

Sattriya Culture A Tool For Social Development: With Special Reference To The Vaishnavite Monasteries.

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Abstract

Srimanta Sankardeva (1449-1568 AD) the Vaishnavite saint and leader started a religious and cultural movement in Assam. Sankardeva's Bhakti movement brought diverse communities under one philosophy of life with a systematized code of conduct and religious practice. One institution established by him was the Satra. The Satras established in the 16th century in North-east part of India are the unique socio-religious and cultural institutions. The Satra is one of the most significant and revolutionized forces in the socio-religious and cultural sphere.

Associated with Satras, are Bhaona, Ankiya Naat, Borgeet and Sattriya Nritya. Ankiya Naat denotes one-act plays while Bhaona is the performance of these plays. These Ankiya Naat always carried a religious message and their enactment showed the victory of good over evil. It is a traditional theatre form that shows the victory of truth at the climax, generally using mythological stories.

The objective of this paper is to search the cultural aspects of the Satras through the varied ranges of aesthetic domains and an effort is made in this paper to analyze the contribution of diverse art forms of Satras in the construction of Assamese society in the past and how they may be preserved and used to contribute to the development in this particular geographical location for future.

Key words: Satra, Namghar, Ankiya Naat, Bhaona, development.

Introduction

In Hindu ideology, there are three means of attaining salvation - knowledge, action and devotion. The Vedas are ritualistic, knowledge is given importance in the Upanishads and the coordination of the three is discussed in the Gita. In the medieval period, many religious thinkers and reformers started a movement by making devotion a means to improve the socio-religious life of India, which became known as 'Bhakti Movement'.

Bhakti movement was an important break in the cultural history of medieval India. In this period, devotion to God was propagated in various ways in the society by the socio-religious reformers. The Bhakti movement started in South India with Alvars and Nayanars which spread throughout South Asia including North India over a period of time (between 800 AD to 1700 AD). Bhakti period customs were associated with the worshipping of God in the Indian subcontinent by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. For example, kirtans in Hindu temples, qawwali (by Muslims) in the dargah and singing of gurbani in gurudwaras all originated

from the Indian Bhakti movement in the medieval history.

Bhakti period has an important place in Indian history. The Bhakti movement, which started in South India, spread widely in North India. Thousands of saints like Ramanand, Kabir, Tulsi, Sur, Vallabhacharya, Gurunanak, Sant Namdev, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu etc. started performing devotions and started performing Kirtan of their God.

North Eastern India also left no stone unturned to water the world with its devotion. With the influence of Kabir and Ramanand, the great man who flourished Vaishnav Pant in North-Eastern India was Srimanta Sankardeva who is also considered as the founder of the 'NeoVaishnavism' in Assam. Assam is located in the extreme frontier region of North-Eastern India (Barua 2011). "Hinduism is the dominant religion in Assam. The three popular forms of Hinduism namely, Saivism, Saktism and Vaishnavism are prevalent here. Neo-Vaishnavism movement gained momentum in Assam in the 15th century" (Neog 1998; Kothari 1980). Neo Vaishnavism was the devotional

movement in response to 'Brahminism', which Shankardev propagated against the anomalies prevailing in the society of that time. Srimanta Shankardev chose a simple devotional path in contrast to the rigid rules of 'Brahmanism' which can be easily adopted by the general public. This religion was influenced by the erstwhile Vaishnavism but Shankardev made some changes in it. Shankardev presented this new version of Vaishnavism to the common masses which made Vaishnav devotion accessible to everyone irrespective of caste barriers. As all people had equal rights in the Nirguna Bhakti Marg of Kabir, in the same way, the 'Neo Vaishnavism' Bhakti Marg, run by Shankardev, had equal rights for all kinds of castes and communities. He showed simple devotional path to the people of Assam. He created a sense of unity, prosperity and harmony among the people of Assam. Shankardev has not only preached Vaishnavism in Assam but also revived it by tying the various Assamese communities in one thread.

Saint Shankardev travelled through the entire length and breadth of Assam and found the Vaishnavite monasteries known as *Satras*, along with prayer hall or *Namghar* and that was the beginning of Satra institutions in Assam. Satras are unique socio-religious and cultural organizations that are founded, aimed at and united for a definite determination for the welfare of the state.

The Neo-Vaishnav movement initiated by Shankardev created a socio-cultural Renaissance in Assam. It was not only a religious faith but also became a way of life which is based on the liberal doctrine of bhakti or devotion opened to all classes and castes. This simple and accessible religion attracted both Hindu and non-Hindu communities, along with the tribal people of Assam. In the socio-religious sphere of the Hindu society it initiated a new change.

The new creed of faith started by Shankardev known as Ekasarana-Nama-Dharma which preached devotion to a single God (Vishnu or Krishna) who can be worshipped solely by uttering. One God, one shelter, there is none but the one, was the motto of Ek saranavaishnavism. There were four important elements of Neo-Vaishnavism: (i) God, (ii) Guru (iii) the fraternity of Bhakats and (iv) Naam (His various names).

The most important place of initiating the Neo-Vaishnav Movement is seen in two unique institutions—Satra and Namghar.

I. I. Satra and Namghar

These were not merely centers of religion and its practice but also played significant role of promotion of mass education and development of the poor people of the Assam. Satra and Namghar are associated with social, religious, and cultural life of the Assamese people. Shankardev travelled throughout Assam and founded Vaishnavite monasteries known as Satras along with prayer hall or Namghar. And it marked the beginning of Satra institutions in Assam. The Namghar is a miniature replica of a Satra whereas a Satra, literally meaning as 'holy area' is a network of decentralized monasteries, which is headed by a Guru (teacher) designated as Satradhikar. Satra is special institutional center which help to maintain and expand the 'Ek Sarana Namadharma'. The Satra is a unique institution with multidimensional social, religious cultural domain, with its distinctive characteristics, democratic organizational set up and ideological strength derived from the Bhakti movement (Borkakoti 2005). All these Satras follow the preaching of Shankardev but are usually separate and independent from each other when it comes to their operations. For example, according to Assam Tourism Development Corporation Limited, Natun Samaguri Satra is famous for mask making, and remains the flag-bearer of Mukha-Sanskriti aspect of Neo-Vaishnavism. Similarly, Auniati Satra is famous for "Paalnaam" and Apsara dances. Further Dakshinpat Satra is famous for its Rasotsava- Raasleela Festival. In Satra hundreds of celibate and non-celibate devotees reside within a traditional complex. The Satras consist of a large prayer hall facing a simple shrine, surrounded by dormitories and bathing tanks for monks. These Satras have vast land and have treasures of cultural relics and artifacts. *"The Satras also served as so many centers of literary production and mainly of religious type"* (Neog 1998). It also cultured around the development of the various visual narratives of aesthetical sphere in art and architecture. *"In Assam, Vaishnavism inspired its adherents to make poetry, drama, music and last but not the least, painting"* (Neog 2004). The Satras control their believers through the Namghars established in the villages and spread the religion.

The Namghar (Kirtanghar) became an integral part of every Hindu village of Assam. The Satras contributed a rich wealth for religious literature and started to revive and popularize the art of classical music, dance and drama. The founding of village Namghar was based on popularizing the Neo-Vaishnav faith to the masses. The Namghar started to provide a forum for not only religious but

also the social and cultural activities of the community. The village Namghar had been serving as the village public hall, prayer hall, a cultural centre, village court and parliament by providing a common forum for the villagers to assemble in an atmosphere of goodwill and co-operation which were managed on democratic principles. It had a great deal of symbolic value to support the idea of impartiality. Therefore, the Namghar became the platform of cultural activities of the villagers.

Shankardev's bhakti movement emphasized upon one philosophy of life and encouraged various communities within Assam to follow a systematized code of conduct and religious practice. The Satras became the epicenter of culture imbibing of the religious teachings of Shankardev (*Eka-Sarana-Hari-Nam Dharma*) along with diverse art forms. The Satras became the torch bearers of these diverse art forms like Sattriya Nritya (classical dance form), Borgeet (devotional song), and Ankiya Naat or Bhaona (one act play)(Borkakoti, S.K. 1997).

1.2 Bhaona and Ankiya Naat:

With the knowledge management of classical drama and contemporary dramatic component Srimanta Shankardev tried to yield a unique form of drama- Ankiya Naat and Bhaona. Ankiya Naat denotes one-act plays while the performance of these plays is called Bhaona. In every culture heroic of brave people, social reformers, warriors etc. have been narrated and passed on from one generation to another. Popular collection of stories like "Burhi Aeir Sadhu" by Lakhminath Bezbaruah has been the staple on which most children in Assam have grown up. Similarly, the epics "Mahabharata" and "Ramayana" have also been told and retold across generations. The enactment of Ankiya Naat, in the form of Bhaona, also became very popular under the aegis of Sankardeva. Studies claim that Bhaona have been the earliest introduction to morality in a child's life in Assam (Borooah, I.P., & Begum, J. 2014).

Ankiya Naat refers to one-act plays while the performance of these plays is called Bhaona. These Ankiya Naat always carried a religious message, and the stories always showed the victory of good over evil. This traditional form of theatre shows the victory of truth using mythological figures of Bhagavata and the Ramayana. This popular form of entertainment –Bhaona, were staged in the *Namghars*, usually in open spaces. The Ankiya Naats are the true index of Mahapurush

Shankardev's creative genius. One of the most unique characteristics of this art form is that Ankiya Naats were written in Brajavali Language. Brajavali language which is said to be a derived language as well as artificial language was created by Shankardev (Gayan , A. 2020).

Staging of the Bhaona attracted masses and can be considered as a propagator of values, morale, and religious education, which was embraced by young and old irrespective of caste barriers. Bhaona helped form the moral fabric of Assamese society at that time. To help establish the facts better let us refer to two Ankiya Naats written by Srimanta Shankardev and try understanding what kind of morale teaching they offered.

Rama-vijaya-naat is the tale of prince Rama of Ayodhya and is the only Ankiya Naat to be drawn from the Epic Ramayana. Rama here is regarded as an incarnation of Vishnu. It retells a story from the Ramayana of the victory of good over evil as represented by Rama's victory over the brave raksasha- Parashuram, the disciple of lord Shiva. When Rama won Sita, in her swayamvar, by lifting and breaking the *Haradhenu* (the bow of lord Shiva) Parashuram wakes up and rushes in anger with his axe to behead the destroyer of the Haradhenu. In the ensuing battle Rama defeats Parashuram. The story reflects the might of Krishna's avatar, Rama, and the defeat of the weak. It highlights the devotion and loyalty of a disciple-Parashuram, to his teacher too.

1.2.1 Values: devotion to one's teachers; might of the Almighty

Kaliya-damana is set in Vrindavana. It tells the story of the child Krishna who killed the serpent Kaliyanaga who was poisoning the Jamuna River with his venom. As a result, the cattle that came to drink water from the river were dying, thus threatening the livelihood of the pastoral Yadava community who grazed their cattle near the river. Hearing about the unnatural death of cattle from his playmates, the child Krishna enters the river and battles with the serpent. Getting news that the child Krishna had disappeared into the river, mother Yashoda runs to the river and the other mothers from the neighborhood also follow her in concern. The earth experiences extreme disturbance in that interim, with earthquake and huge waves in the river. Krishna vanquishes the tormentor but spares his life at the request of the serpent's wives who pray to him. The people of Vrindavan are amazed at the sight of Krishna dancing on the hoods of Kaliyanaga, the first proof

of the child Krishna's superior powers. Kaliyanaga agrees to leave the area along with his family. The story illustrates the early manifestations of Krishna's extraordinary exploits as well as the grace of the divine to those that repent and seek asylum at his feet (forgiveness). Another value reflected in the story is that destroyers of nature's glories cannot ever survive. The destroyers of nature will be disarmed of their strengths and annihilated.

1.2.2 Values: forgiveness; protection and conservation of the environment, caring for fellow beings, concern of neighbors for each other.

Bhaona are colorful presentations which have the quality of captivating the audience with the orchestra. The orchestra comprises of Gaayan (singers) and Baayan (instrumentalists), all clad in pristine white color attire. The demons and animals are in the form of fanciful effigies mostly. The actors representing kings and queens wear elaborate glittering costumes and corresponding facial make up. Also, masks are an essential part of Bhaona. The performers wear large, colorful masks of gods, goddesses, demons, and animals to make the act more convincing. These masks are huge in size, sometimes reaching to 15 feet in height which gives a majestic look to the performance. The actors make appropriate movements of the masks, depicting their character, communicating their stance and stature, and having an immense effect on the audience. The narrator who introduces the play along with the Gaayan – Baayan is called the "Sutradhar,". The Sutradhar continues to explain the story along with the orchestra in between the play so that it becomes easy for the audience to comprehend the story. Bhaona is to be understood as a presentation of mythological story coupled with narration, songs, music, and dance (Borooah, I.P., & Begum, J. 2014). Therefore, this magnificent portrayal can hold the attention of the audience and offer a sensory experience which also depicts stories with moral content. Bhaona, therefore, becomes a direct learning and observation platform of moral behavior. Bhaona helps the audience identify with the Hero or the good characters that help get rid of evil and epitomize "goodness."

1.3 Borgeet:

Banikanta Kakati a prominent linguist, literary figure, critic and scholar in Assamese language defined Borgeet as, "the Borgeets are based on lofty moral and spiritual sentiments. That is why

they are called Borgeet. The English poet Herrick had called a few of his spiritual poems 'Noble Numbers'. In our literature, too, the Borgeets are Noble Numbers". Similarly, prominent linguist, writer and essayist from Assam Kaliram Medhi stated, "These songs are the Celestial or Great Songs in Assamese literature". In a similar fashion, Satyendranath Sarma an Assamese writer, educationalist, research scholar, critic and historian said, "the Borgeets are so called because they are distinguished from ordinary classical songs by their nobility of theme, richness of their idiom and the perfect harmony in them of the dignity of classical music and the restraint of the imagination".

Therefore, Borgeets can be called celestial or great songs in Assamese literature written by Srimanta Shankardev and his follower Shri Madhabdev. They created and composed many devotional songs – Borgeets to spread Vaishnavism in Assam. The qualifier 'Bor' in Assamese refers to something superior. It is used to indicate a superior level of things or people of a class and is prefixed to things or persons. Amongst the songs of the Vaishnavas, a special class composed by Srimanta Shankardev and Shri Madhabdeva is called Borgeet. The songs belonging to this special class are distinct from the non-Vaisnavite compositions in sentiment, idiom and tune and are regarded as superior even among their own categories. Thus, they represent the highest class of music in Assam. Moreover, Srimanta Shankardev developed the *Khol* instrument and applied different Taals in Borgeets. Based on moral and spiritual sentiments Borgeets have many similarities with Indian Classical Music too. The language of the Borgeets like that of the Ankiya Naats composed by Shankardev and Madhavdeva is distinct from that used in their other literary creations. The Borgeets were also composed in the archaic literary language known as Brajavali (Baruah, S. 2017).

Besides being compositions of high literary value, the Borgeets have a particular style of presentation which is different from other types of devotional music like *ghosa*, *kirttana*, *bhatima*, etc., which were introduced by Shankardev himself.

Borgeets are mainly prayer songs in the different services of the Vaishnav prayer-halls or the Namghars. As such, these songs are grouped together for singing at different hours of the day. There are certain compositions which are primarily sung in the morning. Similarly, there are other songs prescribed to be performed during the mid-day or evening services.

Literature states that the first Borgeet written by Shankardev was “*Man Meri Ram Saranahi Lagu*” in Badarikashram during his first pilgrimage. It is said that Shankardev originally composed two hundred and forty Borgeets. Unfortunately, in an accidental fire the manuscripts were destroyed. Shankardev then asked his disciple Madhavdev to undertake the task of composing songs in a similar pattern. Madhavdev collected his Guru's songs - only thirty-four of them - from whatever was retained in the memory of the disciples, and also composed a number of new ones himself. The total number of such songs came to one hundred and ninety one (Sarma, S. 2020). Madhavdev, following in the footsteps of his Guru Shankardev, worked hard to propagate the Bhakti spirit among Assamese people through Borgeets. Borgeet has its own spiritual divine-melody, rich self-revealing diction, and exquisite thinking and theme.

I.4 Sattriya Nritya:

Another beautiful creation of the Great Saint Shankardev, Sattriya Nritya derives its name from the Vaishnavism monasteries- *Satras*, where it was preserved and practiced. In the year 2000 Sattriya Dance form got recognized as a major classical dance form of India by the Sangeet Natak Academy. It is a dance-drama performance which tells mythical and religious stories through had face expression about people of Assam, especially legends and lord Krishna (Dutta, R. 2020).

According to the motions made in ‘Charitaputhi’ Srimata Shankardev was inspired by the Mahari or Devodashi art form in Jagannath Temple during his long pilgrimage throughout Northern and Eastern India. Shankardev systemized and sorted the dance as a form of religious art for ultimate devotion to Lord Krishna. The dance form was introduced by combining different forms of theatrical performances, local folk dance prevalent in Assam, specially *Ojapali* and *Devadasi*. The principles related to ‘hosto mudras’ (hand gestures), foot walk, music, etc. are strictly in classical form. Traditionally performed by male monks but today it is performed by both male and female performers. Khol (drums), taals (cymbals) and Flute are major musical instruments used in this dance form. Today in addition to this practice, this dance form is also performed on stage by men and women who are not monks of Satras. The literary elements adhered to the Sattriya dance is as old as the Sattriya dance evolved from. The songs and verses identifying the lord Krishna as worshipful deity are being selected from the *Borgeet*, *Ankiya Bhaona*, *Ramayana*,

Mahabharata, *Kirtana*, *Dashama*, *Naamghosa* etc. These all elements mentioned above signify the rich tradition of the Sattriya dance (Katakya, S. & Borah, J. 2020).

Sattriya Nritya just like the other creative brilliances of Srimant Shankardev, played a pivotal role in bringing the Assamese community together and preaches the spiritual learning of Vaishnavism in Assam. It must not be seen merely as a source of entertainment but a divine way of connecting with the lord and establishing the principles of Vaishnavism.

Literature suggests that the period of Shankardev (in 15th century) may be considered as the darkest time for all round deterioration or degradation in Assam. Superstitions and meaningless ritualism, injustice, selfishness and indulgence in immoral pursuits in the name of religion were in vogue everywhere. In such a time of social exploitation and corrupt morale, Mahapurush Shankardev was born. He tried to promote the feeling of oneness among the people through a religious movement, gloriously known as the Bhakti Movement. His main successor Shri Madhavdev and other apostles extended its sphere latter on. It is noteworthy that the Satras were not only the religious monastery but it became the nerve center of the Art and Culture. Mahapurush Shankardev laid the foundation of Assamese society by perfectly amalgamating the local artifacts and culture in to the spiritual path of Vaishnavism. The devotional and ritualistic aspects of the art forms complete the life of the villagers of Assam without the need for arduous efforts. These three art forms- Ankiya Naat/ Bhaona, Sattriya Nritya and Borgeet are to be considered as the integral part of Sattriya Culture.

2. Role of diverse art forms of Satras in the construction and development of the community

Satras used wide range of traditional media-classical music, classical dance, theatre for the social, cultural and economical transformation of the Assamese society. Assam has complex social system which comprises of different castes, classes, creeds and tribes. In Assam because of the high rate of illiteracy, mass media proved less effective in the comparison with the familiar performance of traditional artists whom the villagers “could not only see and hear but even touch”. Practitioners of the art forms of Satras used a subtle form of persuasion by presenting the required message in locally popular artistic forms.

Bhaona, Ankiya Naat as an old form of Communication was a deep-rooted tradition in the vibrant culture of Assam.

Traditional art forms of Satras were having roots in native culture; it was embedded in local identity and social values besides providing mass entertainment. It also helped Assamese society as indigenous tools of interpersonal, inter-group and inter-village communication for transformation. Shankaradev propagated his doctrine of Bhakti based on the principle of universal brotherhood to the caste ridden society. While discarding the caste codes, Shankardev, gave more emphasis in the matter of personal cleanliness both inward and outward and correct social behavior for the purpose of establishing social harmony in society and for promoting fellow feeling. It began on a missionary note, trying to improve the lower classes and reduce the severity of caste divisions. The so-called untouchables, as well as backward classes and tribes, were incorporated into the new brotherhood. The Bhaona performance drew people from all tribes and castes.

The goal of neo-vaishnavism was to create a society based on caste equality and harmony. Shankardev opposed untouchability. His main goal was to create a society based on equality and harmony, which is very well portrayed in Ankiya Naat/ Bhaona. Bhaona brings people together in Namghar or Satras and teaches them how to work together without regard for any caste differences. Anyone of any ethnicity or caste can participate and enjoy Bhaona. Thus, the role of Namghar in Assamese Society must be deemed highly remarkable.

One another characteristics of traditional art form of Satra was the use of Brajavali language. There was some slight influence of Bhojpuri, Awadhi and Brajabhasa noticed in Brajavali language. Assamese people were exposed to North Indian languages by listening to and practicing the Brajavali language and many North Indian words entered into Assamese vocabulary. Language is one of the main means of exchange of ideas and views in our society. Linguistic equality strengthens the relationship. So this similarity in language also played a significant role to mitigate the distance in the relationship between the northern India and North eastern part of India. Borgeets (Bhakti songs) are sung by everyone in Assam, and Ankiya Naat (one-act plays) are watched by people across castes or classes, and the Sattriya dance initiated by Satras has gained the status of one of the classical dances of India. Thus these art forms which are the

building blocks of Sattriya Culture have played an important role in bringing unity among all sections of Assam. Hence, in Assam Satras are not just hubs of religious and cultural practice but also proven means of strengthening and unifying greater Assamese community.

These art forms initiated by Satras have also played an important role in the development of the rural economy of Assam. Manufacturing of items like props, masks, costumes and musical instruments, etc used in drama and singing has provided employment opportunities to the rural people. Even today many people are engaged in manufacturing of these items for employment.

Neo-Vaishnavism has had a significant impact on Assam's economic and social transition, and also enriched Assam's culture and art which brought a unique identity to Assam in the whole country. Shankardev collected and refined the scattered elements of different ethnic art forms and developed a new form of art and culture – The Sattriya Culture. Different types of dance-form (Naas) are used in Ankiya Naat/Bhaona such as Gayan Bayan, Sutradhari Naas, Gosai Prebesh Naas etc. Sattriya dance is one of the eight major dance forms of India and it is originated from the Ankiya Naat/ Bhaona. Shankardev introduced raga based classical music in Assam. Shankardev used ragas of Indian classical music in his compositions. In order to effectively convey the message of his Neo-Vaishnavism to the masses, he developed music and not only used it to sing devotional songs (Borgeets) but also used music in Ankiya Naat or Bhaona to attract people towards his ideas and the greater vision of unification.

3. Preservation and use of diverse art forms of Satras for the future development of this particular geographical region

More than 80 percent of the people in Assam live in villages where the reach of mass communication media is limited. Therefore, the traditional art forms of Satras can provide information and entertainment; also it can be also utilized as a medium to spread awareness and education on religious, socio-economic and political matters.

The art forms of Satras have spread to every corner in far flung villages of Assam. Moreover, the traditional art forms of Satras have become a part of everyday activities of the rural people of Assam, through which awareness, information and education can be made available to the people in an effective way along with entertainment.

Through this, people can be made aware of information related to disaster management, health, education, development and women and child welfare.

The people those are participating as a performer in these art forms they are also the residents of these villages, so the information and message that will reach to the villagers through the performers will be more effective and efficient to bring positive change in the attitude and behavior of the common men.

Satra and Namghar are associated with the social and cultural life of the Assamese society, both of them not only act as a means of spreading faith in the Assamese society, but they can also play an important role in empowering the people of Assam by making them aware and more socio-economically developed. The Satras of Assam are the most renowned and influential socio-cultural institutions of the State. Namghar, which is present in almost all the villages of Assam, provides a place for people to gather at one place to worship as well as to stage and practice the Sattriya art forms. These centers can be used to effectively disseminate the information related to change and development to the villagers.

Conclusion:-

In the light of the above discussion, it can be concluded that Vaishnavism plays an important role in connecting the whole of Assam with the rest of India. The art forms of Satras introduced by Shankardev help in the process of social, political and cultural transformation of the society of Assam. Shankardev's Neo-Vaishnavism along with the philosophy of inclusivity has given rise to a new cultural nationalism that focuses on cultural traditions and language shaped national identity, not the concept of common ancestry or caste. Shankardev used different-art forms - Bhaona or Ankiya Naat (Drama Form) Borgeet (Music Form) and Sattriya Nritya (Dance Form) to convey his ideas to the masses. He preserved and developed the indigenous culture of Assam through Satras and Namghar. The Vaishnavite renaissance started by Shankardev contributed significantly towards the development of the Assamese society in the socio-cultural and spiritual realm. The Satras are the monuments of the socio-cultural and religious domain. Namghars of Satras has become one of the major pole bearers in the villages of Assam, it is still a Cultural Centre, and an important Forum for Decentralized Planning and Decision-making place for the villagers of Assam. In view of the

influence of art forms initiated by Satras in the rural society of Assam, it can be suggested that the Governments may use it for propagation of developmental programs among the masses. Special stress can be given to lay on prohibition, family planning, and women empowerment, principles of democracy, fundamental rights, rural health schemes, small-scale industries, agricultural technologies, adult education, and different aspects of socio-economic change to develop.

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