

1. (iii) Festivals : The main festivals observed at Chamarīyā Satra are as follows -
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months</th>
<th>Ceremonies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. $Ba'hāg$ ($Vaiśākha = April-May$)</td>
<td>Celebration of $Ba'hāg$ Bihu ($Saṁkrānti$ or $Domāhi$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. $Jeṭh$ ($Jaiṣṭha = May-June$)</td>
<td>Birth anniversary of Mahāpuruṣa Mādhavadeva on the first day of the dark fortnight</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. $Āhār$ ($Āśādha = June-July$)</td>
<td>Death anniversary of Bhātōkuchi Ātoi (Keśab-Charaṇ)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. $Bhādra$ (Aug. - Sept.)</td>
<td>(a) Death anniversary of Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkaradeva, on the second day of the bright fortnight. $Nāo-khel$ (Boat race competition) also observed in the same day.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(b) Death anniversary of Mahāpuruṣa Mādhavadeva on 5th day of the dark fortnight, $Nāo-khel$ (Boat race competition) also observed in the same day.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(c) $Janmāśtomi$ on 8th day of the dark fortnight.</td>
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<td>(d) Death anniversary of Padma</td>
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</table>
Ātā (Badulā Ātā) on the 11th day of the bright fortnight.

5. Āhin (Āśvina=Sept.-Oct.): (a) Death anniversary of Mathurā Dās Burhā Ātā on the 4th day of the dark fortnight.
   (b) Birth anniversary of Mahāpuruṣa Śāṅkaradeva on the 10th day of the bright fortnight.

6. Puh (Pauṣah =Dec.-Jan.) : Death anniversary of Nārāyan Dās Thākur Ātā on the 5th day of the dark fortnight.

7. Māgha (Māghah =Jan.-Feb.): Celebration of Māgh Bihu (Samkrānti or Domāhī)

8. Phāgun (Phālguna=Feb.-Mar.)
   : (a) Doulotsava on the fullmoon day.
   (b) Death anniversary of Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā on the 2nd day of the bright fortnight (Four-day celebration).
The detailed description of these festivals shall be elaborately discussed in connection with festivals of the Satra.

1. (iv) Sources of Income:

*Kar* (tax) is a source of a regular income. *Kar* is the annual payment made by the devotees to the fund of the Satra in accordance with the prevailing custom. The *Kar* may be paid in cash or kind annually or terminally. *Pranāmi* (offering as a mark of reverence) is a regular feature of offering made by the visitors to the Satra in the form of money, flowers of gold and silver, utensils of brass and bell-metal, mustered oil, salt, sugar and many others. All such *praṇāmi* are deposited to the Satra fund. In default of rendering certain services like *Pālā* (duty in turn) one shall pay an amount to the Satra in lieu of one's *Pālā*. *Bhāg* is an another source of income. *Bhāg* is the share of the offerings made to the Satra. Every member of the Satra who has *Bhāg* in the Satra shall have to pay a certain quantity of rice or its cash value fixed by the *Mazlīca Samūha*. *Dar* is a punishment in the form of fine for violation of certain religious rites. Nowadays, money acquired from *dar* is a part of income source.

There is a *Bil* (small type of lake) of 20 Bighas of land. By selling the fishes of the *Bil* a good amount comes to the Satra fund. Moreover, public donations given to the Satra make the
Satra fund resourceful. The responsibility of collecting these items of income are put to different functionaries under the managing committee.

1. (v) Expenditure:

The expenditures incurred by the Satra are mainly of regular religious involvement, such as regular *Nām-Prasāṅga*. The traditional ceremonies like *Kīrtanas* or *Tīthi-Utsavas* of Šaṅkaradeva, Mādhavadeva and other *tīthi* of Ātās for which a great amount of expenditure is to be incurred by the Satra from its general fund. Other heavy amount of expenditure has been incurred on the heads of the *tīthi* of Bar-Viśṇu Ātā, Doulotsava, Janmāstomī celebration, *Nāo-khel*, Bihu festivals, Satra development activities, implementation of preaching schemes, supply of food articles to the visitors coming from outside. It is very hard to manage all these expenditure from small income for the managing committee. The *Bharālī* of the Satra reports us that the yearly expenditure of the Satra is nearly 6 lakhs as a whole.

1. (vi) Position of woman: The female devotees takes active parts in religious affairs of the Satra with due honour. The female devotees are called Šāi-Sakal. They perform their regular prayer services on the stipulated place on the southern Varandah.
of the *Kirtanghar* in the morning and evening. Therefore, they are called *Kāṭhir-Āi-Sakal* (*Kāṭhi*- Varandah). The members of Āi-Sakal attend to cleaning the *Varanada* of the *Kirtanghar* alternately. The women devotees are allowed to enter into *Kirtanghar* of Chamarīyā Satra. The position of women is honoured in all festivals and functions equally with that of man.

1. (vii) Ḥāṭī organisation: In Chamarīyā Satra the word Ḥāṭī carried the same meaning as *Pārā* or ward synonymous to particular area of a village or town. On the other hand, sets of cloisters for disciples within the main enclosure of the Satra known as *Kevaliyā Ḥāṭi* or *Bhakatar Bahā* from the earliest times. In that sense a Ḥāṭī may also be understood as a row of houses attached to a religious institution or the residence of disciples.

Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā, the founder and first Satrādhikāra of Chamarīyā Satra was the creator of the Ḥāṭī system in Chamarīyā Satra which were the residences of the disciples. There are four Ḥāṭīs on four sides of the village which is known as *Cāri Ḥāṭi*. These are as follows -

1. *Uttar Ḥāṭi* - the Ḥāṭi on the north.
2. *Dakṣin Ḥāṭi* - the Ḥāṭi on the south.
3. *Paścim Ḥāṭi* - the Ḥāṭi on the west.
4. *Madhya Hāṭī* - the *Hāṭī* in the middle.

There are 12 (twelve) *Pārās* in 4 (four) *Hāṭīs* -

1. Kheulāpārā and Bālāpārā in *Uttar Hāṭī*.
2. Daksīṅ Pārā, Dekāpārā and Bāmunpārā in *Daksīṅ Hāṭī*.
3. Pacupārā and Bhāṭhipārā in *Paścim Hāṭī*.
4. Bāccāpārā, Hīrāpārā, Ālipārā, Bharālipārā and Barbārī in *Madhya Hāṭī*.

In course of time some families migrated to a new area which is called Reserve or Natun Chamarīyā. People of different cast and creed live in the same *Hāṭī*. These *Hāṭīs* may be considered as organised on the basis of division of labour, each *Hāṭī* having its own share context. The relation of each *Hāṭī* with the Satra is analogous with the relation of each state with the parliament, taking each *Hāṭī* as a state and the Satra organisation as the parliament.\(^2\)

2. Dāmhālcoch Satra:

There is a managing committee in Dāmhālcoch Satra headed by one president and one secretary who are selected by the Satra villagers. There is a *Medhi* and two *Deurīs* who are offering all the affairs of the Satra. They got annual honorarium\(^3\)

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\(^3\) Data : Prabin Kalita (Dāmhālcoch)
The Satra possesses one bighā of land with its compound and other 8 (eight) bighās of paddy land lie in the village. The Satra affairs are managed by public donations.

Usually 14 prasaṅgas are performed by the devotees. But at present 14 prasaṅgas discontinued for many reasons. Of course every evening the devotees lit the Banti with mustered oil and observed Nām-Prasaṅga.

The death anniversary of Jiban Ātoi is the prime festival of the Dāmālcoch Satra. It is held every year on the Śukla Pañcamī Tīthi in the month of Māgha according to Assamese calander. As he was the founder of this Satra his descendents observe this day with honour and the festivity. The birth and death anniversaries of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and Madhavadeva, the Janmāśṭomi, the Doulotsava, the tīthi of Mathurā Dās Burhā Ātā are observed with due solemnity every year. In the first day of the month of Bahāg, Nām-Kīrtana is performed by the devotees.

3. Dīghalkuchi Satra:

At present there is 64 bighās of land which is recorded in the name of Caturbhuj Vigraha as landed property of the Dīghalkuchi Satra. Out of 64 bighās, 2 bighās are within the

4. Data - Srim ah"tm " P"thak, Dīghalkuchi Satra.
four walls of the Satra campus while 62 bighas are used for
cultivation. The production from this land is the main source of
income for the Satra. Expenditure of all functions of the Satra
are met from this agricultural income and from the public
donations and gifts.

There is a management committee headed by the President
and the Secretary. Besides the managing committee there is an
assembly of *Samūha* including *Deuri, Pāthak, Mazumdar* etc.

The main festivals observed by the Dīghalkuchi Satra are
the death anniversary of Bar-Viśṇu Ātā and Mālibāri Ātoi,
*Janmāśṭamī, Doulotsava, Māghī Purṇimā, Bahāg Bihu,
Ambubāci, Nandotsava* or Piyāk Nām (prayer with mud). Besides
that, the birth day and the death anniversary of Śrīmanta
Śankaradeva, the death anniversary of Mādhavadeva are also
observed every year. In addition to that *tithis* of some other
prominent Ātās are also observed with *Nām-Kīrtana*.

The *Caidhya Prasaṅgas* (14 *prasāṅgas*) were observed by
the devotees earlier, but at present 14 *prasāṅgas* have been
discontinued due to various reasons. Now-a-days only 11
*prasāṅgas* are observed in every morning and the evening.

4. Kaimārī Satra:

There was a devastating fire in the Kaimārī Satra in 1340
Śaka (1934 A.D.). All the valuable documents like the Copper Plate, Guru Carit, and other literatures are reduced to ashes. A Pañcamukhi Ghanta (Pentagonal bell) of 5 (five) K.G. weight and two very big size broken Tou (a cooking vessel made of Brass) of 10 ft. in breadth and 3 ft. in depth are found.

The most sacred and venerable articles preserved in the Bar Bahā of Kaimārī Satra are two pairs of Padaśilā (foot print of stone). According to local belief that the one pair of Padaśilā belongs to Kṛṣṇa Ātoi, the founder of Kaimārī Satra, and the other belongs to Balorām Ātoi, the first Satrādhikāra of the Satra.

The most important festival of Kaimārī Satra is the Rāij Śabhā, which is observed on the death anniversary of Balorām Ātoi, the first Satrādhikāra of Kaimārī Satra. This festival is observed with great pomp and grandeur with 3 days celebration in Śuklā Trayodaśi tithi in the month of Kāti, according to Assamese calendar. The next important festival of this Satra is the death anniversary of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva, Janmāśtami and Doulotsava.

The expenditure of all these affairs are met by public donations and by the paddy of lands. At present the total land

5. Data : Sri Satya Mahanta (Kaimārī Satra) a devotee.
under the possession of the Satra is only 32 bighās. The economic condition of this Satra is very weak. Śrī Gagan Chandra Adhikary, the present *Satrādhikāra* of Kaṁrī Satra is the 10th generation from Balorām Ātoi.

5. Bhālukghāṭā Satra:

Bhārat Chandra Adhikāry was the founder and first *Satrādhikāra* of the Bhālukghāṭā Satra. The name of the *Satrādhikāras* of Bhālukghāṭā Satra are as follows -

1. Bhārat Chandra Adhikary
2. Uday Chandra Adhikary
3. Mahendra Mahanta - temporarily served for ten years.
4. Padma Kanta Adhikary - present *Satrādhikāra*.

The traditional *Nām-presāṅga* is retained in this Satra. The devotional songs, *Nām-Kīrtana* etc. are performed daily as common programmes as in Barpetā Satra and Chamarīyā Satra. They have done it in the Satra daily in different items i.e. morning, afternoon and evening. In this Satra the devotees combined the different types of 14 *Prasāṅgas* in three session -

A. Morning session:

(1) Bargīt, (2) Bhatimā, (3) Bhāgavata pāṭh,
B. Afternoon session:

(4) Kīrtan-ghoṣā or Nāma-ghoṣā, (5) Ratnāvalī (6) Bhāgavata Pāṭh.

C. Evening session:


The Principal festival in the Bhalukghāṭa Satra is the death anniversary of Śrī Śrī Bar-Visṇu Ātā. It is held every year on the 2nd day of the bright fortnight in the Month of Phāguna with 3 days programme according to Assamese calender. It is observed with religious discourses and seminars, Bhāona, devotional songs etc. The birth day and death anniversary of Mādhavadeva are also observed every year in the Satra. In addition to that the tithis of four Ātās namely Mathurā Dās Burhā Ātā, Nārāyaṇ Dās Thākur Ātā, Badulā Ātā and Balorām Ātoi (Kaimārī Ātoi) are also observed with all sincerity and devotion in the Satra. The tithis of these four Ātās are considered by the Satra as the indispensible religious rites of the Satra. The Janmāstomī and Doulotsava are considered as the most auspicious festivals.
Excluding the Satra boundary there are two big fisheries of six bighās of land. The production from the fishery is received by the Satra which is its own regular income. The devotees under the Satra pay some donation annually either in cash or kind to lit which is fully used in the daily offerings. Expenses of *tithis* and festivals are met from contributions by the devotees and general public. Yearly expenditure of the Satra is nearabout 50 thousand. All accounts of income and expenditure are maintained by the Executive Committee with the help of *Mazumdār*. These are two *Pāthaks* at the Satra for performing prayers and *Nām Prasangas*. The *Borā* is engaged to observe all the works and to look after all the other duties of the Satra. There is also engaged a *Śārā* (Messenger). There are two *Bhakats*. One is celebate and the other is *Grhi* (married).

6. Śrī Śrī Caturbhuj Bar Herāmda Satra:

At present the total land under the possession of the Satra excluding its campus is 108 bighās. All these plots of lands are cultivated lands producing paddy by which they meet expenses for the daily offerings and other expenditure of the Satra.

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6. **Data informer** - Sri Biren Mahanta - Barherāmda Satra  
   Sri Umesh Mahanta - ""  
   Sri Mādhav Mahanta - ""  
   Sri Akhil Mahanta - ""  
   Sri Giridhar Das - ""
The descendants of Padhiya Madhav Atoi are enjoying the office of the Satradhikāra still today. The present Satradhikāra of this Satra is Śrī Sarat Mahanta of Heramda.

There is a Satra Paricālanā Samiti (management committee) headed by one President and one Secretary including Deurī, Pāthak, Pālādharīyā, Ālḍharā, Gāyan and Bāyan. This committee is fully entrusted with the maintenance of the Satra affairs.

The traditional Nāṃ-Prasaṅga is retained in this Satra. In this Satra the devotees combined the 14 prasaṅgas into three prasaṅgas i.e. Puwār Prasaṅga (Morning prayer), Biyalīr Prasaṅga (Afternoon prayer) and Rātīr Prasaṅga (Evening prayer). Puwār prasaṅga contains 5 (five) items, Biyalīr prasaṅga contains 3 (three) items and Rātīr prasaṅga contains 6 (six) items (5+3+6 = 14).

The most important festival of Bar Heramda Satra is the Raij Śabhā i.e. festive gathering of the common people. This festival is observed with great pomp and grandeur in the month of Kāti according to Assamese calendar, with three day celebration. They observe the birth and death anniversaries of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva with various religious discourses. In addition to that the tithis of three Ātās namely Padhiyā Mādhav Ātā, Mathurā Dās Burhā Ātā and Bhātokuchi
Ata are also observed with all sincerity and devotion. Two other festivals of Janmāśtomi and Doulotsava are also observed with sanctity. They also observed the three Bihus namely Bahāg, Kāti and Māgh Bihu Šamkrānti with Nām-Kirtana and religious discourses.

During these festivals various cultural programmes like Yātra Paṛty, Behār dance, Bhörtal dance, Satriyā dance, Nāgāra Nām, Bargīt etc. are performed in the Satra.

In Bar Herāmda Satra the women devotees are not allowed to enter into the main Kīrtanghar. Only in the days of festivals they are allowed to enter in the Kīrtanghar to a particular place. The women devotees performed Nām-Kīrtana every morning and evening from outside the Kīrtanghar.

7. Śrī Śrī Caturbhuja Saru-Herāmda Satra:

The Satra had originally a landed property of 192 bighās of land. It was granted by Ahom Swargadew Siva Singha (1714-1744 A.D.) in the name of the Satra. But at present there is only 3 bighās of land under the possession of the Satra. Out of this one bighā is within the Satra compound and other two bighās are used for cultivation.

The Satra receives an annual grants of Rs. 480/-, per year

from the Assam Government.

The descendants of Paḍhīyā Mādhav Ātoi has enjoyed the office of the Satrādhikāra. The present Satrādhikāra of Saru-Herāmda Satra is Śrī Janārdan Adhikary. The Satrādhikāra bears the over all responsibility of the Satra. The residential works are divided among the Pāthak, Bāyan, Deurī, Bharālī Mazumdār and Pālādharā. These people carry on their respective duties. The aim of the office bearers is to make the functions of the Satra a grand success. This Satra follows all the traditional festivals and religious rites of Bar Herāmda and Barpeta Satra.

8. Urput Satra :

The most important festivals observed at the Urput Satra are the three BihuŚaṅkrānties, i.e. Bahāg, Māgh and Kāti according to Assamese calander. The Doul-festival is another important function of this Satra. The death anniversaries of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva, Mādhavadeva, Badulā Padma Ātā, Mathurā Dās Burhā Ātā and a few others are also observed with due respects. The birth anniversaries of Lord Śrī-Kṛṣṇa is observed with great care and meriments. Similarly Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva’s birth day is also celebrated as a special programme. The people those who are associated with Satra give importance for some religious

8. Data - Sri Janardan Adhikary, Satrādhikāra.
performances on these special occasions. Later on, some modern theories and ideas are also included to focus the religious conception. Therefore the organisers of the religious committee hold some seminars and discussions, Pāl Nām, Nāgārā Nām, Yātrā Party etc. in these occasions. These are the new addition in the Satra culture.

The Satra management committee takes the entire responsibilities of financing all the related matters of the Satra. The fund for these festivals is generally raised from the public donations and contributions.

Excluding the Satra campus there is a plot of five bighās of cultivated land. This land is used for agricultural purpose which is the regular income of the Satra. It is said that Ahom Swargadew Siva Singha (1714-1744 A.D.) granted 120 bighās of land with a copper plate inscribed in the name of Satra. But the copper plate inscription had lost and the British encroached upon the lands from the Satra.9

Caturbhuj Thākura was the founder and architect of the Urput Satra. When he left the Satra he offered the office of the Satradhikāra to Gopal, the son of Paḍhiyā Mādhav Ātā. From that time the descendant of Paḍhiyā Mādhav Ātā has been

9. Data - Late Hareswar Mahanta - former Satradhikāra, Urput Satra.
enjoying the Adhikāraship of the Urput Satra till today. We get quite a good number of Satrādhihikāras whose names are stated below.¹⁰


(9). Śrī Śrī Caturbhuj, Bar Phulagūrī Satra:

Excluding the Satra campus there are six bighās of land of the Satra authority.

Caturbhuj Thākur, the grandson of Śaṅkaradeva is regarded as the founder of the Bar Phulgūrī Satra. According to the records preserved in the Satra the names of the Ātois appear after Kānu Burhā Thākur of Nalanā. As the tradition of the Nikā Samhati all the Ātois followed celebacy for whole life.¹¹


¹¹ Data - Nabin Chandra Das, Former President, Barphulgūrī Satra.
All these Ātoi observed celebacy life as a tradition. The traditional Nām-Prasaṅga is retained in this Satra. In this Satra the devotees combined the 14 prasaṅgas divided into 4 prasaṅgas as stated below -

A. Puwār Prasaṅga (Morning session):
1. Puwār Git - Jāgaraṇ, Calaṇ
2. Puwār Bhatimā

B. Dupariyār Prasaṅga (Midday session):
3. Jugal Patal,
4. Kīrtan-ghoṣā
5. Bhāgavata or Ratnāvalī Pāth

C. Ābelīr Prasaṅga (Afternoon Session):
6. Bhāgavata or Ratnāvalī Pāth
7. Nām Canda
8. Bargīt - Upadeśa

D. Gadhūlīr Prasaṅga (Evening session):
9. Guru Bhatimā and Guṇamālā
10. Līlā Mālā
11. Bargīt
12. Jugal Patal
13. Kīrtan-ghoṣā
14. Bhāgavata Pāth
The most important festival of Bar Phulguri Satra is the *Raij Sabhā* i.e. Festive gathering of the common people. This festival is observed with great pomp and grandeur. The next important festival observed in the month of *Bahāg* according to Assamese calendar. In addition to these festivals they observed the Janmāṣṭamī, Doulotsava, Bahāg Bihu, Māgh Bihu and Ambubāci in the same manner as done in other Satras of South Kamrup. They also observed the birth and death anniversaries of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva, death anniversary of Mādhavadeva, the *tithis* of various Ātās with sanctity. During these festivals various cultural programmes and items like *Ankīyā Bhaona*, *Dadhi Mathan*, Kṛṣṇa Dance, Zumurā Dance, Apsara Dance, *Bhajan Bihār*, Bargīt, one act play are staged in the Satra. They also take up the programme of *Pāl Nām*, *Nāgārā Nām*, Āyati Nām, and Bahā Nām during the festivals days.

The main sources of income of the Bar Phulaguri Satra is the *Samūhiyā Kṛṣi Pām Samabāi Samiti*, i.e. a co-operative society of cultivation. This society cultivate in various lands and the production goes to the Satra villagers as a whole. Expenditure of all the functions and festivals of the Satra are met from this society.
There is a Satra Paricālanā Samiti (management committee) headed by one President and one Secretary including 17 members who are selected by the villagers of the Satra. The management committee solely depends on the above mentioned society. The public donation is the main source of income to run the functions and festivals smoothly.

10. Śikārhāti Satra:

The most important festival of Śikārhāti Satra is the death anniversaries of Mathurā Dās Burhā Atā. This festival is observed with great pomp and grandeur in the month of Ahin according to Assamese calendar, with three days celebration. They observed the birth and death anniversaries of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva with various religious discourses. In addition to that the tithi of three Ātās as Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā, Paḍhiyā Mādhava Ātā and Bhāṭokuchi Ātā are also observed with all sincerity and devotion. Two other festivals Janmāṣṭomī and Doulotsava are also observed with sanctity.

The total land under the possession of the Satra excluding its compus is 60 bighās. Out of 60 bighās 36 bighās lands are cultivated lands producing paddy by which they meet other expenditure of the Satra.¹²

¹² Data - Late Lalit Kalita, Rtd. teacher, a devotee of Śikārhāti Satra
The traditional 14 *prasarîga* is retained in this Satra. Šikārhāṭi Satra follows all the traditions of Barpeta Satra.

There is a *Satra Paricālanâ Samiti* headed by one President and one Secretary including *Satrâdhikâra, Bhakat, Deuri* etc.

11. Guwâlhâṭi Satra:

The most important festival of Guwâlhâṭi Satra is the death anniversary of Kânû Burhā Āṭa of Nalanâ, the founder of the Satra. This festival is observed in the *Bhisma Ekâdaśi* in the month of *Mâgh* according to Assamese calendar. In early times they observed this festival in the month of *Āhin*. But due to rainy season they observed it in the month of *Mâgh*. They also observed all the festivals and *tithis* related with the Satra tradition.

At present the total land under the possession of Satra excluding its campus is 36 bighâs. All these plots of lands are cultivated lands producing paddy by which they meet expenses of the Satra. In addition to this expenses are also made from the donations and contributions by the devotees and general public.

There is no *Satrâdhikâra* in Guwâlhâṭi Satra. *Bhakat* or *Ātoi* is the steersman of spiritual or religious purposes. We get a few numbers of *Bhakats* whose names are stated as - Kânû Burhâ Ātoi, Kâmpâl Bhakat, Mamat Bhakat. The were celebacy. Later
on the villagers selected some other Bhakats. They were—Rāmeśwar Dās, Deva Kānta Mahanta, Padmeśwar Mahanta and Sadānanda Ātoi.

The traditional Nām-prasaṅga is retained in this Satra. In Guwālhaṭī Satra the devotees combined the different times of 14 prasaṅgas divided into 3 sessions in a day.\textsuperscript{13} There is a Satra Paricalanā Samiti headed by the President and the Secretary including Baruās, Dhanbharālī (store keeper), Gāyan, Bāyan, Deuri, Pāthak and Pālādhāriyā.

B. Main festivals of the Satras:

The festivals of the Mahāpuruṣīyā Satras of South Kamrup may be divided into two categories considering their importance in the respective Satras i.e. (1) Primary and (2) Secondary.

The primary festivals are: Kirtana or tithi (death anniversaries of the two Mahāpuruṣas), Rāij Sabhā or the death anniversaries of the founders of respective Satras, the Biḥus i.e. Bahāg Biḥu and Māgh Biḥu, Doulotsava, or Phālgutsava, Janmāṣṭomī etc. The secondary festivals are— the death anniversaries of the Satrādhikāras and Ātois of the Vaiṣṇava cult, Kāti Biḥu etc. The above mentioned festivals are being celebrated throughout the Mahāpuruṣīyā Satras of South Kamrup with few additions and

\textsuperscript{13} Informer, Sadānanda Ātoi of Guwāhāṭī Satra.
alterations i.e. the traditional changes. These festivals in the Satras may be placed under the following heads with special reference to Chamarīyā Satra.

I. Kīrtana or tithi-utsava (Death anniversary):

This ceremony is locally known as Kīrtana or tithi. This is the most important and sacred special service of the Mahāpuruṣiyā Satras of South Kamrup which is observed with due solemnity. The Kīrtana festival consists mainly of elaborate programme of prayer services which include reading and reciting of the various religious books composed by the preachers like Śaṅkaradeva, Mādhavadeva and so forth. An attempt has been made to give a description of the Kīrtana celebrated in the Satras particularly in the Chamarīyā Satra along with due customs and traditional rites connected with the ceremony. The ceremonies with the Satra are (1) Kīrtana of Śaṅkaradeva, (2) Kīrtana of Mādhavadeva, (3) Tithi of Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā, the founder of the Chamarīyā Satra etc.

(i). Kīrtana of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva:

The tithi or Kīrtana of Śaṅkaradeva is celebrated on the second bright lunar day of the month of Bhādra (August-September) and is observed for 7 (seven) days. On the previous day of the Kīrtana in addition to fourteen prasaṅgas few more
devotional songs are sung by the Gāyan-Bāyan. Moreover, the order of prasaṅga is also enhanced in comparison to normal prayer activities.

On the day of the Kīrtana, prabhāt pheri (morning procession) is conducted before sun rise chanting and reciting Bhāgīts, Bhātimās and verses from the Kīrtan-ghoṣā and Nām-ghoṣā. The devotional programmes once started during these days continued without break even between two units of daily prasaṅga. From the beginning of the Kīrtana, 2 to 3 puwār-gītās (morning songs) are sung and in the afternoon ghoṣā-kīrtana and vyās-kīrtana are chanted over and above fourteen prasaṅgas in front of the Asāna inside the Kīrtanghar and the Gāyan-Bāyan recite the Bhāgīts to the accompaniment of khol and cymbals. At night nine ghoṣās are chanted there. On the day of the Kīrtana, prasāda is distributed in the afternoon among all the devotees. During the days of the Kīrtana festival the Gāyan-Bāyana play the musical concert after the morning prasaṅga. In this way items after items, the days programme are conducted throughout the entire period of the Kīrtana without break. Generally through these devotional performance of chanting and reciting during the days of the Kīrtana, the life long activities and the philosophy of the Guru are tried to represent. During
the time of Kirtana devotees from all categories take equal seats on the floor inside the Kirtanghar while the prasaïga is in progress. The prasāda prepared in the some vessels is distributed equally among all. For a handful of prasāda thousands of people remain in wait. The prasāda is considered to be sacred thing and so little bits of it is taken on the head before eating.

(ii) Kirtana of Madhavadeva : The Kirtana of Madhavadeva is celebrated on the fifth dark day of the fortnight of the month of Bhādra for ten days. In this Kirtana also the same religious formalities are to be observed like that of the Kirtana of Śaṅkaradeva. Of course, though the Kirtana of Śaṅkaradeva is celebrated first yet it is to be noted that occasionally due to the planetary position, the tithis of the two Gurus are to be celebrated earlier or later as the case may be.

Nāo-khels (boat race) are also arranged at the time of the Kirtanas of both the Gurus, (elaborately discussed in the same Chapter seperately).

(iii) Tithi of Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā or the Chamarīyā Sabhā :

Of all the festivals held in Chamarīyā Satra the tithi of Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā or Chamarīyā Sabhā is worthmentioning which well known to all over Assam. The tithi of Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā, the founder of Chamarīyā Satra, is celebrated on the 2nd bright day of the
fortnight of the month of Phāgun (February-March). It is celebrated for 4 (four) days in the Chamarīyā Satra and its subordinate Satras. The main tithi started from the first bright day and ended in third bright day of the month of phāgun. The tithi of Bar- Viṣṇu Āṭā is also called Chamarīyā Sabha. This festival is observed with great pomp and grandeur. This festival is started with Balandiyā, i.e. invitation. The balandiyā function is observed on the full moon day of the month of Māgh (January-February). Various functionaries and devotees associated with the festival are formally invited by the Satra authority to their traditional duties to be performed during the course of the celebration. Balandiyā consists of one areca nut and one betel leaf to each of the shareholder devotees and arranging a number of brass metal trays with artistically curved stand called Sarāī. These Sarāīs are arranged by placing soaked pulses, betel nuts and leaves, bananas etc. on these towards every functionary family who have got traditional functions to be performed. The representative persons of the concerned families towards whom the Sarāīs have been arranged would receive them, which signifies that they would participate in the activities connected with the
Chamariyā Sabhā. Again some bhakats have been engaged by the Satra authority in the act of balandiya to the devotee families of the neighbouring villages.

The preceding day of the tithi or Sabhā is known as Gandh. The function of the Gandh begin in the afternoon at about 2 p.m. with the payment of karbhār.14 Payment of karbhār to the Satra is an essential feature of the Chamariyā Sabhā. Four Hātis, namely Uttar Hāti, Daksīṇ Hāti, Puv Hāti and Paścim Hāti are entrusted with the paying Khabhār to the Satra in the time of the tithi. The Karbhār consists of foodstaff containing the commodities like cāul (rice), tel (mustered oil), lōn (salt), kumrā (white gourd melon), lāo (squash gourd), kāch kal (green banana), jāluk (black paper), areca nuts and betel leaves etc. which had been initiated by Madhavadeva at the time of Śaṅkaradeva’s śrāddha (funeral rites). People of the Hāti express eagerness to carry the things irrespective of status and age with white dress carrying the things by two. Such traditionally dressed people also join the gāyan-bāyan troupe playing khol and tāls. The Karbhār is carried by the people of the Hāti on a procession to the Kirtanghar on the day of Gandh of the tithi in the afternoon accompanied by the devotional troupes. The articles

14. Karb-hār means tributes payable and is carried on soulder suspended from either end of a pole locally known as bhār.
offered in the Karbhār are placed in the bhājghar which are distributed among the outside visitors at the time of the tithi or Sabhā as sidhā (uncooked eatables provided to a guest).

After the completion of the ceremony of Karbhār, two guru-āsans are taken out, one from the bhājghar and another from the Kīrtanghar. After that both the āsanas are installed in the Thalighar or Sabhāghar (a big and flat wall less house) observing all devotional procedures relating to it along with nām-kīrtana, vyāsa-kīrtana and all other religious instruments. This ceremony is locally known as gosāin-uliōwā. All the devotional functions and congregational prayers along with prasaṅgas are held in the thalighar during the days of the tithi.

Next day of the Gandh is the main festival which is locally known as Bhar-Sabhā. It is a large festive gathering with great pomp and grandeur. The bhar-sabhā is started with puwār-gīta then congregational nām-prasaṅga are held in the thalighar. During the course of the day time choral performances are held by Ojāpāli singers and gāyan-bāyan. Behār-nāce is also performed in front of the guru-āsana at thalighar. In this tithi also the same religious formalities are to be observed like that of Kīrtana of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva. At night cultural programmes are held relating to Satriyā culture.
Next day of the *bhar-sabhā* is called *Bāhi sabhā*. In the day of *bāhi-sabhā* an *ānikyā-nāt*, named *Rām Vijaya* is performed in the open air. It is noteworthy that the man performed the role in place of woman still today in this *ānikyā-nāt*. The actors started their acting by paying devotional salute (*sevā*) to the *Satrādhihikāra*. At that time the *Satrādhihikāra* has sitted on a particular seat in front of the eastern door of the *bhājghar*. Thousands of audiances made convenience for the actors to perform their acting by standing both sides of the open place. The actors of the *ānikyā-nāt* started drama from the eastern door of the *bhājghar*. Then they proceeds by the southern side of the *Kirtanghar* and finished the last part of the play in front of the *guru-grha* or at the *Mathar-Cotāl*. After finishing the play all the artists take blessings of the *bhakāts* and the audiances by paying *sevā* (devotional salute). Thus the *tithi* of Bar-Viṣṇu Ātā or the *Chamarīyā Sabhā* is come to an end. People of all the *Hātīs* of Chamarīyā Satra take part in the *tithi* in one form or another. Taking part in this celebrations has been regarded as noble duty by the Vaiṣṇavite people of the zone.

There are lots of entertainment programmes held out side the Satra campus during the days of the *Sabhā*. Theatre party, touring cinema, circus, *mina bāzār*, temporary market, *vātra*
party etc. are held during these days.

All the families of the *Hāṭis* entertain guests during the festival days. Visitors from far off places are accommodated in the guest house of the Satra. Visitor guests to the Satra are given *Sidhā* (ration) from the Satra fund consisting of rice, dal, potato, fire-wood etc. Services of the people of various *Hāṭis* are sought for the distribution of the various items of the ration.

It may be mentioned here that as the preparations for the festivals proceeds, the *Kirtangharb* and its compound is given a new look by white washing and clearing the garbages in its surrounding. Beginning of this work is made with the cleaning and white washing of the *Math* and its compound. Just as the *Kirtanghar* and its surrounding is given a festive look so also the people of Chamarīyā make some preparations to observe and enjoy this festival. Any kind of decoration of their house with white washing or paint, taking new cloths for the family members are pushed back till the coming of this festival. Even in the families of lower income groups some changes come in their dietary manu also and in every family it is expected that there should be some guests during this festival. In order to entertain the guests various cakes and sweetmeats are prepared by indigenous methods in almost every household. It is the
dearest festival for the people of Chamariyā Satra.

(iv) Kīrtana of other Ātās:

The Kīrtana or the death anniversaries of the various Ātās of the Neo-Vaiṣṇavite cult of Assam are also observed in the Mahāpurūṣīyā Satras of South Kamrup. Amongst them, the Kīrtanas of Narāyaṇ Dās Thākur Ātā, Badalā Padma Ātā, Mathurā Dās Burhā Ātā, Bhātokuṭhi Keśav Charaṇ Ātā, Hari Har Ātā, Krṣṇa Ātoi, Paḍhiyā Mādhav Ātā are observed in due date and time with great veneration on the respective tithis. The death anniversaries of the former Satrādhikāras are also observed by the respective Satras.

2. Nāo Khel (Boat race competition):

Arrangement of Nāo khel (boat race competition) is also another important festival of Chamariyā Satra which is held in the Kīrtana festivals of both the Gurus i.e. Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva. The river Marā Kalahi is used as the venue for Nāo Khel. It is flowing beside the Chamariyā Satra.

Chamariyā being a low lying area boat is essential for the people as the means of local transport, in trade, in fishing and visit to distance places of this area. Boat has occupied the position of sport specially for the young ones. Boat race competitions are arranged as an important pastime in the summer season
when the river Marā Kalahi is spate.

Though the antiquity of the boat race is not definitely known, this much is true that from the Vaiṣṇavite epoch it came out as a festive sport. The principal *gurus* of the Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement of Assam were constantly on the move from one place to another place and on such occasions boats were the only means of conveyance. During the Ahom rule there were separate contingent in the army of naval force who fought from boats.

It is one of the characteristics of the Vaiṣṇavite religion to draw people's attention by arranging rituals and festivals and making games and sports. Boat race (*Nāo khel*) competitions arranged on the sheets of water flowing beside the *Kīrtanghar* at the time of the celebration of *kīrtana* festivals of Chamarīyā Satra are the added attractions on these occasions. It is a happy coincidence that the anniversaries of the *gurus* fall in the summer month of *Bhādra*, where the rivers are in spate and the competitions held in the swelled water. This particular sport is prevalent at Chamarīyā Satra for several hundred years and has merged into the cultural pattern of the place.

The traditional folk songs associated with the boat race competitions enhance the attraction of the race. Probably such
songs are composed orally to suit the interest of the audience and for that purpose certain comic songs are also added the course of time. There are also such songs which are sung by the winning party aiming at the defeated party. Songs are sung in a choral form by the boatmen when the competitions started. A person, dressed like a joker locally called *Bahuwa* has leaded the song with acting. The other members are followed him in accordance to the regulation of musical time of the oars. For example such a song is -

\[
\begin{align*}
pukhurire p\ddot{a}re p\ddot{a}re & \quad O bh\ddot{a}i s\ddot{a}gare \\
ic\ddot{a}late p\ddot{a}c\ddot{a}l k\ddot{h}\ddot{a}i & \\
bh\ddot{a}ng\ddot{r}\ddot{a}l\ddot{a} k\ddot{a}l\ddot{a}c\ddot{i} & \\
pukhurire p\ddot{a}re p\ddot{a}re & \\
\text{*ikara kh\ddot{a}gar\ddot{r}ire ber\ddot{a} &} \\
dali m\ddot{a}ri pel\ddot{a}i dilo & \\
\text{phatikare m\ddot{a}l\ddot{a} &} \\
tumi j\ddot{a}\ddot{b}\ddot{a} b\ddot{a}me b\ddot{a}me & \\
mai j\ddot{a}m n\ddot{a}ve n\ddot{a}ve & \\
duyojane dekh\ddot{a} dekhi & \\
haibo kadam tale & \\
\end{align*}
\]

The making of boats used in the competitions have certain special features. Boats made for such purpose called *Kheln\ddot{a}o*
(boat for playing) are made longer and spindle-shaped to be swift moving. The owner of these boats with the same sportive mind decorate their boats with carving of floral designs and of peacock (mayūra paṅkhī) on the body of the boat which are again beautified with various colours. There are carpenters adopt in making such boats with elegant designs. Each boats have their own name like- Āśīrbād, Śrī Śrī Jay Lakṣmī, Śrī Viṣṇu etc.

Nāo khel is an indispensable and most entertaining co-relative item of the Kīrtanas of both the Gurus. It is not only an object of entertaining but also a training ground of developing certain qualities of rowing, swimming, courage, painstaking, wood carving etc. Nāo khel also acted as a symbol of unity and integration as people of neighbouring immigrant Muslim villages also joined.

The mentionable point is that this Nāo-Khel has not been celebrating for the last three or four years at Chamariya Satra due to erosion of river. The Satra authority inform that in near future through new thinking the Nāo-Khel will be celebrated again at Chamariya Satra.

3. The Bihu:

Bihu is regarded as the national festival of Assam. Transition of one month to another is called Samkrānti or Domāhi or
Bihu. But all the transitional phases of twelve months in a year are not celebrated. Three such Bihu are celebrated in Assamese society. The three Bihu festivals observed on the last day of Caitra, Pauṣa and Aśvina are popularly known as Bahāg Bihu, Māgh Bihu and Kāti Bihu. The Bahāg Bihu is associated with the beginning of the spring season. It is also known as Raṅgālī Bihu that cheers. Māgh Bihu is the Bhogālī Bihu in which one can enjoy different items of food and drink. In between the two is the Kāti Bihu or Kaṅgālī Bihu in which there is nothing much to eat or enjoy at the time. In lower Assam, specially in South Kamrup Bihu is better known as Domāhi which means the junction on coincidence of the two months.

It is interesting to note the coming of the elements of folk culture like Bihu into the sphere of a Vaiṣṇavite religious centre like the Satra. It is also interesting to note here that implication of Bihu festivals in the Satra circle has been given more emphasis on social importance and it continues from one to two weeks celebrating different social functions. But such functions are not associated with the Satra. Only few more religious functions are conducted in the Satras over and above the daily prayer services according to custom.
(i) Bahāg Bihu:

The Bahāg Bihu in Satras, particularly in South Kamrup have been occupying a conspicuous position since its formative stage. In the morning Banti is lighted in the Satra Kīrtanghar and Naivedya (sacred food) is offered to God. The Gāyan sings three or four morning songs (puwār git) and then the Satrādhikeāra and Bhakats come to the Kīrtanghar putting on new cloths (Nava-vastra) after finishing their morning bath. The old clothes covering the Guru Āsana have been replaced by new clothes in the form of Bihuān. According to the custom the devotees pay homage to the Guru-Āsana, Guru-Gṛha, Satrādhikāra and to the elder Bhakats. The Bahāg Bihu is observed for seven days. During this period of Bihu along with Nitya-prasātīga some more special devotional programmes are also performed. On the day of the Bar Bihu i.e. the Assamese new years day, astrological readings of the new year (coming year) known as Varṣa-phalgaṇaṇā are made known to the devotees present in the Satra. On this occasion prasāda are offered to God and are also distributed among the devotees to mark the new year with great respect and devotion.

In the connection with Bahāg Bihu we should mention here about a function celebrated in the Satras of South Kamrup known
as suveri-utsava or Suveri-phuroa. It is conducted on the Sāt-domāhi which falls on sixth day of Bahāg. In this Suveri-utsava, a Āsana of the Satra has been taken out for a procession to moved round the village. The procession is accompanied with Nām-Kīrtana and Gāyan-Bāyan to the accompaniment of khols and tāls. On the procession the villagers are paid their homage to the Āsana with great respect by bowing their head. At the end of the procession the Āsana entered the Satra campus through Mūl-Toran. After entering the Satra campus the Āsana is moved round the Kīrtanghar for 7 (seven) turns and the Āsana is installed in the usual place by chanting Nām-kīrtana.

(ii) Māgh Bihu:

The Māgh Bihu or Māghar domāhi is noted for enjoyment. As it falls after the winter harvest, various food like pithā (rice cake), Kāre or Karāi, Cīrā, Gurā-sāndah (fried-rice flalended) are prepared and eaten. In the Satras Māgh Bihu is celebrated holding congregational prayer services and music. The community feasts are arranged in the month of Māgh. Each Ḍāṭi of Chamarīyā Satra arranges community feast where caste is not a matter of consideration. This sort of community dining ensures co-operation, fellow-feeling and the removed of the regour of castism.

(iii) Kāti Bihu:

As stated earlier that the Kāti Bihu is a secondary festival in
the Satra. The festival is celebrated by planting baril plant (*tulasī*) under which the *cāki* (earthen lamp) is lightened ceremoniously through *Nām-Kirtana* either in the Satra and Nāmghar or in the family household and *Māh-prasāda* is offered on the occasion. But particularly in Chamarīyā Satra this ceremony of *Kāti Bihu* is not followed. There held only *Nām-prasanīga* and offered *prasāda* and *nirmāli* to the *Bhakats*.

4. Doul-utsava:

   The Doul-utsava locally known as *Deul* is one of the most important festival of the Satras of South Kamrup celebrated on the full moon day of the month of *Phāgun* (February-March). As the festival is celebrated in the month of *Phāgun*, it is also known as *Phālgutsava*. The festival is observed in this group of Satras for 3-4 days. When *Deul* is celebrated in the month of *Phāgun* it is called *Deka-deul* and in that case it continues for four days. Due to position of the moon, the next year it is celebrated in the month of *Caitra* (March-April) which is called *Burhā-deul* and continues for three days only.

   The first day of the *Deul* is called *Gandh* and general mass people gathered in the Satra campus in the afternoon of the day. After the performance of the rites of the deity of *Doul-Gobinda* is over, it is taken out from the *Kirtanghar* through the main
door and kept in the courtyard of the Kirtanghar. But particularly in Chamarîyā Satra taken out two Guru-āsanas, one is from Bhājghar which is made by Mādhavadeva with his own hand, and the other is from Kirtanghar in place of the image of Doul-Gobinda as the representative of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

After completion of the customary function, the image of the deity is moved around the Doulgrha for seven turns accompanied by the Gāyan-Bāyan, nām-kīrtana with khols and tāls. After that the deity is installed in the Doulgrha observing all procedures relating to it along with singing of ghoṣā-kīrtana and vyās-kīrtana. During this period varities of fire works (phatkā) have been exhibited.

The worship of the deity is performed by the devotees during the entire period of the Deul. The devotees chant and recite Līlā-mālā, Bhatimā, Guna-mālā along with Sevā Kīrtana. On the Bhar Deul or second day morning after the Puwār-Gīta (morning songs), eight big sarāis are placed before the Doulgrha lighting Cākis. Then chanting and reciting of prayers taken from the selected passages from oreṣā varṇapa episode of Śaṅkaradeva’s Kīrtan-ghoṣā in a congregational manner by the Bhakats. During the course of the day time choral performances are held by Ojāpāli singers and Gāyan-Bāyan. In this way same
devotional routine services have been carried on till the last day of the *Doul-utsava.*

In the afternoon of the last day, the image of the deity is brought down in a decorated litter (*dolā*) from the *Doulgrha* for a procession to the supposed *Ghunucā-grha* situated near by a field made of brick plate-form with shed in the village. Generally *nām-kīrtana* and *holi-gītas* have been sung batch by batch beating *khol, dhol* and *tāls* during the entire period of the procession. This last day is significant for the extensive use of *Phāku* by people of all age groups. The playing of colour restricted till mid-day before taking bath. In that particular day batches of people of various age groups come out and play among themselves smearing coloured powder at each other. When the image of deity is brought back from *Ghunucā-bāri* (house) and arrived at the gate of the Satra compound, a mock-fight between those who went out with procession and those who remained within the Satra campus takes place and coloured water and powder (*Phāku*) are sprinkled by both parties. The party that remains within, according to custom, blocks the way by fencing with four long and big bambos (*Bhalukā-bāh*) at the main *toran* (gate) and the party with the deity has to break into the Satra campus.
The party supposed to be on the side of Kṛṣṇa after a few conversations pray to permit entrance and ultimately compromises peace by paying a little honourarium to the supposed party to be on the side of Lakṣmī. All those happenings are nothing but an imitation of quarrel depicted between Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī in connection with Ghuṇucā. Then the image of the deity is brought back to the usual place of the Kīrtanghar. The entire proceeding is called locally as Suveri-phuroā. In this group of Satras it is also called Halī-khelā which is known as Phālgu-utsava elsewhere.

After the Doul-utsava is over Gandh-tel (Musterd oil specially mixing with macalā) from the Kīrtanghar are sent to each Hāti through Barā. He distributes this Gandh-tel to all the families of the Hāti and to the Satrādhikāra’s family to receive with utmost reverence.

5. Janmāṣṭamī:

Another important festival celebrated in the Satras is the birth day celebration of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This festival is observed on the eight day of the dark fortnight in the month of Bhādra (August-September) on which Lord Kṛṣṇa was born. Hence His birth day is known as Janmāṣṭamī. The festival is observed at night to commemorate the moment of Kṛṣṇa’s birth. Along
with the usual Satra services some special devotional programmes are also added in order to befit the occasion. It is curiously noticed that mostly the women folk, specially the teen agers observe the festival with a fast upto the auspicious moment of Kṛṣṇa’s birth at mid-night in order to celebrate the day with pure body and mind. It is a common belief that by observing this fast one can get good husband like Kṛṣṇa. They wear neat and clean mekhelā cādar (female dress) and assemble in the Satra Kīrtanghar to spend a sleepless night. The villagers also observe the festival in their respective Nāṁghar with profound devotion. The Brat (vow) being over the next morning, the devotees take simple vegetarian diet in order to break the overnight fast.

In the next morning another function is celebrated which is known as Nandotsava. This festival consists of devotional prayer, recitation and orchestral music which are conducted throughout the day. The observance depicts the joy and amusement of the people of Braj-dhāma at Kṛṣṇa’s birth. In order to express the extreme joy, the people perform Bokā-Bhāonā, sprinkling mud (Bokā) at each other. That is why this performance of the Kṛṣṇa’s birth episode is called Pek-yāṭrā or Bokā-Bhāonā. Here in the Satras of South Kamrup Pek-yāṭrā is better known than Bokā-
Bhaona.

One more festival connected with Kṛṣṇa’s birth which is celebrated in the Satras as well as in the village Nāmghars. It takes place in the fifth day of Kṛṣṇa’s birth and perhaps that is why the function is called Pācati which comes from the Sanskrit word pañca meaning five. This festival is exclusively conducted by the women folk. The festival is an expression of joy and amusement of women folk at the birth of Kṛṣṇa. The function is symbolic celebration of the ceremonial removal of uncleanliness of Kṛṣṇa and His mother Yaśodā.

6. Special devotional functions:

(i) Pālnām:

The word pāl, the meaning of which is one after another. Pālnām is a congregational prayer held in an unbroken chain. Pālnām is such a type of congregational prayer in which different nām-parties perform nām one after another without interval for a few days at a stretch. In a pālnām the devotees sit together taking the most senior or most experienced one in the centre. The Āchārya who takes his seat in the centre of the devotees goes on singing the verses of different Vaiṣṇavite religious books, while the others go on repeating the same. It continues for a period of more than 6 to 10 hours in the minimum and at times
to the extent of 7 (seven) days at a stretch. In such a situation, the singers take part in the congregational meet on rotation.

*Prasādas* are offered before the altar and at the end of the function, these are distributed among the devotees and others, attending the same function.

The *pālnām* is held with the help of some of the devotees in the Satras, sometimes in the individual houses and sometimes in the village *Nāmghars*, and on some special occasions.

(ii) Thiya-nām (*nām* held in standing posture):

It is a particular form of congregational prayer service performed both in Satras and households. Such a *nām* is performed by a troupe called *Nāmdlal* consists of 20 to 40 male members.\(^\text{15}\) The *Pāthak* (one who sets the refrain of the song) leads the chorus standing in front. The *pāthak* begins *nām* in a melodious tune and describes the story through his hymns exhibiting motions of his hand in a dancing pose in order to represent the feeling. The men with cymbals and co-partners will be following him with oneness of voice by playing cymbals and claping hand with the time beat of *nāgāra* (kettle drum) and cymbals. All the participants join the chorus in standing position.

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\(^{15}\) There are Thiyanām troupes consisting of female participants only in some areas.
and hence is called *Thiya-nām*. The *pāthak* goes on reciting the *Padas*, each two lines of the verses, begin alternating by the singing of the *ghoṣā*. This particular recital generally narrates the glory of Lord Krṣṇa or Viṣṇu. This congregational song is performed to the accompaniment of *nāgārā* (kettle drum) *bhortāl* (symbal, having nearly 2 ft. diameter) and clapping of hands with the movement of bodies. *Thiya nām* recitals are held in the *Kirtanghar* on the occasions of various festivals, in the private homes and also while arranged in public places for the wellbeing of the inhabitants of the locality. For recital in private home and in public place temporary altars are erected on the eastern end of the pandal by raising 6 inches and four young plantain trees planted in the four corners of the raised plateform nearly 3 ft. square. A sacred book written by Śaṅkaradeva or Mādhavadeva keeping on a raised decorated *Śarāi* is placed on the altar.

(iii) Bhakat Sevā :

This type of gathering is very popular among the devotees and Vaiṣṇava householders. In the *Sevā* the householders invite some devotees on a particular day and they are served with food and offerings, and *gāmocā* (Assamese hand made towel) is offered to each of them as a mark of respect. The devotees so gathered pray for the welfare of the householder as intended. For this
purpose a prayer service is conducted usually. In so doing it is believed to get rid of the evil influence of the planets and evil spirits. It becomes most popular in South Kamrup area under the new cover called *Bhāgavata-Pāṭh* i.e. recitation of the Assamese rendering of the *Bhāgavata* both in Satra *Kīrtanghar* or *Nāmghar* and private household.

(iv) Janmotsava of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and MādHAVadeva:

The biographies dealing with the lives of the great Vaiṣṇava reformers of Assam contain no instance anywhere regarding the celebration of birth anniversary of the Vaiṣṇava saints and reformers. Perhaps, it is a recently emerged function which is performed on the dates of their birth. At present the observance of the saints birth day is going to be a custom among the Vaiṣṇava devotees and the like minded people. It is noticed in this connection that Śaṅkaradeva's birth anniversary had been observed first in the Suwalkuchi Satra\textsuperscript{16} and from that time perhaps, it spread throughout Assam like wild fire and the birth anniversary of the Vaiṣṇava *Gurus* started after being celebrated in the Satras and villages *Nāmghars* with great pomp and grandeur. The birth anniversaries of *Gurus* are celebrated for a period of one to three days in this group of Satras with various

\textsuperscript{16} Goswami, N. C., *Satriya Saṃskṛtir Svarṇarekha*, p. 130.
programmes of both religious and cultural aspects. Now, it is no longer a Satra observance but also socio-cultural too crossing the barrier of religion, perhaps due to their literary contribution.

The birth anniversaries of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva are celebrated marking the beginning with the lighting of earthen lamps (banti) in every of the previous day. In the actual birth day it is started with the Phrabhāṭpherī (morning procession). In the anniversary specially the discussion on Guru's life history, social and religious contributions and literary works along with their influences over various field of Assamese culture of to-day are conducted with great veneration. Variety show is another most important feature of the function in which performances of Bargītas composed by the saints, Ankiya Bhāonā, Satriya Nṛtya, Bhortāl Nṛtya, Holi Gitas, Nāo Khelar Gitas and Loka Gitas deserve special mention.

Thus, the festivals held in the Satras of South Kamrup offer scope for the people to come together across caste line. This community participation helps to create a feeling of brotherhood coming to a common platform among various categories of people. Thus, the festivals show the ground of studying the cohesive influence of the Satra on the community.