

## PREFACE

The neo-*vaisnavite* movement is a glorious chapter in the religious history of Assam. It has lots of impact not only on religious life but also on the social and cultural life of the people of Assam. The movement was initiated by the saint-poet Sankaradeva in the last decade of fifteen century. As a result of neo-*vaisnavite* movement, *satra* institution was established and was headed by Sankaradeva and the first *satra* was established at Bardowa, his native place. Later on lots of *satras* were established in Assam by other *vaisnava* saints. The importance of the institution lies on the fact that it is intimately connected with the Assamese society and it has become a part and parcel of Assamese life. Contributions of this institution towards the spreading of *vaisnavism* in particular and the cultural development of Assam in general are indeed great. Therefore, the study of the *satra* institution covers the entire field of Assamese *vaisnavism* since its beginning. The movement brought in its wake, literacy and artistic renaissance at Barpeta also and as a result Madhavadeva the chief disciple and apostle of Sankaradeva with proper help to Mathuradas Burha Ata (one of the chief followers of Madhavadeva and the first *adhikara* of Barpeta *satra*) established a *satra* in 1583 AD. Barpeta *satra* is one of the earliest and most influential *satras* in Assam. The people of Barpeta live in different *hatis*, follow neo-*vaisnavism*. It is to be noted here that the people living in different *hatis* are intimately related to different aspects of the *satra* functions. In this regard the relations between the *satra* and *hatis* at Barpeta town and socio- religious study on the *satra* institution in general and Barpeta *satra* in particular is an important matter as it may have a great impact on the people of Assam in general and Barpeta *satra* in particular. An attempt on ‘A Socio-Religious Study on the *Satra* Institution of Assam with special reference to Barpeta *Satra* and its relation with the *Hatis* (cluster of settlements)’ has been made here in the following pages. The work is prepared for the Doctoral Degree of the University of North Bengal.

In preparing this work, all available source materials both primary and secondary have been carefully examined before use. But in spite of my sincere efforts, error may have crept into it.

It has been tried to arrive at the nearest point of the aim in respect of the proposed study. However we never claim perfection. I take this opportunity of expressing deep

gratitude to Dr. Samar Kumar Biswas, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of North Bengal who took so much trouble in guiding my research work in the midst of his manifold activities and academic engagement.

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