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SANKARDEVA AND NAMGHAR: ITS ROLE AT VILLAGE AREA

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Abstract: Namghar is a religious institution, it is an institution which gives identity to assamese community and plays a notable role for maintain unity among the masses. Srimanta Sankardeva is an important name in regards the establishment of this religious institution. The Namghar's 'democratic' institution offers a basic venue for villagers to gather and not only debate their mutual challenges and concerns jointly, but also to settle local conflicts using locally developed judicial techniques and processes. This paper basically focuses on the role played by the Namghar in the village areas as a traditional institution. This paper contains the origin and growth of Namghar in different course of time.

Keywords: Namghar, Srimanta Sankardeva, Assamese Community, Religious Institution, Conflict Resolution.

Introduction: Kirtanghar is another name for Namghar. The vast prayer hall is where you'll find it. Namghar is where the Satra's major activities take place. The size of a namghar is determined by the number of disciples it must accommodate and is not fixed. On numerous events, it became the site of collective namprasang, playing of Borgeets (traditional devotional songs) penned by Srimanta Sankardeva and his student Madhabdeva, and enacting of Bhaonas. Sankardeva founded the first Namghar in Nagaon's Bordowa area. The namghar have played a significant role in upholding the villages' discipline, order, and morality, integrity over the last 400 years or so. As per Charitputhi, towards the beginning of Namghar's construction of Barpeta Satra's wall, bamboo and woods were used. Also built out of the same materials is another Barpeta Kirtanghar. However, Vrindavani Vastra's Kirtanghar or Naamghar structure was the same size as Barpeta Satra's. The two words 'Naam' and 'ghar' effectively imply the same thing in Naamghar, which was 220 feet long and 60 feet wide. Ghar means Hall and Naam means God Lord Krishna's prayer (Narayan Goswami, 2019).

Sankardeva founded the Namghar institution near Bordoa while he was young, and it was previously known as Hari griha. Every hamlet in Assam now has a Namghar, where the values of Hari are chanted and listened to at set times. In the past, the Namghars were made of bamboo or wooden materials. At the time, the institution of "tol" was generally open to pupils from the higher classes of society. Through his innovation, Sankardeva disseminated education beyond the "tol" institution in a liberal and democratic fashion for the public. Namghar, also known as Kirtanghar, Then, or Debogriha, is a spiritual organisation. Namghar is divided into four sections: Baatchora, Community prayer hall, Manikut, and Choghar. A Satra's Namghar is its most important component (Kusre, n.d.). It was due of Sankardeva's Ekasarana ideology. The idea of global brotherhood and equality, NeoVaishnavism was revealed to the native people who have joined this movement in Assam at the time brand-new faith. Sankardeva's theory never encouraged idol worship, which is a common practice in orthodox Brahminical Hinduism. As a result, the satra institution also played a significant role. This was reinforced even more by the Ahom Kings' embrace of the Vaishnava faith as well as other nobility as a result, the Hindu Assamese had two types of social ties: the temporal ties and the social ties (Paul, 2018).

Subject Matter: Namghar as an institution, plays a very significant role in village area. It is an institution of moral and ethical norms, believing on almighty, and ensuring spirituality. Sometimes Namghar plays a role to resolving disputes among the people of that particular area. It may consider as a dispute resolution institution. In its function as a Proto-Type Parliament, the Namghar has long been a thriving hub of community development programs (Rahman, 2015).

Nature and Scope of the Study: In the present-day context establishment of Namghars are seen almost everywhere in Assam. It is sign of peace and spiritual activities of the devotees. The study represents some village areas of Barpeta district of Assam. The evolution of the Namghar fulfilled Sankardeva's aspirations of an egalitarian society, where members from all walks of life, regardless of caste, creed, tribe, or community, may sit together for God's prayer and dine together (Nath, 2020).

Objectives of the Study

- To find the origin of Namghar in different places
- To examine the role of Namghar are playing in different perspectives
- To find why Namghar is so spiritual and necessary for community development



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Methodology: The study employs a qualitative and analytical research methodology based on both primary and secondary sources, including official documents, conferences, related books and journals, reprints of published papers, and soft copies such as internet pages and pdf documents acquired from sites. The study will mostly rely on primary sources, with secondary sources being reviewed as needed.

Limitation of the Study: The study is confined in the village area of Sarukshetri Development Block under Barpeta district. Basically, focus on two different villages. The study contains a holistic and analytical finding of Namghar and its origin. The whole findings of the study is based on the field study of that particular area.

Result and Discussion: The significance of Sankaradeva's Neo-Vaishnavism, and, greater crucially, the characteristics of its institutionalised forms, can be stated. Sattras and namghars have made significant contributions towards Assamese culture's social growth in progress and a sense of self. During the 15th and 16th centuries, Sankaradeva became renowned as the most notable Vaishnava reformist of Kamrupa (Assam) and Kamta Kuchvihara (Cooch Behar, present-day Bengal). The Kamrupa lands were then extended eastward from the Lohit Division of the erstwhile North Eastern Frontier Agency (present-day Arunachal Pradesh) to the river Karatoya, which today passes through northern West Bengal and western Bangladesh. In some eras of history, the old kingdom consisted of the valley of the powerful Brahmaputra forming a type of central corridor and the various hills constituting peripheral rooms to which one could access from that corridor (Paul, 2018).

Along with his devotees, Srimanta Sankaradeva used to perform "Namprasanga" and "Naam kirtan" on a daily basis at the Namghar institution. "Ek Saarana Hari Naam Dharma", which he developed to avoid unnecessary rites. The major goal is to chant and hear of Vishnu Krishna's or Hari's work. Sankaradeva and his disciples founded the Naam prasanga and Nam kirtan systems, which are still practised in Namghar institutions in some form or another. He centralised the spiritual emotions inside the Namghar and made people more aware and attentive about the life and actions of Lord Krishna via art of dramas and paintings by building emotional stability in the masses and offering spiritual well-being to the classes. He went to great lengths to make sure the well-being of mediaeval Assamese society, as well as to enhance their social health and emotional maturity (Kusre, n.d.).

The Namghar-Satra connection created a very well organised but dispersed religious framework, which is a distinct element of Assamese Vaishnavism. Sankaradeva built the first Namghar with the assist of his first followers in 1503 A.D. He was the one who wrote the prayers. In this Namghar, recitations from the Bhagavata and religious discourses were placed. Sankaradeva was familiar with raga-based music and used it to construct his devotional hymns, the Borgeets. The Namghar is well-known in practically all Assamese villages, to the point where village residents' identities are inextricably linked to the Namghar they attend. In fact, the Namghar became a focal point for the community's religious as well as socio-cultural activities. For the past 500 years, the Namghar has served as the village public hall, combining the functions of a village prayer hall, a community center, a local court, and a village assembly to provide a common venue for villagers to gather in a spirit of friendliness and cooperation (Nath, 2020).

A management committee, consisting of the President, secretary, joint-secretary, and other individuals elected unconditionally by the Raj or common people, oversees the day-to-day business of each Namghar. In general, the management committee appears to be made up of people from many walks of life, such as government employees, school / college teachers, landlords, and so on. It is in charge of the Namghar's finances. They also have frequent meetings with the residents of the neighborhoods to discuss problems of pressing concern to the community. The local community is no longer the only source of funding for these Namghars. Namghars are presently funded by a combination of community finances, government subsidies, and donations from affluent families and individuals (Dutta, 2017).

It has been observed that the formation of Namghars is often influenced by the state's goals and objectives. The Assam Accord, for example, was signed in 1985 in order to emphasize an all-encompassing 'Assamese' identity in answer to the state's failure to manage foreigner immigration into Assam (Dutta, 2017).

Issues of moral or social disobedience are heard by the Raj. To try their cases, the disputants appoint their own Raj –Medhi or Barmedhi from their own Sattras. Sanctions are meted out in accordance with the nature of the offence, and the judgements are binding on both the complainant and the accused. There are several restrictions on the types of matters that can be handled, such as criminal matters being kept out of the Namghar's jurisdiction and minor moral and civil cases being tried (Rahman, 2015).

The Gram Sabha, which is constituted in Namghar, lays the groundwork for village planning and change. There is a question of how public cash will be spent. In the Namghar, several other social rules and regulations are altered. The namghar serves as the



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focal point for all cultural events. It all begin with the Boorgeet and ends with the Dihanaam, with everything from dance to drama (Hazarika, 2019).

Conclusion: In view of the aforementioned discussion, it may be argued that Sankaradeva's Neo Vaishnavism has given rise to a new Cultural Nationalism based on a national identity created by cultural practices and language rather than the concept of common origin or race. Namghar is a place of devotion as well it may sometime consider as an institution of resolving disputes. It also plays a significant role to ordering social norms and regulations, which can ensure the sense of inclusion among the masses.

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