

CHAPTER V

VAISNAVISM AND SATRA INSTITUTION AT BARPETA

Introduction

Barpeta *satra* is situated at Barpeta town which is the head quarter of Barpeta, a district of the province of Assam. Geographically the position of Barpeta town is 26° 19.01.62" North and 91° 00.19.74" East (Patra, 2012 in Gogoi 2012: 15). The *satra* is situated 26° 19.01.62" North and 91° 00.19.74" East. Barpeta *satra* is the earliest and most influential *satra* of the *mahapurusiya* sect (Sarma, 1999: 177) as well as the chief monastery of Assam (Neog, 1965 reprint 2008: 137), which was established by Madhavdeva the chief disciple and apostle of Sankardeva with proper help of Mathuradas Burha Aata¹ in 1504 sakabda (1582-1583 of Christian era). According to some biographies of the medieval age, after passing away of Sankardeva, Madhavdeva took the responsibility of the spiritual instructor of *vaisnava* religion in Assam and later on he established some *satras* including Barpeta *satra* (Das, 2005 cited in Barthakur 2005: 36-37).

a) Establishment of Barpeta Satra: "It was 1504 *sakabda* (1582-83 AD) when Madhavadeva was at Sundaridiya continuing his mission most earnestly. One day two of his disciples come to him with the message that they had been severely humiliated by a farmer as they came crossing his paddy field Madhavadev was utterly moved by this news and soon he made preparation to leave the place to go to Bhawanipur *satra* of Gopal Aata, Gopal Tanti (later on known as Mathuradas Burha Ata), however came to Madhavdeva at that time. He soon knew all about Madhava's plan and requested him to go to Tantikuchi (old name of Barpeta) instead of Bhawanipur. Madhavadeva found it hard to go against the wishes of his favorite disciple and therefore started for Tantikuchi. At Tantikuchi his disciple Gopal Tanti made a hut of three rooms for his master, one of these rooms was to be used for daily *prasanga* (worshipping). But when Madhava found the room very narrow and therefore unsuitable for that purpose, he called Gopal and said- 'I found it very narrow here, Gopal we will have to make a *harigriha* for the purpose'. Gopal responded

¹ One of the chief followers of Madhavdeva and the first *adhikara* of Barpeta *satra*.

immediately – ‘But it will be very hard to find out open spaces. But I know my uncle and aunt. They had no children of their own but possess a very wide, large home garden. I will introduce you to them and you may ask them for land’, Madhava did accordingly. At first Gopal’s uncle Ram Laruwa Burha was not ready to provide land, but he agreed at last. Soon the land which was actually a jungle was cleared under the leadership of Gopal himself. Gopal enacted the *Kotora Yatra* (drama written by Sankaradeva) there in the open space beneath a tent. People came in groups. They were deeply attracted by Sankaradeva’s doctrines. Madhava got more inspiration than before. They arranged for more land from Ram Laruwa Burha and decided to build a large *kirtanghar*. Within a few days basic requirements of *chati-marali* (a long piece of timber to support the roof) were made ready by the group efforts of Parbatiya Krishnai Aatoi, his son Ram and one Bidhisha Aatoi. Other requirements like – *kharimati* and *reinejpata* (Chalk and tin foil) were brought by Harikrishna Aatoi and Madhai Aatoi, as imported by Heren Doloi. Bamboos were brought from Bajali locality². In this way, at the enterprise of Madhavadeva and his follower devotees, the first *kirtanghar* of Barpeta *satra* was constructed. As the *charita puthi* (biographies of saints) says, it was unique example of wood-sculpture and bamboo. The same architecture was also to be found in the *rangiyalgriha* (the holy sportive house), the residence of Madhavadeva which was constructed in 1585 AD. The first *kirtanghar* was placed just at the place where *Kotora Yatra* was enacted and at that very place lightening for worshipping was also done, the *charita* says” (Pathak, 1959: 5-10).

Actually it took many days to arrange for all the necessary materials required for construction of the large *kirtanghar*. In this connection the sentiments of the local people were also given a preference and it was on the basis of their enthusiastic advice that the *kirtanghar* was designed to be 120 hands (180 ft.) length and 60 hands (90 ft.) breadth (Khan Choudhury, 1936: 101). The *brindavani bastra* is also of same measure Sankaradeva prepared this *bastra* for King Nara-Narayana of the Koch kingdom in the year of 1455 to 1509 *sakabda* 1533-34 to 1588 A.D. (Khan Choudhury, 1936: 101) by the weavers of Tantikuchi and it is now preserved at London museum³.

After completion of the construction of the *kirtanghar*, Madhavadeva on specified date prescribed by the astrologer opened its door by lightening the *akkhay banti* (ever

² Bajali locality: Nowadays it is a sub-division of Barpeta district of Assam.

³ Brindavani Bastra Documentary by Surya Hazarika

burning sacred lamp) and by installing the sacred Bhagavata at the altar. Within a very short time span, this *satra* became the centre place for spiritual upliftment on the one hand and also a unique institution for practicing art and culture on the other hand. Sessions of *prasanga* (prayer services), *patha* (text from religious books), *byakhya* (explanation of devotional verses) etc. were arranged for spiritual uplifting, while training session in varied *satriya* dances songs and instruments etc were arranged for cultural or artistic uplifting. Gopal Tanti under special favour of Madhavadeva learnt all these things attentively and soon he became the learned person of the *Satriya* Culture itself. Many people were christened in *vaisnava* doctrine and Madhavdeva's popularity spread far and wide (Raychoudhry, 2012: 109).

During this time Madhavadeva, was summoned to appear in the court of Roghu Ray⁴ on some false allegation. Though he was set free as found innocent, it was almost tough for him to live peacefully due to one untiring conspirators. In 1592, therefore, he gave total responsibility of Barpeta *satra* over Gopal and went to Hajo Ramdiya⁵. After some years, he left that place also and went to Koch Bihar at the earnest request of Aai Dhaai, wife of the late king Naranarayana. Of course, he now decided to spend the rest of his life at Bheladoba *satra*, Koch Bihar, for it was hard for him to leave ever caring Aai Dhaai (Khan Choudhury, 1936: 121).

In 1594, Barpeta *satra* house was reduced to ashes by the forest fire suddenly. At that time Gopal Tanti was at Bhawanipur. When he came back and learnt what had happened he went almost dumb because of grief and sorrow at the loss of his dearest *satra* at Barpeta. At last on the advice of his wife, Gopal went to Madhavdeva at Bhela Doba. Madhavdeva inspired Gopal and Changed his name as Mathura Das made him the first *adhikara* of Barpeta *satra* providing him two *nageri-takas*⁶ (Sri Sri Sankara Charita Puthi, 223). Gopal alias Mathuradas Burha Ata returned to Barpeta and revived the *satra* on its burnt foundation again. In 1595 A.D. he was coronated as the *adhikara* of Barpeta *satra* on the *tithi* (death anniversary) of Sankardeva.

Mathuradas Burha Aata's attention was also directed towards social organization. He was the man who introduced the *hati* system (Pathak, 1959: 71). It was a unique system suited to the conditions of the medieval time. The main objectives of introduction of the *hati* system were –

16 Koch kingdom of 1581-1627 century A.D.

⁵ Presently situated in Kamrup district.

⁶ *Nageri-Taka*: Coins in the name of king Naranarayana.

1. To bring unity and cohesion.
2. To create a sense of attachment to the *kirtanghar*.
3. To bring economic viability.

There are all together 22 *hatis*. In each *hati* a *haitarghar* (community hall) was established. The *haitarghar* is still being used as the venue for disposal of petty disputes and for decision making in connection with all matters both temporal and religious. Moreover a treasury in each *hati* was established so that people could take loans at nominal rate of interest. He also introduced the religious tax. Every resident of the *satra* has to pay the tax; in return he receives a share of the offerings made in the *kirtanghar* by the devotees at the time of the death anniversary of the *gurus* (Pathak, 1959: 72-77). This system still prevails.

Barpeta *satra* received favour from the royal house for two times. When Mathuradas Burha Aata was still alive Koch King Naranarayana (1627-1632 AD) sent many people from his own state to serve the *satra* (Khan Choudhury, 1936: 123). On the other hand the Ahom King Sivasingha (1735 AD) donated land to the *satra* inscribing the act on copper plate (Gait, 2008: 183). Accordingly, there is no *myadi* land in the *hatis* around Barpeta *satra*. The land owner is the *satra* itself and hence this land under the *satra* cannot be sold out to anybody (Adhikary, 2010: 49).

The *kirtanghar* reconstructed by Mathuradas Burha Aata was again burnt by fire and it was built again in 1828 AD. During the earthquake in 1897 AD it was again destroyed. In 1908-09 AD, it was rebuilt and the present construction was completed in 1962 AD. The *akhay banti* has been lightning till date for 427 years (Das, 1996: 04).

b) Barpeta Satra Complex: The areas and various buildings inside *satra* premises -

Satra Premises: *satra* premises start with 3 *batchoras* (entry gate), where as main complex is surrounded by wall, these are –

- I) Na-*hati batchara* (West side entry).
- II) Uttar *hati batchara* (North side entry).
- III) Dakshin *hati batchara* (South side entry).

There is no entry from east side because a canal named Hari Jaan is flowing from the east side. People are not allowed to enter beyond these *batchoras* on any vehicles (as a respect and honour towards the *kirtanghar*).

Entry Gate: Like *batchora*, there are 3 entry gates to enter the main complex, i.e. –

I) *Uttar Duwar* (North Gate).

II) *Dakshin Duwar* (South Gate).

I) *Dalan* (On the West Side).

Dalan is considered as the main entry gate to the complex.

Kirtan Ghar: *Kirtanghar* is situated almost at the centre of the *satra* complex. Main entrance of the *kirtanghar* is on the west; *bhajghar* is to the east and an entry gate on the north. Inside near the main west gate, there are two wooden pillars (traditionally known as *tulashi khuta*) supporting the main building. There are three *guru-aashanas* (sacred pedestals) in the *kirtanghar*. These three *guruaashana* in the *kirtanghar* are associated with the name of Sri Sankaradeva and Sri Madhavadeva and Mathuradas Burha Aata, which are followed by a table and two big *gacha* (traditionally designed earthen lamp stand). There are two seats behind the *guruaashana* for *adhikara* and *deka adhikara* from where they do their day to day activities. There are seven *barsarais* (big plates to offer pulses to God) kept in a line before the *guru-ashana*. Inside the *kirtanghar* there is no statue of any God and Goddess. The three outside walls of the *kirtanghar* are decorated with different idols describing stories of the Bhagawata and Purana (North and South) and with the idols of *dashavatara* of Vishnu (ten incarnations of God) on the west.

Manikuta: The *manikuta* is situated on the eastern side of the *kirtanghar*. In local language it is called *bhaj-ghar*. It has two parts – 1) where valuable ornaments of gold and silver are kept along with the valuable belongings of the *Satra* is called *Ghai Bharal* (main store). 2) The other part of the *Bhaj Ghar* is known as *Manikut* – where the idol of Kalia Thakur (Lord Krishna) though there is no place for idols in Mahapurushiya religion but the idol of Lord Krishna is kept in order to avoid royal wrath or to gain royal favour. Moreover the king's gifted land to the monasteries in the name of the idols (Nath, 2001: 114) is kept here. The *Akkhay Banti* is lightening up more than 450 hundred years in front of the idol of Kalia Thakur.

Pat-Chang: *Pat Chang* was constructed parallel the *bhaj-ghar*. It is 8 feet away from the *bhaj-ghar*. It is made of wood and tin. When the earlier *chang-ghar* (made of bamboo and thatch) was destroyed by the earthquake held in the year 1897, one woman named Sonpahi (Das, 2010: 217) constructed the new one. It carries a special

architectural style. The floor of the *pat-chang* is 5 feet above from the ground. In the lower portion of this *Chang* some peacocks and rabbits are found only. In the upper portion of this house some special meetings are held. Basically religious and administrative issues of *satra* are discussed here. It is honoured as pure as the *pat-chang* of King Kangsha⁷.

Khatkhati: A canal named Hari Jaan is running from the east side of *satra* complex. The bank of the canal which is touching the *satra* Complex on east side is known as *khatkhati* (stair case). The canal was later on blocked on two sides and converted to a pool named Madhab Sarovar, but it now again runs as a canal. In earlier days Madhab Deva and other Bhakats used it to take bath in (Das, 2010: 218). All the steps of the stair case are made of stone. A statue of Child Krishna is constructed in the middle of this canal. A modern guest house is also constructed on the east bank of the canal.

Math: *Math* (cylindrical shaped structure) is situated on the north side of the *kirtanghar*. As the people say this *Math* was constructed on the platform of the house where Madhavdeva lived (Nath, 2001: 117). *Math* was constructed in the similar architectural style of the Ahom Kingdom. The glittering golden pitcher on the pinhole of the *math* can be seen from a distance. People make lots of religious activities in front of the *math* and in the open space which is called *mathar chotal* (courtyard of the *Math*). The construction of this *math* was completed in the leadership of Kinaram Satriya, one of the *adhikara* of the *satra*.

Ram Ata's Bhithi (house of Sri Ram Ata): The house of Sri Ram Aata disciple of Sankardeva was established opposite to the house of Madhavdeva (nowadays *math*). Presently a well is constructed here, the water of this well is assumed as pure and water from this well is used in all the works of the *satra*.

⁷ King Kangsha: Maternal uncle of Krishna.



Figure 7: Main *kirtanghar*, Barpeta *satra*



Figure 8: *Math*, Barpeta *satra*



Figure 9: *Doul*, Barpeta *satra*



Figure 10: Brindaban *hati batsora*, Barpeta *satra*



Figure 11: Na *hati batsora*, Barpeta *satra*



Figure 12: Dakshin *hati batsora*, Barpeta *satra*



Figure 13: *Guruasana* of *kirtanghar*, Barpeta *satra*



Figure 14: Southern verandah of the *kirtanghar*, Barpeta *satra*

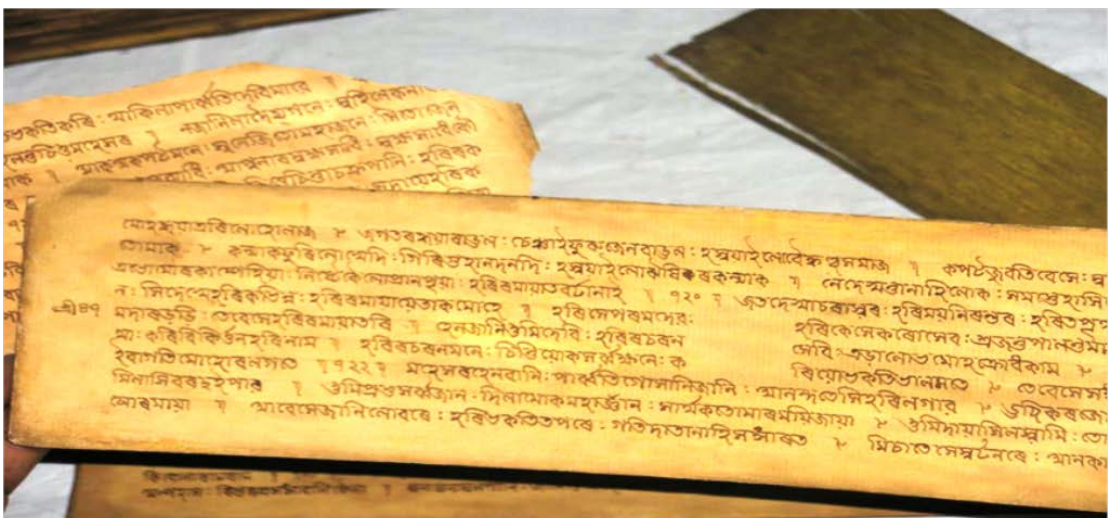


Figure 15: Books of *sanchi* leave, Barpeta *satra*

Burha Aata's Bhithi (house of Mathuradas Burha Ata): In the north-east position of the *satra* a small beautiful house is reconstructed where 1st *adhikara* of Barpeta *satra* Mathuradas Burha Aata lived.

Padma Aata's Bhithi (house of Padma Ata): A beautiful house is reconstructed on the place, where one of the best disciples of Sankardeva lived on the southern portion of the *kirtanghar*.

Bhagavata Griha (house where Bhagavata is recited): There is an open (without wall) shaped house on the southern part of the *kirtanghar*. This house is named *bhagavatgriha*. The *pathak* (reciter) recites the Bhagavata in this house twice a day. Every morning and evening people come and sit here to listen the Bhagawat. At the time of any festival there is no Bhagawat *path* conducted in the evening. There is another house to the west of *bhagavat griha* which is used for treatment during the days of festivals.

Atithi Griha (guest house): There is a dormitory guest house inside the complex, where people can stay there any time. *Satra* normally provides the grocery to cook any tourist come there to stay and the devotees have to prepare the meal by themselves.

Satriya Sangeet Bidyalaya (Satriya Music School): A *satriya* cultural music school is situated inside the *Satra* premises. It is in east-south corner on the bank of the Hari jaan. Lots of trainings are given to the boys and girls who want to study Sankari Culture.

Sabha Ghar (seminar hall): It is also an open house situated in the north-west position of the *kirtanghar*. General meeting of the *samuha bhakat* (Community devotee) are held here. There is a small house in the north side of the *sabha ghar* and it is known as *jagmohan griha*.

Doul: There is a uniquely designed with 7 stairs building on north-west corner (near north entry gate), which is used mainly for keeping the idol of *kolia thakur* (Lord Krishna) at the time of *doul* festival. The design of the structure just represents that after crossing seven steps one can reach the heaven where God resides

Ranga Mancha (stage): In *satra* premises a *ranga-mancha* (stage) is found. It is a modern stage for performing art and cultural activities from time to time.

Mathura Das Burha Aata Puthibharal (Library): There is a library of books and journals. Anybody can get books written about Sankari culture from here.

c) Rites and Rituals of Barpeta Satra: Sankardevas neo-*vaisnavite* movement is known as *ekasarana-nam-dharma*. It is called *nam-dharma* in short. In *nam-dharma*, the celebration of God's names and activities in songs, verse recitations and narration of the holy lore would occupy the widest place requires little emphasis. From the earliest times the devotees used to assemble in the *namghars*, hold discussions with the *Guru* and sing prayers. These small concourses were known as *prasangas* and as the talks and songs centered on God they were also known as *hari-prasangas* (Neog, 1965 reprint 2008: 341 cited in Gurulila, 447, Vamsigopaladevar Charita: 918). In *nam-dharma* there are two main religious services observed by the devotees. These are known as *nitya* (daily rites) and *naimittika* (occasional rites), (Nath, 2012: 60). The services which are observed by the devotees either in the *satra kirtanghar* or in the village *namghar* from dawn to dusk are known as *nitya* or Daily prayer service. The services which are observed on special occasions are called *naimittika* or occasional rites.

Nitya Prasanga (Daily Rites): The daily prayer services were divided into three different programs like the *puwar prasanga* (matins), *biyalir prasanga* (afternoon prayer services) and *ratir prasanga* (evening prayer services) (Neog, 1965: 341 cited in Gurulila: 254). The *Katha Gurucharita* (Lekharu: 331 & 584) tells us that when Madhaba lived at Sundaridia after his master had passed away he installed the *guru-ashana* there and systematized the *prasangas* into fourteen fixed up the order in which they were to be performed. At Barpeta *satra* Mathuradas Burha Ata developed the three times daily prayer services into fourteen units (Roy Choudhury, 2011: 110). This program is followed even today at Barpeta. *Sewait bangsara* (dedicated devotees) performing the daily rites in the *satra* as per shifting system. Different *bangsaras* of Barpeta *satra* are- *pathak* (public reader or reciter of religious book), *gayan* (singer of devotional music like- *bargeet*, *bhatima*, *geet*, *pada*, *ghosa*), *bayan* (an instrumentalist, especially *khol*), *ojah* (choral singer), *ghosha kirtaniya* (a group of religious singer of devotional music). The detailed program of services observed at Barpeta *satra* are given below –

The *nitya prasangas* are divided into three shifts –

1st shift- Morning Prayer service.

2nd shift- Afternoon Prayer service.

3rd shift- Evening Prayer service.

The three shifts are divided into fourteen *prasangas*.

1st shift – 5 *prasangas*.

2nd shift –3 *prasangas*.

3rd shift – 6 *prasangas*.

Puwar Prasanga (Morning Prayer service): Rituals of *puwar prasanga* at Barpeta *satra* are given below-

The first shift of *prasanga* starts at dawn. The *pathak* sits in front of *guru-ashana* and sings two *bargeets* (holy song composed by Madhavdeva, one is called *jagaranar puwar geet* and other is called *colanar puwar geet*).

The 2nd item of *puwar prasanga* is started with a devotional song called *puwar bhatima*. This *bhatima* describes the story of sending Krishna to tend the cows at Brindabana daily with necessary supply of food, milk, butter and clothes.

After recitation of *bhatima*, the reader devotees sit in their specific *ashana* (sit) to begin the *jugal kirtana* (one type of prayer). But it is worth mentioning that before starting of the *kirtana*, the Chief *deuri* lights the mustard oil lamp in front of the *guru-ashana* and garland is placed on the *ashana*. Apart from this the Sri Madbhagavat Gita is placed on the chapels and then the reader devotees utter the name of God and the *jugal kirtana* starts. After that the first two *ghosha* from *Sishulila* (a part of the verses from holy book Kirtan written by Sankardeva) are sung by the reader devotees and his companion. This program concludes with a *ghosha*.

The 4th *prasanga* of morning shift is started by the *bhagavati* with recitation and explanation of *slokas* (metrical Sanskrit verse) from the Gita or Bhagavata on the basis of *ahira raga* (one type of *raga*).

The 5th *prasanga* consists of three *ghoshas* read by the reader devotees. About 15 holy books, which bear of *vaisnava* ideology and written by *vaisnava* poets Sankardeva, Madhavdeva and Sri Chandra Bharali. These looks are Harichandra Upakhyan, Kirtan Ghosha, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, (Anadi Patan), 6th (Ajamil Upakhyan), 8th, 10th (First part) 11th

and 12th Skandh Bhagavata, the Kavya Rukmini Harana and Kurukhsetra of Sankardeva. Rajsuya Kavya of Madhavadeva and Britrasur Badha of Sri Chandra Bharali.

The daily *prasanga* is observed for the whole year or in 365 days. So, after completion of the verses from all these books, the Harichandra Upakhyan is to be begun again (Aatoi Burha Bhakat, 1932: 44-45).

Biyalir Prasanga (Afternoon prayer service): Rituals of *biyalir prasanga* at Barpeta *satra* are given below-

In the afternoon, between 2.00-3.00 P.M., the *deuri* installs Bhagavata and texts in front of *guru-aashana*. The *pathak* starts his selected text (*Bhakti Ratnawali, Bhakti Ratnakara, Nam Malika, Bhakti Pradip, Janma Rahaishya* etc.) as sixth *prasanga*.

The 7th *prasanga* is started after recitation of text. The reader devotee sits on his specific *ashana* to begin the *jugal kirtan* with a petal of *namchanda*.

The 8th *prasanga* is started with some *slokas* of Bhagavata or Gita on the basis of *raga saranga*.

Ratir Prasanga (Evening prayer service): Rituals of *ratir prasanga* at Barpeta *satra* are given below-

The *deuri* and helper devotees light the mustered oil lamp inside the *kirtanghar* according to their jurisdiction. At that time the reader devotee sits in front of the *guru-ashana* and starts ninth *prasanga* with the verses from *gunamala* (substance of the Bhagavata written by Sankaradeva).

The 10th *prasanga* begins with the two verses of *Lila-Mala*.

The 11th *pransanga* begins with *guru-bhatima* (a series of prayer to Sankardeva, which is written by his disciple Madhavdeva) and ended with *totaya* (A hymn, composed by Sankardeva).

The 12th *prasanga* is *sewar kirtan* where the *gayans* and *bayans* sing two *Bargeets* on the basis of two *ragas* like *sowary* or *nat mallar* or *bhairabi* or *kedar*.

The 13th *prasanga* is *jugal kirtan*. The reader devotee utters the name of God and sings one verse each from *nam chanda* and *sarana chanda*.

The 14th or the Last *prasanga* is text. The text begins on the basis of *raga ramgiri* while it ends with the *raga saranga*. (Burha Bhakat, 2008: 1-45).

Naimittika Prasanga (Occasional Prayer Service): The occasional observances of the *Satra* may be divided into two categories- primary and secondary (38). The primary observances of Barpeta *satra* are *kirtana*, two main *bihus* (*bihu* in the month of *magh* and *bihu* in the month of *bahag*), *doul utsav*, *janmastomi*, etc.

The secondary observances are death anniversary of *adhikaras* and *aatois*. *kati bihu* which is observed in the Assamese month *kati*.

Kirtana or Tithi Mahotsav (death anniversaries of Gurus): The death anniversaries of the three *vaisnava* saints Sankaradeva, Madhavadeva and Mathuradas Burha Aata are the days of three *kirtanas*. In the colloquial language of Barpeta it is called *kitan* (San.-*kitan*, Pkt. – *kitan*, Kam.-*kitan*, and Bar.-*kitan*)

The death anniversary of Sankaradeva is known as *guru kirtan*. It is celebrated on the second bright lunar day of the Assamese month *bhada* (August-September). This festival is celebrated for about 07 days. After the passing away of Sankaradeva his disciple Madhavadeva observed his death anniversary at Patbaushi *than* it was observed at Barpeta *satra* also. The death anniversary of Madhavadeva is celebrated for about 10 days and that of Mathuradas Burha Ata is celebrated for 5 days. Madhavadeva's *kirtan* falls on the fifth day of the dark moon in the Assamese month *bhada* (August-September). Accordingly *kirtan* is started on the eleventh day of the bright moon in the month of *bhada*. The death anniversary of Mathuradas Burha Ata falls on the fourth day of the dark moon in the month of *ahin* (September-October). So the *kirtan* is started on the fourteenth day of the bright moon of the same month. On the day when the *kirtana* is ceremonially started, the *gayan* and *bayan* after the morning *prasanga* additionally sing one *bargeet* and one devotional verse. Ablation of green pulses and betel nuts are kept separately in front of the *guru-ashana*. It is customary that ablations are offered inside the *kirtanghar* on the occasion of the *kirtana* of Sankaradeva, at the residential quarter of Madhvadeva.

On the day before the main celebration of *kirtan* festival *gandh* is celebrated. Though the occasional *prasngas* continues from the first day to last day *ankiya-naat* or *yatra* is performed on the day of *gandh*. Now a day *yatras* are not performed on this occasion. Of course the devotees conclude their functions by singing the songs of some dramas.

The day of the death anniversaries are called the day of *kirtan*. On this day people assemble in the *kirtanghar* from the morning. According to *satriya* tradition 7 *ghoshas* of Sankaradeva, 10 *ghoshas* of Madhvadeva, and 5 *ghoshas* of Burha Ata's

kirtan are sung respectively from *kirtanghosh*a composed by Sankaradeva (Burha Bhakat, 2008: 50-60). After the *prasanga*, the drama- *bhojan vyavahara* is staged. It is customary to stage at least one drama after three *prasangas* at night shift. Now a days instead of the drama shows, only songs of the drama are sung. This day is also called *sabha* (meeting) day. On this day, it is customary to offer duties consisting of articles like- *ou* (a kind of acid fruit), *komora* (white gourd melon), and raw banana etc. are carried to the courtyard of the *math* in slings by the devotees and this ritual is known as *karbhar*. People of Brindaban *hati* on the occasion of *kirtan* of Sankaradeva, people of Dakshin *hati* on the occasion of *kirtan* of Madhavadeva and the people of Na *hati* on the occasion of the *kirtan* of Mathura Das Burha Ata offer the *karbhar* to the *kirtanghar* respectively. Apart from the three main *karbhars*, some other *karbhars* are also offered by other *hatis*, which are not mandatory. People of Kanara *satra* offer *karbhar* to Barpeta *satra* on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Madhavadeva. The exception is that on the occasion of the *kirtan* of Sankaradeva, *karbhar* is offered to Patbaushi *satra* from the side of Barpeta *satra*.

There is a custom of offering *guru-kar* (religious tithes) within the *kirtana* festival. This custom continues from the time of the death of Madhavadeva and this rule was established by Mathura Das Burha Ata (Raychoudhury, 2010: 27) According to that custom on the eighth day from the beginning of the *kirtan* the *adhikara* and other compatriots would offer *gur-kar*. On the ninth day the celibate devotees would offer *guru-kar* while on the tenth day it would be offered by all.

Doulotsava (Doul festival): *Doul* festival is originally based on folk culture (Chugh, 2008: 01) but later on transformed into a religious festival. The *doul* festival is narrated as a religious festival in the holy book *kirtan-ghosha* of Sankaradeva (*Kirtan-Ghosha*, 1986: 535). At Barpeta *satra* *doul utsav* is celebrated with religious farvour. According to some writers, the festival was observed during the last part of 16th century AD and it has continued till date (Pathak, 1959: 20).

The first day of *doul* festival is called *gandh* or *bahnutsav*. The word *gandh* actually means the *adhibasha* or the beginning of a festival (Nath, 2001: 161). On the eve of this day, the idols of the two deities (*Kaliya Thakur* and *Doul Gobinda*) are accompanied by priest and *gayan bayan* from the *kirtanghar* to the court yard of the *math*. The idols are kept on the big platter and *raj-medhi* (the priest of the *satra*) starts worshipping the idols, while *gayans* and *bayans* sing eight songs on the basis of eight

ragas simultaneously. This ritual is over after completion of the songs of *gayans* and *bayans* and the recitation of hymn of the priest. After completion of the rituals the priest sprinkles sacred water on the devotees who accompany the priest on two separate sedans from the courtyard of the *math* to the Court yard of the *tupa* with a cultural procession, where a huge heap is made of *nal*, *khagari*, *ikara* (some kind of reed) by the devotees. The heap is called *meji* (bon fire), while it is called *bhela mag* in local language. After that the idols are moved around the burning *meji* in the presence of *gayan* and *bayan*.

The idols of two Gods then entered the *jagmohan griha* after completion of moving around the fire and then the idols taking rest in the *griha* till the time of the position of the *magha naksatra* (tenth lunar asterism). This ritual is locally called *gahe jirani lowa* (God is taking rest). The idols are there after placed in the chapels of *doul-griha*. That time different fireworks are shown and after that the *gandh* Festival is over.

Next day is called *bhar doul*. It may be one or two days, when the *doul* festival is observed in the Assamese month *fagoon* it continue to two days and locally called *deka deul* and when it is observed in the month of *chat* it is one day and called *burha deul* (Roychoudhury, 2011: 89). On the day of *bhar doul* the morning *prasanga* of women and male devotees begin from about 7 am while the priest undertakes ceremonial bathing of the idols and the *gayans* and *bayans* sing eight songs on the basis of eight *ragas* simultaneously after completion of morning *prasanga*. There are some rites and rituals related to *bhar doul*, viz – *phakuwa geet* (holi song based on holi festival), *Bhojan Vyavahara* (A drama of Madhavdeva) *ghosha-kirtan*, *ojhapali*, *yatra nat*.

The last day of *doul* festival is called *fakuwa* (*holi* – the festival of colour) and at Barpeta this day is called *sueri*. *sueri* begins from early morning on the next day of the *bhar doul*. In the evening time of this day the idols of God go for a journey to Kanariya Para⁸ When the idol of God has been taken to Kanariya Para by the devotees with a cultural procession, some devotees brought *heketa* (hurdle) from the open field and offered by the devotees to the idol of Lord Krishna. After completion of the ritual, the sedan of idol Krishna is taken back to the *kirtanghar*. The devotees on the side of Lakshmi obstruct the entry of Lord Krishna at main gate by fastening a bamboo turnpike horizontally and demand a tax. There a mock altercation take place

⁸ One of the small *satra* situated about 2 kms away from the southern side of Barpeta *Satra*.

between the devotees on the side of Lakshmi and those on the side of Lord Krishna, the bamboo bar is broken with a thud and the devotees on the side of Lakshmi make way for the entry of sedan of Lord Krishna. The sedan of Lord Krishna along with the devotees revolves seven rounds along the boundary of *kirtanghar* and after that the idols of Gods are return back to the *bhaj-ghar*. It is to be noted that all the Hindus of Barpeta and its surrounding areas smear *faku* on one another from morning time on that day and make merriment. Peoples from different parts of Assam and even outside Assam also come and participate in this festival every year.

Janmastami (birth anniversary of Lord Krishna): The specific date of the birth of Lord Krishna is called *janmastami*. The specific day is the eight day of the dark Moon in the month of *bhada* according to Assamese calendar (Sarma, 1995: 62). At Barpeta *satra*, *janmastami* is being observed in a *satriya* tradition. This festival according to *satriya* tradition begins with casual *prasanga*. On the day of *janmastami*, Morning Prayer and *bhatima* are performed as per practices followed at the time of morning *prasanga*. Other *prasanga* are same as daily *prasanga*, but on the occasion of *janmastami* performance of the *Nat-Dhemali* and *Janma-Yatra* (A drama, written by Gopal Aata) are mandatory. Now a day the drama is acted and recited only, but the songs of the drama sung by *gayan* and *bayan* on the basis of distinct *raga* (a melody of music) and *tala* (a rhythm in music or dance). Fasting is observed by the women folk on this day. Young girls of different age groups are seen to be very much interested in observing fast on this day

Smearing of clay is a festival observed in the morning on the next day of *janmastami*. It is also called *nandotsav*. This festival is started from 9 am in the morning on the court yard of *tupa*, where water and mustard oil sprinkled to make a paste of mud. The youth adolescent, young boys make merriment by smearing mud all over their bodies.

An important ritual of *nandotsav* is the *jata-karma* of newly born Sri Krishna (Nath, 2001: 188). The name giving ceremony is observed behind *guru-ashana* of *kirtanghar*. A person acts the role of saint Garg (An Astrologer). In the presence of two *adhikaras* and other devotees with *gayan* and *bayan* saint Garga begins the name giving ceremony. The women folk also sit on the two *varandas*. The whole atmosphere becomes festive with the beating of *khol*, singing songs by *gayan* and

bayan. The saint Garga keeps the name of Sri Krishna after going through the zodiac carefully.

Domahi (confluence of two months): *Bihu* is the main festival of Assam. In Assam it is also called *domahi* (confluence of two months). *Domahi* implies the conjunction of two months. It is the time at which the sun passes from one sign of zodiac to another. In lower Assam *domahi* is called *dahmi*. At Barpeta also it is called *dahmi*. At Barpeta *satra* two *domahis* are observed as *satriya* festivals. One is the *bahagar domahi (bahag bihu)* which falls on the last day of the month of Chat of preceding year. The other is the *maghor domahi (magh bihu)* which falls on the last day of the month of *puh* (Sarma, 1995: 63). In colloquial language of Barpeta these are called *boihagar dahmi* and *maghar dahmi* respectively.

Bahag Bihu is observed throughout Assam to welcome the Assamese New Year. This New Year festival is more or less observed by all the people of India. The socio-cultural life of the people of Barpeta centered round the *satra*. Therefore the *dahmi (bihu)* is strictly confined to *satriya* customs. *Baihagar dahmi (bahag bihu)* is observed for seven days. Therefore all these seven days, some special *prasangas* are observed by the different *bangsara* (dynasty). Some rites and rituals are observed at Barpeta *satra* on the occasion of *baihagar dahmi*. These are as follows –

On the previous day of the 1st *dahmi*, one more *ghosha* is mandatory and is recited in the regular *prasanga* at night where the chief of the *bangsara* briefly tells the congregation about how the coming *dahmi* is to be celebrated for seven days.

On the first day of *dahmi* the chief *deuri* is to arrange *naibedyas*⁹ at several places considered to be sacred inside the *satra* campus at dawn. This item is to be touched after beginning of the afternoon *prasanga*. This *prasanga* is started in between 2.30 pm to 3 pm with *ghosha-kirtan*. As per determination of the *satra* the cultural unit (*gayan, bayan, ojahpali, ghosha kirtaniya* etc.) is taking their ablation and distribute the *naibedyas* amongst themselves.

The *naimittika prasanga* continues from the first day to the sixth day of the *dahmi* inside the *kirtanghar* premise with alternation of different *ghosha* on different days.

On the first day of *dahmi* the women devotees recite one or two more *ghoshas* in their *prasanga* at southern veranda of the *kirtanghar*. It should be noted here that women are debarred from entering the *kirtanghar* and are allowed to perform their religious

⁹ *Naibedyas*: Oblations Containing Pulses, banana and betel nut.

duties by sitting on the Veranda of the *kirtanghar*. In the male dominated society, the religious rights of women are sought to be curtailed by such measures. Although reformists raise protest from time to time, the anti-women sentiment is so strong that this anachronic practice is still continuing.

The *prasanga* of male devotees is started inside the *kirtanghar* after conclusion of women devotees' *prasanga*. The *pathak* and others are sitting in U pattern in front of the *guru-ashan*. After finishing this *prasanga*, *pathak* goes to 1st room (Immediately back side of *guru-ashan*) of *kirtanghar* and sits on the allotted seat where he recites a stanza of *sanchipatiya* Bhagavata (The Bhagavata written on the bark of sanchi tree). The priest offers blessing to *pathak* and others after completion of morning *prasangas*. On the other hand simultaneously *sewar kitaniya* start their cultural item with *bargeets* in front of the *guru-ashan* and conclude it by *gurughata* (a musical prelude). Thus the morning shift *prasanga* is concluded. *Ghosh-kirtan* is started in room no. 06 of the *kirtanghar* at around 2.30 -3.00 pm as occasional *prasanga* of afternoon shift. When *kirtaniya's* item is over the *ojah-pali* begins their program (the occasional *prasanga* of afternoon shift are the same from first day to sixth day of *dahmi*).

The occasional *prasanga* of night shift commences at around 6 pm. This is also a cultural item where 8 to 10 or more artists of *gayan* and *bayan* participate.

At first *bayans* play *khol* with *gurughata* and *gayans* sing *bargeet*. Finally the *gayan* and *bayan* come to the room no. 3 by singing *bargeet*. After that they return again to the place where from they start to recite some verses from the *namghosha* (holy book) and prostrating themselves in devotion before God. Thus comes to conclusion of *sewaite* (dedicated) rituals of this are continuing up to 6th *damhi*.

The 1st day of *bahag* is the second day of *domahi* and is locally called *bar-dahmi*. From dawn, the *ghai-deuri*, *paladharria* (attendant) *kewalias* (celibates) and others busy themselves in different works in arranging ceremonial offerings on the raised platter, lightening of the earthen lamp etc. are completed as per tradition before 6 am. Women devotees congregate at the southern veranda of the *kirtanghar* like the previous day they perform the *prasangas* with the singing of one or two more *ghoshas*, after the performance of the female devotees, male devotees begin their performance inside the *kirtanghar* (occasional morning *prasanga* is same upto 6th *dahmi*). On the occasion of *bar dahmi* the *adhikar* and *deka adhikar* sit on their allotted seats inside the *kirtanghar*.

After the *prasangas* of morning shift, annual astrological forecasting is made on this day and it is locally called *bihu ganowa*. This forecasting is made twice-one-inside the *kirtanghar* and the other at the courtyard of the *math*.

Corit Tola (oration of experts from biographies of *Mahapurusa*) is one of the rituals related to *bahagar dahmi* which starts from 3rd *Bahag* and concludes on 6th *Bahag*. Old women devotees go to the different *bahas* (holy residences of unmarried devotees) and *than* (Holy place for *vaisnavas* to worship) nearby to hear the biographies of *mahapurushas* in religious procession singing *bat bulanir ghosha* (a kind of religious verse sung by devotees while walking). During the days of *dahmi* in *Bahag*, it is the practice of different *hatis* to stage religious dramas and *ankiya bhaona* (a kind of theatrical performance).

The 7th day of *Bahag* is an important day for the inhabitants of Barpeta. Three platters and three numbers of large vessels of brass metal are kept in different directions like North, South and Western side of the gate of *satra*. Secretaries, treasurers and some senior members of the *hati* sit on the carpet. Devotees of the 22 number of *hatis* come to the pre-determined place of recitation of holy songs in chorus in standing posture with cymbals and *nagaras* (a small kettle like drum) in their hands. Three groups of devotees perform their programs on three sides of the gateway as well as in front of the *kirtanghar* simultaneously and it is locally known as *thiyanam* (recitation of holy songs in chorus in standing posture). This program comes to an end around 8 pm. After this one or two rituals are observed on the courtyard of *math*. With this the rituals accompanying the *bahagar dahmi* are completed. Jaggery and anise seed is the main offerings of this *thiyanam*. It is the practice of the people to take cooked mixture of different vegetables during these days known as *saat-saak* (seven vegetables), although the number of vegetables may be more than seven.

Another *bihu* named *bhogali bihu* or *Maghor domahi* is also observed in two different ways in Assam, one is *satra* centric and the other is folk centric “The neo-*vaisnavite* religion of Assam has brought about many changes in the socio-cultural life of Assam. Formerly, young and old irrespective of sex rejoiced by feasting on the *uruka* night (the night before *Maghar domahi*) and in the morning next day, worshiping *meji*. After being initiated to *vaisnava* religion, when monotheism is practiced, fire worshiping has been abandoned. In some places, the devotees after bathing and warming themselves in fire go to the *namghar* or *kirtanghar* to perform *nam-prasangas*” (Gogoi, 1990: 52)

Some senior devotees and *sewait bangsharas* tell that *Maghar dahmi* has been observed in full *satriya* tradition at the time when the *satra* was first established. *Magh bihu* is observed in the *satra* for five days from *sankranti* to 4th day of the month *Magh*.

Occasional *prasangas* are begun from the morning of the last day of the month of *Puh* (January 14), (Gogoi, 1990: 60). The *paladhara* beats the drum the morning song and prayer are performed. At occasional *prasangas* one song/ *Raga* is additionally sung. *Pathak* or Chief *Deuri* sings the morning song. After this the women devotees perform their *prasangas* on the southern *varanda* of *kirtanghar*. At this time they additionally sing two or more *ghoshas*. The male devotees begin their morning *prasangas* after the women devotee's *prasanga*. The *pathak* recites four *ghoshas* and then again recite four *slokas* from the Gita. After this *gayan bayan* start their *gurughata* in front of the *guru-ashana* and after this the drum beating starts. Simultaneously conch is blown and bell is sounded inside the *manikut*. As soon as the final stroke falls on the drum, the *gayan* and *bayan* sing songs.

On the first day of the month of *Magh* a platter is ceremonially kept in the first room of the *kirtanghar*. The *adhikara* recites the Gita and then four betel nuts along with betel leaves are distributed among the devotees present. Those devotees who participate as audience during the recitation of the Gita can leave their places only when the pedestal where the Gita was kept is removed from its place.

Other Kirtan: Apart from the three *kirtan*, there are other *vaisnavite* saints like Narayan Das Thakur Ata, Barbishnu Ata, Bhawanipuriya Gopal Ata and Badula Padma Ata whose death anniversaries are also observed as one day function in the *satra* premises. Besides the other *vaisnavite* saints such as Keshab charan Ata, Sriram Ata, Hari Har Ata and Beherua Bishnu Ata whose death anniversaries are also observed as *kirtan* in a small way (Misra, 2010: 223).

d) Other Satras of Barpeta: Great saints like Madhavdeva, Damodaradeva and Harideva and others etc. established a numbers of *satras* at Barpeta (Adhikary, 2010: 19). These *satras* are considered as religeo-cultural institutions or monasteries that

পৰ্ব, তিথ আদিৰ তালিকা আৰু সময়পূৰ্ণ

- ১। বহাগৰ দেমাহি (বহাগবিহ)- চ'ত মাহৰ সংক্ৰান্তিৰ পৰা -
বহাগ মাহৰ ৬ তাৰিখলৈ।
 - ২। শ্ৰীশ্ৰীমথুৰা দাস বুঢ়া আতাৰ- (আবিৰ্ভাৱ)- জ্যৈষ্ঠ মাহৰ-
শুক্লা দশমী তিথি।
 - ৩। শ্ৰীশ্ৰীমাধৱ দেৱৰ জন্ম (আবিৰ্ভাৱ)- জ্যৈষ্ঠ মাহৰ কৃষ্ণা প্ৰতিপদ।
 - ৪। ভাটোকুছি ৩ কেশৱ চৰণ আতাৰ- (তিৰোভাৱ) আহাৰ মাহৰ-
কৃষ্ণা চতুৰ্থী তিথি।
 - ৫। শ্ৰীশ্ৰী শঙ্কৰ দেৱৰ (কীৰ্ত্তন)- ভাদ মাহৰ শুক্লা দ্বিতীয়া তিথি।
 - ৬। শ্ৰীশ্ৰীমাধৱ দেৱৰ (কীৰ্ত্তন) ভাদ মাহৰ কৃষ্ণা পঞ্চমী তিথি।
 - ৭। শ্ৰীকৃষ্ণৰ জন্মাষ্টমী- ভাদ মাহৰ কৃষ্ণা অষ্টমী তিথি।
 - ৮। বদুলা পদ্ম আতাৰ (কীৰ্ত্তন) ভাদ মাহৰ শুক্লা একাদশী তিথি।
 - ৯। শ্ৰীশ্ৰী শঙ্কৰ দেৱৰ জন্ম (আবিৰ্ভাৱ)- আহিন মাহৰ শুক্লা-
দশমী তিথি।
 - ১০। শ্ৰীশ্ৰীমথুৰা দাস বুঢ়া আতাৰ- (কীৰ্ত্তন)- আহিন মাহৰ
কৃষ্ণা চতুৰ্থী তিথি।
 - ১১। কাৱৈমাৰী বুঢ়া ৩ বলৰাম আতাৰ (তিৰোভাৱ)- কাতি মাহৰ
শুক্লা মহোদশী তিথি।
 - ১২। নাৰায়ন দাস ঠাকুৰ আতাৰ (কীৰ্ত্তন)- পুহ মাহৰ কৃষ্ণা-
পঞ্চমী তিথি।
 - ১৩। মাঘৰ দেমাহি (মাঘবিহ)- পুহ মাহৰ সংক্ৰান্তিৰ পৰা
৪ মাঘলৈ।
 - ১৪। শ্ৰীৰাম আতাৰ (আবিৰ্ভাৱ)- মাঘ নাইবা ফাগুন মাঘী
পূৰ্ণিমা তিথি।
 - ১৫। দক্ষিণ কুলিয়া বৰবিষ্ণু আতাৰ (কীৰ্ত্তন)- ফাগুন মাহৰ-
শুক্লা দ্বিতীয়া তিথি।
 - ১৬। শ্ৰীকৃষ্ণৰ দৌল উৎসৱ- নক্ষত্ৰ গণনা মতে ফাগুন
বা চ'ত মাহৰ পূৰ্ণিমা।
 - ১৭। হৰি চৰণ আতাৰ (তিৰোভাৱ)- চ'ত মাহৰ অমাবস্যা।
- ‘বৰপেটা সত্ৰৰ কাৰ্য্যালয়’

Figure 16: List of various festivals observed in Barpeta *satra*



Figure 17: First day of *doul* festival, Barpeta *satra*



Figure 18: Common people, playing *holi*



Figure 19: *Holi* in Barpeta *satra*



Figure 20: *Pachati* festival, Barpeta satra



Figure 21: Occasional prayer service in *kirtan* festival Barpeta satra



Figure 22: Religious procession on the day of *kirtan* festival



Figure 23: *Karbhar*



Figure 24: Devotees from different dynasties involve in preparing *prasada* in *kirtan*



Figure 25: Daily prayer by *gayan-bayan* inside the *kirtanghar*



Figure 26: Map of Barpeta satra and surrounding satras

had a deep impact on the social, political, economy etc. of the region (Neog, 1965: 9). Although these *satras* were established for the propagation of *vaisnavite* faith, but with passage of time these institutions gradually transformed themselves into open universities to become all embracing socio-cultural centers covering numerous subject including education, music, dance, sculpture, drama, fine-art, ivory-works etc. .

The other *satras* of Barpeta are described below-

Patbaushi Satra: After the entry into Koch-Kamrup Sankaradeva and his followers had changed their abode several times and ultimately they went to Baralchung or Baraljar later known as Patbaushi (Gurulila – 24) where Sankardeva finally settled and established a *satra* there. From this *satra* Sankardeva spread his faith, literature, music, art-forms, culture and work-culture to their fullest form (Nath, 2001: 40). Here he spent 14 to 15 years (Guru Charit) of his life with remarkable achievement including completion of the *Kirtan-Ghosha* and composition of 20 numbers of invaluable *bargeets* (Nath, 2001: 43). Some important items used by him and *sanchipat puthis* are preserved here. This *satra* is located about 2 KM south of Barpeta *satra*.

Sundaridia Satra: This *satra* was established by Sri Madhavadeva after leaving Patbaushi *satra* (Guru Charit – 195). The first *Adhikar* of Barpeta *Satra* Mathura Das Burha Aata initially come to this *Satra* and became a disciple of Madhavdeva. From this place Paal Nam (prayer sessions continued over a long period by groups in turn) and Beer Nam was created by Madhavadeva. Large number of items used by Madhavdeva including *Sanchipat- puthis* is preserved here. It is located about 2 kms. North from Barpeta *satra*.

Ganakkuchi Satra: Ganakkuchi *satra* was the 2 no. *Satra* established by Madhavdeva. Perhaps it was established in the year 1550 (Neog, 2006: 81). When Sankardeva was at Patbaushi *Satra* Madhavdeva created most of his literature. Even he composed 191 No. of *Bargeet* on the direction of Sankardeva (Lekhuru, 1952 reprint 1964: 178) in this *satra*. While coming to this place Madhavdeva resided in a newly constructed house of Ganakkuchi, it came to be known as Ganakkuchi *satra*. Some items like *Sanchipaat puthi* and others used by Madhavdeva are well preserved here. It is located about 1 KM south from Barpeta *satra*.

Janiya Satra: This is one of the famous centers of neo-*vaisnavism* of this region (Nath, 2001: 57). There are two *satras* at Janiya- Sri Narayan Das Thakur Ata *satra* and Purushottam Thakur Ata *satra*. With reference it is known that Madhavadeva went to Janiya at least three times in a year with Sri Ram Ata. Purushottam Thakur was the grandson of Sankaradeva. This *satra* is located at a distance of 8 kms. from Barpeta *satra*.

Baradi Satra: This *satra* was established by Madhavadeva. He stayed here for a very short period. The Sankarite culture spread far and wide from Baradi making it a center for learning. This *satra* is located about 2kms.east of Barpeta *satra*. This *satra* is managed by local committee (Lekharu, 1952 reprint 1964: 182).

Bamuna Satra: This *satra* is situated 4 kms.towards the north east of Barpeta *satra*. It is said that there were a few Brahmin families at this place and that is why this place is called Bamuna (Raychoudhury, 2012: 57). The founder of this *satra* is Daityari Thakur who wrote Sri Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva Chorit. This *satra* was established in the year 1625 (Nath, 2001: 59). Bamuna is the first and only *satra* established by him. There are the images of Radha Krishna well preserved here in the *satra*.

e) Management System of Barpeta Satra: Management system of Barpeta *satra* has under-gone considerable changes over time. Hence, for the purpose of discussion the administrative system has been divided into 1) Old management system and 2) New Management System.

Old Management system: At the time of establishment of *satras*, there was no such office of the *adhikara* (religious head of the *satra*). During the time of Madhvadeva, the *satra* movement spread far and wide both in the Ahom Kingdom and the Koch kingdom. The number of disciple also multiplied. According to Gurucharita, at Barpeta *satra* alone, there were more than thirty disciples (Nath, 2001: 122). Mathuradas Burha Ata divided the activities of the *satra* into fourteen *prasangas* and assigned them among different faithful devotees. He also introduced the system of attendant to the important devotees. He also introduced the system of religious tax among the devotees.

New Management system: The rules and regulations came into existence in written form in 1935. Before that, there were no written regulations. So, this period can be divided into- a) Period before implementation of written laws b) Period after implementation of written laws.

Period before implementation of written laws: It was Madhavadeva who introduced democratic system in the administration of the *satra*. The first *adhikara* of the *satra* was Mathuradas Burha Ata. He appointed a number of officers from among his disciples in order to smoothen the functions of the *satra* (Raychoudhry, 2012: 121). These officers are still relevant. These officers are described below-

Bhagavati: The main book of *vaisnavite* religion is the Bhagavata Purana and it was found necessary that the work in its original form should be recited and expounded repeatedly in a *satra* (Neog 335 cited in Vamsigopala Devar Charita 807). Madhavdeva appointed a Brahman named Karnapur as a Bhagavati at Barpeta *satra* (Nath, 2001: 124). From Mathuradas Burha Aata's times this post is getting importance at Barpeta *satra*.

Pathak: The reader of Assamese religious books is known as *pathak*. This portfolio was introduced for the first time by Madhavdeva at Sundaridiya *satra*. He appointed Yadumanideva alias Adhalia as *pathak* at Sundaridiya *satra* (Lekharu, 1952 reprint 1964: 310) and was succeeded to that office by Ramacarana Thakur.

Gayan and Bayan: Music is the part and parcel of *satra* institution. So *gayan* and *bayan* are getting importance in the *satras* till now. At Barpeta *satra* also this type of portfolios were introduced. Mathuradas Burha Aata accommodated the Gayans and Bayans to stay at two separate *hatis* (Nath, 2001: 125). From that time the *gayans* and *bayans* are appointed from the specific *hatis*. Some of this famous *gayans* and *bayans* of Barpeta are – Bhima Bayan, Kamala Gayan and Jagannath Gayan.

Sutradhara: The head of the dance performer of *satra* is called *sutradhara* and the others are called *natuwa*. At Barpeta *satra* the *sutradhara* and *natuwas* are performing dance and drama from Madhavdeva's time (Nath, 2001: 125). At Barpeta *satra* the role of *sutradhara*, the Chief *natuwa*, became confined to one or more families from the time of Mathuradas Burha Aat. The *natuwas* also used to make effigies required for such representations (Lekharu, 1952: 355).

Deuri: One of the most important officials of Barpeta *satra* is the *deuri* or *bilaniya*.

They distribute the *prasadas* (offerings made by man for the propitiation of God)) after the religious festivals of the *satra*. Mathuradas Burha Aata engaged the Chief *Deuri* of Barpeta *satra* in the management of the lamp to be lighted every evening (Mahanta, 2004: 115).

Kirtaniya or Ojha-Pali: Sankardeva's *Kirtan Ghosha* are performed by a chorus known as *kirtaniya* or *ojha-Pali*¹⁰ (Nath, 2001: 125) Mathuradas Burha Aata and his eighteen weaver companions were *ojha-pali* singers, singing non-neo vaisnavite songs before their ordination. After their conversion they applied their musical art to neo-*vaisnava* performances, and their group became known as *kirtaniya* (group of *Kirtana* singers) (Neog, 1965 reprint 2008: 337). One man named Laksmana was the *daina-pali*¹¹ and Mathuradas worked as an ordinary *pali* (Neog, 1965: 337 cited in Lekharu ed: 351- 512).

Bharali: when general store-houses were to be maintained in the *satras*, *bharali* (store keeper) were appointed. According to *Katha Guru Charita*, Madhavdeva gave the responsibility of the store of Barpeta to a person named, Manpur (Lekharu, 1952: 412). From the time Mathuradas one permanent store house was constructed and from that time the store house of Barpeta *satra* is working. The number of storekeepers was also increased. They were in charge all materials that have to be stored for a time and then given for consumption (Nath, 2001: 126).

Lakhak: This was an important function. The writers collected the manuscripts of different religious books and systematically wrote them down in *sanchi* leaves (Neog, 1965: 339).

Majumdar: The duty of the *majumdar* is to maintain all accounts of income and expenditure of the *satra*. Mathuradas Burha Aata appointed Sivananda as *mazumdar* (registrar) at Barpeta *satra* (Mahanta, 2004 in Goswami ed 2004: 116). His duty was to keep the accounts and issue general orders in the name of the *samuha* (Das, 2010: 149).

Hatimata: A *hatimalta*'s duty is to summon the clerics in the *hatis* to prayer services or to some meeting for discussing things of general import. At present day they

¹⁰ Neog in his SNBT quoted that "Oja is the master musician or instructor of music in the Satras" 337.

¹¹ *Daina-Pali*: the main supporting singer and dancer of an *Ojha Pali* chorus very often marked by jest

arrange the furniture of the *satra*. So they are also known as *barbhella* at Barpeta *satra*. For this purpose they are paid now a day.

Joganiar: During festivals like *doul*, *kirtan* etc, the number of pilgrims rises abnormally. The *satra* takes upon itself the responsibility of providing rations like rice, mustered oil, daal etc to such pilgrims. Joganiyars were appointed to distribute rations to such pilgrims (Nath, 2001: 60). This system is still continuing.

Paladhariya: *Paladhariyas* were those persons who keep watch over the property of the *satra* day and night. Formerly, it was a wholly honourary duty (Pathak, 1969: 54). Now arrangements are made to pay money to such persons.

Bora: *Boras* are officials who supervise distribution of *prasada* of the *satra* among the devotees. They also collect taxes from the devotees for the *satra*. (Nath, 2001: 60).

Burha Bhakat: The honour of conferring the epithet *burhabhakat* is bestowed upon a very senior and experienced devotee who has sufficient influence among the devotees. Such honour is bestowed upon only bachelor devotees (Nath, 2001: 61).

Dhan Bharali: *Dhan Bharalis* are appointed in different *hatis* to control and operate the *hati* Bank. The *hati* bank was an ingenious device evolved by Mathuradas Burha Ata. Every *hati* has its own bank from which the people of the *hati* can take loans at nominal rates of interest (Nath, 2001: 61).

Period after the implementation of written Laws: In 1935, written laws were enacted in order to systematize the functions of Barpeta *satra* and it is known as *satrar sangbidhan* (constitution of *satra*).

Satrar Sangbidhan (constitution of *satra*): It was void through the magistrate of Assam valley District dated 19-08-1935 to manage the Satra institute. Responsibility and works are remaining same, but amount/ fund and banking policies are changed time to time.

“Chapter I

Unit I

1. **Samuh:** The constitution of voter is calling ‘Samuh’.
2. **Mahapurushia :** The devotees and followers of vaishnavate faith of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev is call “Mahapurushia”

3. Any person, whose father was a Mahapurushia, he remain a Mahapurushia until and unless he change his religion. Similarly a person is a Mahapurushia but his father is not Mahapurushia, he can't be Mahapurushia until and unless he takes the "Naam" of Mahapurushia.
4. **'Kar'**: (The Tax) All the member give annual fees to central treasury is called 'Kar'. Managing committee has rights to decide the annual fees rate.
5. **'Dar'**: if any person break the rule of Mahapurushia follows, he would be punished and fined for his activity. The fine imposed is call "Dar".
6. **'Bhag'**: The all tax payer of Satra give donation or fees to Satra, that is called "Bhag". All members have to give 'Bhag' two times in a year. Once in the time of Kirtan and once in the time of Deul Mohotsav.
7. Process to take "Bhag": all the Mahapurushia people can take 'Bhag' in the Satra. They have to pay nominal admission fees to Managing committee. Majumder (The accountant) give receipt to the person as a member of the Satra as well as he is eligible for giving vote on Satra election. If someone missed or not paying the annual fees he loses his 'Bhag'. The said person can again take the 'Bhag' with repay all his dues with a new admission fees.
8. **'Bhag'** will be followed hierarchy of family. After death of father /husband, 'Bhag' will continue with the Son or wife of the person. Any person/ member of the family can take 'Bhag'.
9. **'Pala'**: All the members are responsible to do work in the Satra or Satra premises. That responsibility is call "Pala". The responsibility to do on "Pala's are follow
 - i) Cleaning of Kirtan Ghar Sotal (Field)
 - ii) Collection of flower and Tulasi for daily prayer.
 - iii) Beating of Drum (Doba) and bell
 - iv) Collecting of Bokul for daily uses.
 - v) Preserve of all goods, which are giving by people on the name of Satra
 - vi) Give security to Satra surrounding (day and night)
10. If someone fail to do above 'Pala' or fail to give fees as decide, he will discard as a member of the Satra. The Member of the Satra working (managing) Committees and office bearer responsibility. The responsibility of the Managing Committee is to manage Satras day to day activities and

administrating all Satra related works. Below are the list of office bearer and responsibility of each.

- i) **President** (always Burha Satria will be president)
- ii) **Secretary:** he will be the main responsible person for all administrative work.
- iii) **Register** : responsible for taking care of membership
- iv) **Majumder** : responsible for maintaining daily account.
- v) **Ghai Bharali:** the treasurer, who is responsible for all goods of Satra.
- vi) **Burha Satria:** he is the chief guru or administrator of the Satra.
- vii) **Deka Satria** : assistant to Burha Satria and responsible for all activities in absence of Burha Satria
- viii) **Chaul Bharali:** he is responsible for maintain rice which are collecting from the member of the Satra.
- ix) **Choru Bharali:** he is responsible for maintaining the teracota utensil of the Satra.
- x) **Mass Bharali:** he is responsible for collecting fish and distribute it in between the pilgrimage (yatri)
- xi) **Hishap rakshak:** he is the chief accountant of the Satra. Accountant is not a professional qualified accountant. He is nominated by the executive member of the committee.

Chapter II

Rights of disciple and works

Unit II

1. All the units of Satra (Hati) are the owner of the Satra and they are the main deciding authority to Satra.
2. For Managing the Satra there will be a Managing Committee.
3. All member of the Satra elected Deka and Burha Satria as well as Managing Committee members.
4. All people have the rights to terminate of Satria and member of the Managing Committee. If they found any illegal activity of any member or Satria and if they are not capable to handle his responsibility due to age factor or so on.

Unit III

1. All member have rights to give vote

2. All Mahapurushia (above the age of 18 years) men and women will be member and voter of the Satra.
3. Member has no residential barrier but a voter should be reside within Barpeta municipal board.
4. If someone reside outside of Satra barrier but they want to keep membership of the Satra they have to follow the following criteria.
 - i) He or she have to pay “Kar”
 - ii) He/she have to pay “Dar”
 - iii) He have to work something for the Satra Exception:
 - a) All the ‘Kowarta’ community who supply annual fish to Satra, if they don’t have membership, still they have rights to vote.
 - b) All the ‘Hira’ community people can be member with the name of their community.

Unit IV

Preparation of voter List:

1. All voter list will be prepared on the form provided by District Judge appointed commissioner (Now election commissioner)
2. On the time General election of the Managing Committee, Deka and Burha Satria, voter list be re-consider/re-scan. Need to give notice in Kirtan Ghar and Assamese newspaper before 2 month. if someone have any objection, that can be rectified within that period.
3. There will be a register book for voter and name should be ascending order of alphabet. Every constituency have separate register book. In every register have separate coloum for men and women.

Unit V

Membership: as per unit III

Unit VI

If someone declined any of rules of Unit III, their membership will be terminated.

Unit VII

Procedure of election

1. For betterment of election, Satra would be divided in some constituency.
2. Every constituency have a polling booth with an election polling office in presence of agent of every contestant.
3. Male people vote can be taken in a single day
4. Female vote can be taken on single day with male or may be taken separately.
5. If possible for female voter will be conducted by female polling officer and contestant agent also is a female.
6. Male & female vote can be taken in vote-box. (It was implemented by order from District Judge in 5th January , 1977, before that male vote taken in box and women vote taken openly).

Chapter 3

Election of Burha Satria and Deka Satria and their discontinuity

Unit VIII

1. Burha Satria and Deka Satria will be elected by general election, but there should be minimum 500 votes to be poll.
2. If Burha Satria post laying vacant, than Managing Committee approach District Judge(now election commission officer) for election and election commission fixed a date for general election.
3. Election date should be published in Assam gadget, Assamese newspaper and locality.
4. Publication should be before 21 days of general election date.
5. Election can't be cancel showing issue of publishing.
6. If Deka Satria post is laying vacant, Managing Committee can fixed a date for general election without informing District Judge (Election commission) and publish the date in all applicable manner.

Unit IX

Discontinuity of Deka and Burha Satria

1. At least minimum 300 voters can approach Managing Committee with written application for dismiss of a Burha or Deka Satria , reasoning their

bad/ill character, physical or mental situation/ stability to continue their responsibility.

2. Managing Committee asked all the respective member of the Committee before 15 days and call for an emergency meeting for voters approach. If Satria have to say something about allegation about him, he get scope to speak before them. If 2/3 of the member of Managing Committee agrees with allegation against Satria and its proof as a truth, then it will produce before “‘Samuh’”. If there would be minimum 750 voters and if they vote against Satria, than Managing Committee will consider the Satria as dismissed. After that Managing Committee have to inform District Judge (EC) about the situation. A general election would be happen for new selection of Satria, but if ‘Samuh’ not found any guilty about Satria and not dismiss them, they can be lifelong on their position.

Chapter 4

Managing Committee

Unit X

1. Duty of Satra is for religious activity only and that duty will be managing by 28 representatives, who are elected by the people of ‘Samuh’. Burha Satria and Deka Satria will be president and vice-president of the Committee respectively

Unit XI

Qualification of the member of Managing Committee

1. Every voter can be member of the Committee if they are elected by voters.

Unit XII

1. Election of the member of the Managing Committee : on the time of election for the member of Managing Committee will being elected as per guidance of election commissioner and elected from all cast to maintain equality. The entire devotee also wishes that representative should be from all community.
2. If a member position is lying vacant, than that post will be filling up by re-election.

Unit XIII

1. If a member of Managing Committee death on his tenor, if the member loses his voting power or if he resigns from the said post, than that post will be vacant.
2. If a member absent in 6th general meeting continuously and not taken any written approval from president, than that member will lose his post and a re-election will be happen on his post.

Unit XIV

Term of a Managing Committee is 3 years. After completion of terms, there will be election again as per Unit XII

Unit XV

Koram of Managing Committee and time for general meeting.

1. If 1/3 of member attend than they can continue their duty.
2. Every 15 days , in a specific time there will be a general meeting
3. If emergency than body meeting can be call with a 24 hour notice.

Unit XVI

Managing Committee and member of office bearer.

1. Managing Committee will be select one secretary, one assistant secretary, one register , one accountant , one treasurer from the member. Burha and Dekha Satria will be president and vice-president respectively.
2. On the process of office bearer selection: if both sides have equal vote, than president can't be vote either side. On that condition, conclusion will be getting through toss. (as per District Judge guidance, 20th April, 1977)
3. Every year in general meeting they will appoint an auditor for auditing the entire accounts. The auditor can't be a member of Managing Committee

Unit XVII

Responsibility of Managing Committee

1. Managing Committee will be managed all the responsibility and administration of the Satra in ideal manner.

2. They will arrange fund for any religious activity
3. They will collect the earnings of Satra.
4. They will be trying to preserve all the property of Satra as well as try to recover any lost item or property. They will represent 'Samuh' in any religious work and cases.
5. They will accounting the fund and earnings of Satra and deposit the same in any bank, who is recognise under Reserve bank of India or in post office.
6. If a Committee is irresponsible and they spend the fund in any illegal or unauthorized work, than the whole Committee will be responsible for the same. On that prospect individual also responsible for the same.
7. If the term of the Committee ends, the Committee will be responsible to make new Committee and after that dissolve the old Committee.
8. If any position lying vacant, than they will arrange a re-election for that post.
9. The Committee will be present a Budget of earn and expanses in the beginning of the year. General body can add or remove some point with member vote. For any emergency expense, the Committee can present a small Budget in front of general body before 15 days of expense. Majority of voter can accept or reject the same.
10. There need to give 15 days' notice before presenting annual Budget and 7 days required for any sub Budget. If anything not written on accepted Budget, than they can't spend anything.

Unit XVIII

Rights of Managing Committee

1. Managing Committee can appoint any person for religious activity and they can restricted any person if found guilty.
2. They can use stamp of Satra in any work related to Satra.
3. They can decide the amount of tax, admission fees for 'Bhag' quantity of rice for 'Bhag' and they have rights to fixed price of fish which gives by kowarta (a cast)
4. Responsible for maintaining property of Satra.
5. They can do any legal activity in favour of Satra and Bhakat. The expenditure will bear by Satra.

6. They can't be spending any amount if there is no involvement of Satra or interest of Satra. All the expenditure Budget should be accepted by vote.
7. They can spend amount for any festival with due permission from Bhakat.

Unit XIX

Economy and fund of Satra.

Amount collect for 'Kar' (tax), 'Dar' and 'Pala' should be deposit in the hand of Majumder. Rice, Saru, and Fish, all the goods need to be deposit in the hand of Bharali. For other purpose amount should be deposit by accountant. Amount collect on prayer will be collected by Ghai Deuri. On the time of deposited collector give a receipt to depositor. Everyday collection will be deposit to Majumder. Majumder will maintain ledger and cashbook. Later on he will show the details to accountant. If accountant find all the ledger and cash book ok, than he sign on the ledger and cash book. Accountant will be maintaining various account books for various activities. Accountant will be responsible for showing all voucher and receipt to auditor. Accountant will deposit the entire amount in bank passbook except emergency fund, which was passing on Budget.

Unit XX

Fund of Satra.

Treasurer can't keep more than Rs. 200 in Satra treasury. He can deposit up to RS. 2000 in his personal postal savings accounts for Satra. He has to give Rs.500 security deposit for the same. Other amount should be deposit in any nationalise bank under Reserve Bank of India guidelines. President and two other members will be authorising for withdrawal deposited amount. Gold, silver and any other valuable goods would be kept in the safety vault of Satra. Ornaments for daily use would be kept open.

Unit XXI

Expenditure

will be submitting and produce Budget in front of Managing Committee .Budget for next year would be prepared before Magh month. Budget would be produced by Managing Committee in general meeting. Expenditure would be divided as per Budget; nobody can take out any amount from treasury except accountant. As per

Managing Committee, they will elect 2 member along with president for authorising to withdraw amount from saving bank. Any person who expense any amount as per Budget and authorise by Managing Committee, he have to give all details to accountant without fail. In every month end treasurer and accountant would give detail about accounts in front of Managing Committee and they authorise the same.

Unit XXII

Accounts Audit

Auditor who has appointed by Managing Committee will be auditing all account within the year. He will give a audit report to secretary and secretary will be produce it in front of Managing Committee. In every 3 years, Satra will be request to government for auditing the fund of Satra. If a govt. auditor found anything wrong on audit report, he will submit the same to District Judge and Judge will ask clarification from Managing Committee.

Unit XXIII

Responsibility of office bearer

1. President will be head of every meeting of Managing Committee. In any meeting if there arise some dispute and raise up to vote and vote number is equal to each party than president have rights to give his vote to any party. Assistant President: he will be responsible for every work in absence of president including act as a head of the organisation. If both president and assistant president are absence, than member can select one from them to lead that days meeting.
2. Secretary would note all the procedure and works of Satra and every noted document should have sign of president.
3. He can accept and keep all the application, except application for re-voting. Secretary has rights to answer all those application and letter. If the matter is serious than he can discuss the same with the member. (it is mandatory that all application/letter should be address to president)
4. Secretary produces audit report in general meeting.
5. Register: Voter list would be in the hand of register. He will accept application for voter registration and evaluate the criteria of the voter and if found match the criteria, then register put the name of applicant name in voter register. If he

found any miss-match on that he will produce it in front of Managing Committee and Managing committees decision would be consider as a final decision. On the time of voter registration application, they have to pin up certificate of 'Bhag' or tax payer certificate (any of them). Receipt will be return back after voter registration. Register would checked if they have any due of tax, if they have any due than have to pay tax before registration.

Unit XXIV

Subject to religious activity

All the religious activity or function will maintain tradition and continue as per traditional way.

Unit XXV

If any person fined anything wrong on religious activity and that rule not beneficial for Satra, he would be question in front of Managing Committee. If Managing Committee find that rights but not able to justify or do any conclusion, then they can make appeal in front of District Judge. District Judge then supervise the matter and give Judgement on that. After Mathura Das Burha Ata, the selection of Satria have made through by raising hand in favour of some one. After 1935, that was done through giving vote in ballot box”

(<https://barpetasatra.org/satra-information/constitution-of-barpeta-satra/>).

f) Landed property of the Satra: Barpeta *satra* possesses lots of agricultural land and *beels* (lakes). These are auctioned every year. All lands belonging to the *satra* are *nisfkhiraj* (half rent) land. The total amount of land is 1804 *bighas* and 5 *lechas* while there are 648 *bighas* of land in the *beel*. The *satra* collects land revenue from the *rayatas* (tenant). However due to half hearted measures adopted by the *satra* authority, revenue collection is never up to expectation. There is large scale area in the collection of land revenue sometimes extending to even 48 years¹². Following areas of land are in the name of Barpeta *satra*-

¹² Proper documents are collected from Barpeta *Satra*.

Table: 5.1: Land of Barpeta Satra from where revenue is collected

Sl. No	Places	Amount of Land		
		<i>Bigha</i>	<i>Katha</i>	<i>Lecha</i>
1.	Barpeta Town	1027	4	09
2.	Baradi Satra	15	4	09
3.	Jati Gaon	22	3	10
4.	Madlijhar	20	2	12
5.	Khablar Bhitha	120	3	05
6.	North Bajali	35	-	19
7.	East Bajali	140	1	08
8.	Mandia	200	-	05
9.	Gopalpur	180	3	18
10.	No 3 Bardalani	23	4	09
11.	Ag Mandia	15	1	12
12.	Guwahati Panbajar	-	1	12
13.	Bhelengi Beel (lake)	648	-	-

g) Financial position of the Satra: The *satra* cannot run without adequate source of finance. The income of Barpeta *satra* comes from the following sources-

- i. Land belonging to *Satra*
- ii. Fisheries
- iii. River landing place
- iv. Offerings of money by the devotees & others
- v. Income during different festivals
- vi. House rent
- vii. Purchase of share
- viii. Sales of books
- ix. Sales of articles
- x. Penalties etc.

Major expenditure of the *Satra* consists of the following items

1. Bihu
2. Tithi of Ata Purusha (Death anniversaries)
3. Janmastami
4. Kirtan
5. Doulotsav
6. Printing
7. Electricity
8. Salaries of employees
9. Repairing
10. Office maintenance cost
11. Expenses on election
12. Up keeping of birds and animals
13. Law suits
14. Land rent
15. Miscellaneous

The total amount of income of the *satra* during 2014-15 was 19, 40,373.00. Total amount of expenditure during the same year was 19, 38, and 650.00. It appears that the *satra* has a little amount surplus. (Source- published accounts of the *satra*)

Moreover the *satra* has a total deposit of money in banks and post offices as under-

S/B Account-	641409.15
Fixed deposit-	153602.00
K V P-	170000.00

Total	Rs. 3888111.15

h) Satra centric market: There is a market of Barpeta *satra* entitled “Thakur Bazar” which has been surviving for the last 120 years. The market is located within the *satra* premises. There are several shops within the premises, which mainly cater to the needs of the pilgrims who visit the *satra*. These shops sell articles, like mustered oil, salt, earthen wicks, rice, sugar, fruits, incense, wick stand etc. Apart from these goods, all the necessary goods for a household are also found here. A great fair is held every year on the occasion of *doulotsav* outside the *satra* premises.

Barpeta *satra* is one of the biggest *satras* of Assam established at Barpeta by Madhabdeva, the chief disciple and apostle of Sankardeva with proper help from

Mathuradas Burha Ata. From the time of construction till completion and it became the center for spiritual upliftment of the devotees. Side by side arrangements were made for practicing art, culture, dance, drama and a host of other activities. *satra* complex is a well defined and dignified structure. One unique feature of Barpeta *satra* is that it is democratically managed. Rules and regulations for management of the *satra* came into existence. A number of functionaries also had been created for smooth running of the *kirtanghar* and it is continuing till date. Barpeta *satra* has a constitution of its own. *Adhikara* and *deka adhikara* are periodically elected by the voters who possess share in the *kirtanghar*. There shall be managing committee, who are directly elected by *samuha*. *Adhikara* and *deka adhikara* are the president and vice-president of the committee respectively. The managing committee can take action against the *adhikara* and *deka adhikara*. Barpeta *satra* is rich in every aspect, like- religious, social, economic and cultural. Apart from the religious aspect, Barpeta *satra* has tremendously influenced the social and cultural lives of the people. It has taught people to be love all castes and creed and behave all people equally. During the long courses of its existence, Barpeta *satra* has undergone various changes in all fields. Such changes are noticeable in structure, organization, management and so forth. Though the *satra* is maintaining its traditional character in religious activities very important changes have taken place in the management of the *satra*. It is noticed that there are some disregarded has developed for the *satra* among some young generations due to impact of modernity against at values and traditions. Changes are of course rapidly taking place in the culture, the way of life etc. but there is another side that some young stars are whole heartedly obeying this culture. Barpeta is a place of trade and commerce but now some people have done other services also. The participants in traditional functions of the *satra* say that when the older generation will die, the *satriya* culture which was introduced by Sankardeva and Madhabdeva will be vanished. As a result there will be a lack of skilled artists in various art forms in the *satra*. The schedule caste had no access to the *kirtanghar* run with cosmopolitan principles and liberal ideas. But due to the efforts of some liberal minded persons and public organizations, the *satra* authority granted permission to all the Hindu people to enter the *satra*. From that time the *satra* is running according to the principle. Till date females have been debarred from entering the *kirtanghar*. It is known that, women were given due importance in earlier times. But the position of woman later on degraded to a large extent in the male dominated society and they

were debarred from entering into the *kirtanghar*. Strong demand is being raised from time to time in favour of women's entry but inside the town there are strong groups who are dead against the entry of women. It is hoped that sooner or later, this attitude will get softened and all restrictions in the entry of women will be removed.

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