

## CHAPTER III

### BARPETA- LAND OF *SATTRAS*

Assam is considered as the gateway of Northeast India. As north east is known as seven sister's state, Assam plays a vital role for the entire communication system since the historical times. In ancient time, Assam was known as Pragjyotishpur but after the advent of the Ahoms changed the name to Assam. Till the middle of 80's, Mizoram and Meghalaya were as the district of Assam. But gradually these states were declared as full fledged independent state. The state of Assam is geographically divided into two parts i.e. Brahmaputra Valley and Barak Valley. The total area of Assam is 78,438 km<sup>2</sup> and population is 31,169,272 as per 2011 census. The density of population is 398 km<sup>2</sup>. The population of Brahmaputra Valley is comprised of Mongoloid and Caucasoid people.

Present Barpeta district was under undivided Kamrup district of Assam till 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1983. Barpeta town is the District Headquarter of Barpeta district and had received formal town status from the then British rulers in 1884. Barpeta town is popularly known as "*Sattras Nagari*" and the heritage town of Assam for its cultural-spiritual glories. Barpeta is the centre of traditional Assamese culture and Neo Vaishnavite religious faith till today. Sir Edward Gait, the famous British historian had mentioned the "*Mahapurushiyas* all over Assam regard Barpeta as their headquarters" (Sir E.A. Gait, 1906).

### **3.1 Brief Description of Barpeta District:**

#### **3.1. a. Geography**

Barpeta is the most beautiful district from the natural and socio- cultural points of view. Geographically the land mass of the district lies between 26° -50° north and 19° -30° east latitude and 90° East longitude of the Greenwich. The geographical area covered by the district is 2677.33 km<sup>2</sup> and it is 4.21% of the whole state of Assam. The topography of the district is variant, highland towards the north plains at the middle and marshy lowland toward the south.

#### **3.1. b. Boundaries:**

Evergreen Bhutan Hills and Baksa district of the BTAD stand towards the north, Nalbari district towards the east, Bongaigaon and Kokrajar district towards the west and Kamrup (Rural) and Goalpara districts are situated towards the south of Barpeta district.

#### **3.1. c. Rivers**

The river Brahmaputra flows from east to west through southern part of the district touching Baghbar Hill and enter into Goalpara district. Other important rivers of the district are Beki, Manas, Chowlkhowa, Pahumara, Polla, Kaldia, Nakhanda and Aalpa.

#### **3.1. d. Climate**

The District enjoys tropical monsoon climate in two distinct seasons viz summer and winter. The summer season starts from March and continues till May and is followed by the monsoon from June to September. The retreating monsoon occurs from October and continued till November. The season from December to February is

characterized by average temperatures remaining generally above 2°- 8° Celsius. The average rainfall is 360 to 400 cm.

### **3.1. e. Demography**

According to 2011 census, Barpeta has the total population of 16, 93,190. Total male and female are 8, 67, 891 and 8, 25, 299 respectively. Total literate is 9,18,708. Average literacy rate is 55.05%, sex ratio is 1000:986 and population density is 632/km<sup>2</sup>.

### **3.1. f. Ethnic group**

Generally the ethnic group inhabitants in this district are Indo-Aryan with slight Mongoloid base. The Bodo Community, whose linguistic pattern belongs to the Tibeto-Burma origin, is believed to be the ethnic inhabitants. Some of the Bodos followers of Bathow religion, some of them have belief on Brahma religion and few of them follow Christianity also. The Muslims are seen as majority in population (nearly 57%) in Barpeta Sub- Division. Besides these above mentioned category of population, Barpeta district is inhabited by indigenous caste population viz Kalita, Koch, Kaibarta, Saud, Hira, Bania, Sutar, Suri, Jogi, Kumar, Kamar and Tanti.

### **3.1. g. Dress and Ornaments**

The dress and ornaments represent the material culture of a society. Like the other parts of Assam, in Barpeta the people, male or female wear the dress and ornaments permitted by the society. The old people generally wear *dhoti* or *pa-jama* and *Kurta*. The majority of people, who live in the village area, generally put on a piece of cloth known as *Gamocha* which hangs down from the waist to knees. The young man

of the village use trousers, shirts, etc. during winter season people wear woollen grabs. The women put on *Mekhela* which covers the lower part of the body covering the waist alike *Lungi*. They use blouse, *chadar* and *saree* too. The young girls now –a –days use Sallowers, pants, t-shirt, frock, stockings, leggings etc. Usually they wear these dresses, but when they enter into *Sattra* compound the male wear *Dhoti-Piran*, and hanging a *Gamocha* around their neck. This dress is compulsory for male devotees during *Naam Prasanga*. Similarly, the women wear *Sadar Mekhela* of light colour (basically white) and hanging a *Gamocha* around the neck like the male devotees. The ornaments consists of earring, necklace, ring, *Kharu* (Bangles), etc. which are used by women made by gold, silver or bronze.

### **3.1. h. Economic Life**

Agriculture is the main source of income among the majority of the people of Barpeta District. Besides agriculture, people are engaged in different service, business and other job oriented occupation. *Sankari Satriya* culture is the core and predominant culture of Barpeta. This culture has shaped and nourished the life of this place and at the same time it has also patronized its traditional arts and crafts. Different crafts specialists and job- oriented communities were encouraged to settle in different villages of *Satriya* devotees or in the *haatis* (locality) at the surrounding of Barpeta *Sattra*. The *Sattra* under the leadership of Mathura Das Burha Ata (the first *Satradhikar* of Barpeta *Sattra*) had encouraged the artisans to continue their handicraft. Thus Barpeta became traditionally famous in ivory works, gold and silver jewellery work, iron lamp stand and other items of iron making by, black smiths, pottery work, wood carpentry, making of earthen ring for ring wells (*pat kuwa*) and *aatosbazi* (fire crackers), boy of vehicle

building. But due to course of time, the industries like ivory works, vehicle body building, making earthen ring for ring well wound up.

### **3.1. i. Cultural Life**

Barpeta is like a mosaic and treasure house of culture and performing arts such as *Boithaki* (traditional musical conference), *Nao Khelar Geet* (song sung during rowing of boats), *Holi Geet*, (song of Deul festival) and *Bhor-Taal nritya*. There are some *Satriya* cultural arts like *Ghoshha-Kirttan*, *Thiya Naam*, *Byas Kirttan* or *Ojahpali*, *Dashavatar nritya*, *Bir Naam* and *Paal Naam*.

### **3.2 A Concise description on Patbaushi**

It is mentioned that Patbaushi is a revenue village under No. 11 Patbaushi Gaon Panchayat of Barpeta Development Block, Barpeta. The village Patbaushi is situated almost 100 km west side from Guwahati city and almost 5 km away from Barpeta town. It is situated south east direction of Barpeta Sattrra. The village falls under the jurisdiction of Barpeta Police Station and Barpeta Mauza of Barpeta sub division in the District Barpeta, Assam.

The ancient name of the village was Baushi. Baushi covered a large area including Chenga, Bahari and Sarthebari in eastern side and river Na- Khanda in western side. In the book *Guru Charit* "Baushi" was known as Baushi Paragana and the place where Patbaushi Sattrra is situated was known as Baraljar. In 16<sup>th</sup> century when Saint Sankardeva, Madhabdeva, Damodardeva, Harideva, Narayana Das Thakur Ata and other great saints established the altar of Vaishnavite religion then the place was considered as *path* ( a big centre of learning ) and from which the name Patbaushi is derived.

The Patbaushi Sattrra is bounded by – to the North –Kumarkuchi Sattrra, to the South –Dhakuagaon, to the East- Gaherpam and to the West –Kahibari village.

The Patbaushi village is full of many flora and fauna. The fauna include generally banana, bamboo, mango, jackfruit, jujube (*bogori*), coconut, betel nut at this area. There is a five hundred years old *Ahat* (banyan) tree on the road side of Sankardeva's *Thaan* which was planted by Sankardeva. The domesticated fauna consist of cow, goat, fowl, pigeon etc. in this locality.

The communication facility is not so good to village though it is situated only 5 km away from Barpeta town. The village road is connected with PWD road. There is no bus service or other heavy transport communication provided by the Government of Assam. Only private auto rickshaw, four wheelers, scooter, bicycle and rickshaw run through the village though it is one of the tourist places of Assam.

Patbaushi is a heterogeneous village inhabited by the Brahmin, Keot, Kalita, Baisya, Namasudra, etc. The village is inhabited by 321 house hold (According to Gaon burha's record). The total population is 2128. Male population is 791 (37.17) and female is 1437 (67. 52). There are three categories of people residing in the village. Among them population is like this, OBC male -58 (49. 57) and Female- 59 (50. 42), General male 443 (28. 71) and female – 1100 (71.28) and SC male- 290 (51. 05), and female -278 (48. 94).

Patbaushi village is known as *Milan Bhumi* (a place of uniting) of the great saints. When Saint Sankardeva was at Patbaushi then Saint Madhabdeva came from Baradi Sattrra, Harideva came from Bahari, Purushottam Thakur Ata and Narayan Das Ata came from Janiya and Damodardeva from Bayaspara Village. They met in this holy

place for performing *Naam Prasanga*. It is also considered as village of *Sattras* because there are three *Sattras* established by two great saints. The Kumarkuchi *Sattras* and Patbaushi *Sattras* (Sankardeva's *Thaan*) were established by Saint Sankardeva and Shri Shri Damodardeva's *Thaan* was established by Saint Damodardeva in 16<sup>th</sup> century. Saint Sankardeva propagated the Vaishnavism which was easy to understand, simple and more accessible than the other caste based Hindu religious activities of that time. He stressed in worshipping a single God, Lord Vishnu only through *Naam Prasanga*.

Besides these three *Sattras*, there are also many holy places in and around the village ie. Maa Manasa temple (Nasatra), two Shiva Temples, Basudeva's *Thaan*, two Sitala Temples (Majkuchi), another Shiva Temple at Amrakuchi, Shri Shri Rakhai Gosai *Thaan* and Laksmi Temple includes in Patbaushi Gaon Panchyat area. According to the villagers, though most of the villagers follow the path of Damodardeva, yet 40/45 families follow rules and doctrine of Saint Sankardeva. At the early period, there were only seven number of families and among them Pathak's family, Ramram *Guru*'s descent and Bangayagiri's descents are still reside at Patbaushi. All the villagers celebrate the occasions like birth and death anniversaries of the Vaishnavite Saints Sankardeva, Madhabdeva and Damodardeva and some other festivals related to socio-religious matrix of the Assamese culture are also celebrated.

The people of the village are not of so high position in their economic structure. The villagers engaged in various occupations such as service, fishing and selling fish, carpentry, daily labour, cultivation, rickshaw pulling, driving and some of the women engage themselves in weaving.

There is a music school, i.e. Sankardeva Sangeet Vidhyalay, in *Sattras* premises. *Sattras* Management Committee established the school. Here Saint Sankardeva's *Bargeet*, *Bhatima*, *Satriya* dance and drama are taught. Besides this, there is an Anganwadi centre outside the *Sattras*, two Primary schools, one M.E. school and a High school are available in this village. The students have to go Barpeta town for higher education. There is one Veterinary centre and a primary health centre in the village.

The houses are arranged in linear pattern i.e. on the both sides of the village path. The materials used for constructing houses are brick, sand, tin, thatch, bamboo, wood, mud, etc. The villagers have their own tube well, running water for drinking supplied by the Public Health Engineering Department.

The dresses and ornaments of the villagers are very simple like the entire caste community of Barpeta district.

### 3.3 *Sattras* of Barpeta District

**Table 1. *Sattras* in Barpeta District**

Sl. No	Name of the <i>Sattras</i>	Founder	Place	Year of Estd.
1.	Kapala <i>Sattras</i>	Sankardeva	Barpeta	1543 AD
2.	Patbaushi <i>Sattras</i> (Sankardeva's <i>Thaan</i> )	Sankardeva	Patbaushi	1549 AD (1468 Saka)
3.	Patbaushi <i>Sattras</i> (Damodardeva's <i>Thaan</i> )	Damodardeva	Patbaushi	1560-1590 AD
4.	Kumarkuchi <i>Sattras</i>	Sankardeva	Patbaushi	1543 AD

5.	Barpeta Sattra	Madhabdeva	Barpeta	1583 AD
6.	Sundaridia Sattra	Madhabdeva	Barpeta	1570 AD
7.	Ganakkuchi Sattra	Madhabdeva	Barpeta	1539 AD
8.	Baradi Sattra	Madhabdeva	Barpeta	1546 AD
9.	Jania Sattra	Narayan Das Thakur Ata	Jania	1576 AD
10.	Baniakuchi Sattra	Jaganathdeva	Sarthebari	1553 AD
11.	Bahari Sattra	Harideva	Bahari	1453 AD
12.	Chinpora Sattra	Sankardeva	Barpeta	1543 AD
13.	Keotkuchi Sattra	Mukundadeva	Barpeta	1600-1625 AD
14.	Gomura Sattra	Madhabdeva	Sarthebari	1579 AD
15.	Subha Sattra	Narayandeva Medhi	Barpeta	1553AD
16.	Byashkuchi Sattra	Bhattadeva	Sarthebari	1628 AD
17.	Guagacha Sattra	Ramcharan Thakur	Barpeta Road	1600 AD
18.	Na Mati Sattra	Mukundadeva	Bhabanipur	1679 AD
19.	Moinbari Sattra	Narayan Das Thakur Ata	Shifted from Haladhiya Gram	1596 AD
20.	Gobindapur Sattra	Bhagawandeva	Bajali	1548 AD
21.	Bamakatha Sattra	Purnananda Thakur	Bajali	1626 AD

22.	Namati	Mukundadeva	Bhabanipur	1679 AD
23.	Moiramara	Mukundadeva	Howly	1899 AD
24.	Saibari	Manipuriya Krishna Aatoi	Bajali	1565 AD
25.	Lachima	Kapildeva	Lachima,	1600 AD
26.	Haldhibari	Kapildeva	Baniakuchi	1600 AD
27.	Bejkuchi	Acharjya Rangadeva	Bejkuchi	1781 AD
28.	Bhaluki,	Lakshmikanta Goswami,	Bajali	1688 AD
29.	Sothiya	Krishnapati Deva Goswami,	Balaji	1788 AD
30.	Boithaputa Ghat	Madhabdeva	Baghbar	1580 AD
31.	Siddhapur	Joyramdeva	Bajali	1588 AD
32.	Palla	Narottam	Bajali	1633 AD

**Table 2: *Sattras* Have No Definite Time and Founder**

S. N.	Name of the Sattrā	Founder	Place	Year of Estd.
1.	Bamna Sattrā	Tripurari Thakur	Barpeta	--
2.	Bhabanipur Sattrā	Gopal Ata	Barpeta	--
3.	Jania Sattrā (II)	Purushottam Thakur	Jania	--
4.	Kaljar	Gopal Ata	Near Bhabanipur	--

5.	Para Bharal Sattra	Gopal Ata	Howly	--
6.	Dhuparguri Sattra	Gopal Ata	Bajali	--
7.	Bawanipur Sattra (New)	Gopal Ata	Bhawanipur	--
8.	Betbari Sattra (Almost Extinct)	Madhabdeva	Near Kaljar	--
9.	Kanara Sattra ( New)	Narayandas Thakur Ata	Ganakkuchi	--
10.	Kalbari	Ramcharan Thakur	Kalbari	--
11.	Gilazari	Chaturbhuja Thakur	Raha	--
12.	Bargomura	Chaturvuj Thakur	Sarthebari	--
13.	Saibari Hahar Kirttanghar	Mukuta Aatoi Burhabhakat	Bajali	--
14.	Kaljirapara	Gopaldeva	Bajali	--
15.	Kundapara	Gopaldeva	Bajali	--
16.	Parabharal	Gopaldeva	Howly	--
17.	Na – Sattra	Manohardeva	Sarthebari	--
18.	Baniyakuchi	Jagannathad	Baniyakuchi	--
19.	Goherpam Borigaon	Baladeva	Patbaushi	--
20.	Bamuna	Doityari Thakur	Bamuna	--
21.	Kamalpur	Bor Jodumanideva	Howly	--

22.	Kalbarikuchi	Ram Charan Thakur	Near Ganakkuchi	--
23.	Chengdi	Thaneswar Deva	Borghopa	--
24.	Aaoniati	Gobinda Thakur Ata	East Bajali	--
25.	Gabindo Bhawan Gita Sattra	Krishananda Brahmachari	Bajali	--
26.	Pata	Ramnath Mishra	Patacharkuchi	--
27.	Gajia	Narayan Das Thakur Ata	Gajia	--
28.	Haripur Sattra	Harideva	Pathsala	--
29.	Haripur Kholabandha Sattra	Harideva	Bahari	--
30.	Chakabaushi Sattra	--	Sarbhog	--
31.	Bamakhata (II) Sattra	--	Bamakhata	--
32.	Baadeshila Sattra	Joyramdeva	Sarthebari	--
33.	Banglipara Thaan Sattra	--	Banglipara, Bajali	--
34.	Barkapla Sattra	Monohardeva	Barkapla	--
35.	Barpeta Road Sakha Sattra	--	Barpeta Road	--
36.	Belbari Sattra	--	Belbari	--
37.	Jarabari Sattra	--	Kaljar	--

38.	Jagor Sattra	--	Jagor	--
39.	Amguri Sattra	--	Sarbhog	--
40.	Anandapur Sattra	--	Nityananda	--
41.	Amrikhowa Sattra	--	Sarthebari	--
42.	Akoya Sattra	--	Bajali	--
43.	Gurumukhi Sattra	--	Sonkuchi	--
44.	Kanara Sattra	Narayan Das Thakur Ata	Mandia	--
45.	Karairtal Sattra	--	Barpeta	--
46.	Karakuchi Sattra	--	Sarthebari	--
47.	Damodardev Sewashram	--	Nityananda, Bajali	--
48.	Doishingri Sattra	--	Doishingri, Bajali	--
49.	Shri Shri Bishnu Thaan Sattra	--	Kathalgurighat, Bajali	--
50.	Majhipara Sattra	--	Barbang	--
51.	Narayanpur Sattra	Bijoy Krishna Goswami	Behargram, Sarbhog	--

(Roy, 2016:80-83)

According to a survey conducted by Asom Sattra Mahasabha, there are altogether 922 numbers of *Sattras* in Assam and Coochbehar of West Bengal and in Assam alone there are 914 numbers of *Sattras*. (Roy, 2016:80)

The most important *Sattras* are located at the river island Majuli, Barpeta, Nagaon and Dhubri. Saint Sankardeva, Madhabdeva, Damodardeva, Harideva and their disciples established almost 84 *Sattras* at Barpeta District. These *Sattras* play a vital role in preceding social aspect, religious aspect and cultural aspect of Assamese caste in Assam. Among those *Sattras*, 24 are extinct due to natural calamities - like heavy flood, land slide; earthquake and almost 60 numbers are still in existence.

It is mentionable that Maneri Sattrra got damaged due to the erosion of Bramhaputra River in 1995. In 2004, Kaljar Sattrra and in 2005, Kanara Sattrra almost became extinct due to flood water, flowing from Bhutan throughout entire district of Barpeta. Similarly, Bahari Sattrra established by Harideva, Janiya Sattrra established by Narayana Das Thakur Ata and Purushottam Das almost became extinct due to erosion of Beki River. Mainbori Sattrra is also shifted to Sarbhog town in 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2005 due to river erosion. (Assamiya Khabar, 4<sup>th</sup> Oct, 2016)

### **3.4 Brief description of the *Sattras* nearer to Patbaushi:**

#### **3.4. a. Kumarkuchi Sattrra**

This *Sattrra* was established by Saint Sankardeva in the east direction from Patbaushi Sattrra and 1 km away from it. Shrimanta Sankardeva stayed there for a period of one year. It is situated at Patbaushi village. When he established Patbaushi Sattrra, handed over the charge of this *Sattrra* to his brother Bangayagiri and since that time the *Sattrradhikars* have been taking charge from his family one after another till today. The present *Sattrradhikar* is the 14<sup>th</sup> generation of his family. The construction of the *Kirttanghar* (Prayer house) is still incomplete. There is only a *Guru Asan* (Seat for spiritual Guide), a *Sarai* (offering plate with stand) and a *Gaccha* for lighting lamp inside the *Manikut* (sanctorum). At present the *Sattrra* is in poor condition. Only

*Manikut* is built and posts are standing for *Naamghar* (prayer house). Recently Govt. of Assam released a grant of Rs. 11, 000, 00.00 (Rupees eleven lakhs only) to the *Sattra* for construction work.

#### **3.4. b. Damodardeva's *Thaan* (Patbaushi Sattra)**

Saint Damodardeva established Patbaushi Sattra in 1462 *Saka*. Saint Damodardeva was born at Nalcha village of Bardowa, Nagaon. His father's name was Sadananda and mother's name was Sushila Devi, Clan – Maharshi Goutam. He got married in 1426 *saka* and at that time his family was close to Sankardeva's family. In 1439, Damodardeva left Nalcha and arrived at Ratanpur village of Hajo. He stayed there for 21 years. In 1460, he came to Barpeta and arrived at Barpeta near the bank of Dhanukhanda *jaan* with seven members of his family by boat. He purchased a piece of land at the close of one packet of silver to establish a *Sattra* from a resident of the village. He stayed there for 54 years (1460-1514).

The religion propagated by Damodardeva is known as Vedic *Sanatana Bhagawati* Vaishnava religion. To preach this religion he was assisted by 12 numbers of *Keolia Bhakats*. Besides these, five *Dharmacharyas* and 12 *Mahantas* cooperated with him to spread this religion.

The great Saint Damodardeva left the earth for his heavenly abode in the *saka* era 1520 in the month of Bahag (April), at the *Sukla Pratipada Tithi* (first lunar day). After that the *Sattra* developed in all the respects under the guidance of Bhattadeva who followed the ideals of the great *Guru* Damodardeva. He looked into the internal matters of the *Sattra*. He had a reformative outlook. He changed the compulsory rule of celibacy formerly maintained by the devotees of the *Sattra*. Bhattadeva established a

new *Sattra* on the bank of the Brahmaputra, twelve miles away to the east of Patbaushi *Sattra* in the *saka* era 1550. This *Sattra* was named Byaskuchi *Sattra* by the name of Byasadeva - the other name of Bhattadeva.

As per the advice of Saint Damodardeva, Bhattadeva wrote the famous *Katha Bhagawata* (Assamese prose version of original *Bhagawata*), the *Katha Geeta* (Assamese prose version of the *Geeta*), *Katha Bhakti Ratnavali* (Assamese prose version of the *Bhakti Ratnavali* by Visnupuri), *Katha Sattvata Tantra* (Assamese Prose version of the *Sattvata Tanrta*). Bhattadeva is said to be the father of Assamese prose literature.

Like Sankardeva's *Thaan*, this *Sattra* consists of different parts viz. *Manikut*, *Naamghar*, *Deul*, *Toron* (gate), *Jogmohan Greeha* (assembly house) and *Chalia*. The idol of Shri Shri Basudeva (Lord Krishna) was set inside the *Manikut* and daily worship is conducted by the *Bhakats*. There is a temple inside the *Sattra* premises which is known as Gopinath temple, where there is the idol known as Gopinath. Besides these, there are Bishnu Pada, Salagrama Sila and Sivalinga regularly worshiped by the devotees.

There are 12 pieces of *Katha Bhagawata* written by Bhattadeva using Sanchipat to write on. *Guru Leela* written by Dwiz Ramrai is preserved there.

In 1669, Ahom King Pramatta Singha built the *Math* of the *Sattra* to preserve the *Pada Sila* (foot stone) on the west side of Byaspara. Actually this work was started by king Siva Singha but completed by Pramatta Singha. He provided a stone slate to the *Sattra*. The length of the slate is 2 feet 6 inches, breadth is 1 foot 2 inches and thickness is 3 inches. Lotus flower is engraved on the slate.

The length of the *Math* is 60 feet from the bottom. The *Kalshi* (pot used for keeping water) placed on the top of the *Math* was made of gold. But during the attack by the Burmese, the *Kalshi* was taken by them. In 1952, the *Math* was reconstructed under “Ancient Temple and Monuments Preservation Act, 1904” during the period of Ramdeva, the then *Sattradhikar*. There are three idols of God engraved on the wall of the *Math*. (Goswami 2004)

**Table 3. *Sattradhikars* of Damodardeva’s *Thaan*:**

SI No.	Name of Proprietor	Tenure	Year	Life time
1	Saint Damodardeva	1462-1518 saka	54	1410-1520
2	Bhattadeva	1519-1550	31	1480-1560
3	Bhanudeva Bidyabisharad	1560-1601	41	1538-1601
4	Jaideva	1601-1608	7	1568-1608
5	Balladeva	1617-1700	80	1600-1700
6	Dharmadeva	1700-1705	5	1613-1705
7	Santadeva	1705-1717	12	1634-1717
8	Dharanidhardeva	1717-1758	41	1681-1758
9	Basudeva	1758-1784	26	1716-1784
10.	Banamalideva	1784-1816	32	1749-1816
11	Gobindadeva	1816-1849	33	1788-1849
12	Ramdeva	1849-1878	29	1821-1878
13	Bhudeva	1878-1893	15	1823-1893

### 3.4. c. Barpeta Sattrra:

Barpeta Sattrra is the largest *Sattrra* institution of Assam. The *Sattrra* is located at the heart of the city. Shri Shri Madhabdeva founded the *Sattrra* 500 years back and he stayed for a period of long 8 years. For rendering his responsibility as a disciple of Shrimanta Sankardeva, he left the *Sattrra* by handing over the responsibility to his disciple Mathura Das Burah Ata (1490- 1596), who later took care of the *Sattrra* and Mathura Das Burah Ata became the 1<sup>st</sup> *Sattrradhikar* of Barpeta Sattrra. It was Burah Ata who systematized the administration of *Sattrra* leading to the allround development of the institution as well as of the entire region of Barpeta. A democratic system was introduced which is effective till today.

Barpeta Sattrra consists of different parts which structured the entire *Sattrra* as a whole like *Kirttanghar* (Prayer house), *Bhajghar* or *Manikut* (Sanctorum), *Paatchang* ( a raised wooden platform), *Khatkhathi* (Staircase), *Uddyan* (Garden), Mathura Das Burah *AtarBhithi* (Residence of the first *Sattrradhikar*), *Math*, *Mathar chotal* (Courtyard of Math), *Keoilar baha* (Residence of Bhakats), Office of the Management Committee, *Rangamancha* (Stage), *Sabha Ghar* (Meeting Hall), *Deul*, *Jagmohan greeha*, *Satriya Samaskriti Prashikshan Vidyalaya* (Cultural School), *Badla Atar Bhithi* (Residence of Badla Ata), *Atithisala* (Guest House), *BhagawataKendra*, Health Centre, Southern Gate, Northern Gate, *Puthibharal* (Library), office, *Dalan* (main gate), Rangiyal flower (Flamboyant flower) Garden, Shri Ram *Atarbhithi* (Residence of Ram Ata) and one small zoo comprised of deer and peacock. The *Sattrra* compound covers approx 20 bighas of land.

The front gate is called *Batsora*. The main *Kirttanghar* (Prayer house) is the place where prayers or *Naam Kirrtan* (act of singing the names of God) are performed. It is an architectural splendour. Earlier it was built as a *katcha* house with big pillars but in 1952 it was renovated with decorative walls having attractive sculptures on these depicting the mythological events. Inside the *bhajghar* an earthen lamp is being continuously lighting for more than 500 years that is known as Akhshay Banti.

The *Samuhia Bhakat* (community of devotees) is the supreme authority of the *Sattra* in all matters. The religious affairs are managed in traditional manners. The religious programmes in the *Sattra* are managed by the Senior *Satriya*, Junior *Satriya*, *Sutradhar* (anchor man), *Bayan* (musician), *Gayan* (singer) *Ghai- Deuri* (main distributor), *Pali- Deuris* (junior distributor), *Ghai- Bharali* (main store keeper), *Pujari* (worshipper), *Bhagabati* (People engage in read the Bhagawata), *Pathak* (reciter), *Mazumdar*(auditor), *Gosai- Bharali* (a person engage in store of religious items), *Paladhariya* (dramatic performer), *Chowkidar* (guard) and *Pachaniya* (Helper).

**Table 4. Annual Festivals of Barpeta Sattra**

Sl. No.	Name of Months	Name of Ceremonies
1.	Bohag (April –May)	A. Bohag Bihu ( seven days celebration) B. Death anniversary of Gopal Ata on the 6 <sup>th</sup> of the dark fortnight.
2.	Jeth(May-June)	Birth anniversary of Madhabdeva on the first day of the dark fortnight
3.	Ahar ( June July)	Ambubachi Nibritti and death anniversary of Bhatoukuchi (Keshab Charan) Ata observed

		on the same day
4.	Bhadra ( August-September)	<p>A. Death anniversary of Sankardeva on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the bright fortnight</p> <p>B. Death anniversary of Madhabdeva on 5<sup>th</sup> day of the dark forth night</p> <p>C. Janmastami on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the dark fortnight</p> <p>D. Death anniversary of Padma Ata ( Badla Ata ) on the eleventh</p>
5.	Ahin (September- Octobar)	<p>A. Death anniversary of Mathura Das Burha Ata on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of the dark fortnight</p> <p>B. Birth Anniversary of Sankardeva on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the of the bright fortnight</p>
6.	Puh (December – January)	<p>A. Death anniversary of Narayan Das Thakur Ata on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the dark fortnight</p> <p>B. Death anniversary of Purushottam Thakur on 14<sup>th</sup> day of the dark fortnight</p>
7.	Magh ( January – February)	Magh Bihu ( five day celebration)
8.	Phagun ( February -March)	<p>A. Deul Yrta on the full moon day</p> <p>B. Death anniversary of Barvisnu Ata on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of that bright fortnight</p>

Barpeta Sattrā is a democratic *Sattrā* of Assam. All the activities are done on the basis of local people's opinion. Generally, in this *Sattrā*, as a tradition women are not allowed to enter into main *Kirttanghar* till today. But they are allowed to enter into *Kirttanghar* for two times, first before attaining puberty and after marriage when the newly married brides and grooms or only the brides take initiation from the *Sattrādhikar*.

#### **3.4. d. Sundaridia Sattrā:**

The *Sattrā* was established by Saint Madhabdeva in 1570 AD. It is situated in the North Eastern corner of Barpetā town, about 2 km away from the same, the place is also considered as centre of Vaishnavite religion. Saint Madhabdeva stayed here for 14 years and 6 months.

Saint Madhabdeva first ignored to go to Sundaridia because Saint Sankardeva also ignored the place. According to Sankardeva “*jatek sundari nari: param anarthakari*” means beautiful women are the cause of destroy. So he lived in Chinpora, Kumarkuchi and Patbaushi. But as per the advice of Kalindi Aai, Madhabdeva decided to reside at Sundaridia. Therefore, Madhabdeva started to stay at Sundaridia from 1570 AD (1492 *Saka*). (Pathak, 2008:2)

The physical structure of the *Sattrā* consists of *Bhajghar*, *Kirttanghar* (prayer house), *Math* (shrine), *Pat Naad* (well), Store room of women devotees, Residence of Kalindi Aai, *Sabha* or *Jogmohan* house, *Dalan* or main gate, Corner door, *Deul*, *Bararpo Mancha* (stage), Store room, Office of the Management Committee, *Keular baha*, *Atithishala* (Guest House), East door and *Adi bhithi* (plinth of a house). At present the area of the *Sattrā* is 7 *bigha* 3 *katha* and 7 *lechas*.

Ahom ruler Pramotta Singh built the *Math* of Sundaridia *Sattra* in 1771, 12 numbers of small *Maths* surrounded the main *Math*. It is like the Shiva Deul of Sibsagar. In 12<sup>th</sup> June of 1897, the tremor of a severe earthquake collapsed the *Math* upto 10 feet, only the upper part of it remained on the ground. The *Deul* of the *Sattra* reconstructed in 1379 (saka). The foundation of the *Deul* was formed following the image of Baikuntha with seven steps. During that time the statue of Bangshi Gopal was introduced by *Sattradikar*, *Pujari* (priest) and *Bhakats* (devotee) inside the *Deul*. In 1860, the public built *Manikut* or *bhajghar* and reconstructed the *Kirttanghar* with 105 hand length and 42 hand breadth with 11 posts.

Some important property preserved in this *Sattra* such as Ear ring of Kalindi Aai, *Padashila* (foot stone) of Madhabdeva, *pira* (wooden cot), *panziputhi*, 68 numbers of *tula paat* and *sanchi paat*, Kirttan Ghosa, Naamghosa, Gunamala and Ratnawali.

Like Barpeta *Sattra*, in this *Sattra* also some major festivals are celebrated by the devotees like *Bahag Bihu*, *PaalNaam*, Birth Anniversary of Madhabdeva, Death Anniversary of Madhabdeva, Birth Anniversary of Saint Sankardeva, *Magh Bihu* and *Deul* (Holi) festival.

Besides these annual festivals observed in the *Sattra*, every day the devotees perform 14 numbers of *Prasanga* in the *Sattra* premises. During the *Prasanga*, *Kirttan puthi* is read by the *Bhakats*.

The members of the Management Committee are selected from each *hati* (locality). Four persons are selected as members from each of the three numbers of *hatis* i.e.  $4 \times 3 = 12$ , 2 members from 2 *hatis* i.e.  $2 \times 2 = 4$  and one member female devotee. Total

member of the committee is 17. The secretary is selected from the midst of selected members.

Like the Barpeta Sattrā, women are not allowed to enter into main *Kirttanghar* but after marriage when the brides want to take initiation from the *Sattradhikar* they are allowed to enter into *Kirttanghar* (prayer house) and sit behind the statue of Hanuman and Varunpakhi. They are not allowed to cross it.

#### **3.4. e. Bhari Dhua Ghat Sattrā:**

Bhari Dhua Ghat Sattrā is situated at Chenga which is 19 KM from Barpeta town. In this place when Saint Sankardeva came to Barpeta took rest for a while and prepared his meal. At that time this area was covered by river and ponds. As in this place Sankardeva washed his feet before taking meal, this place was named as Bhari Dhua Ghat. At present, the building of the *Sattrā* is under construction after receiving the grants from the State Government. The *Sattradhikar* of Barpeta Sattrā is the in charge of this *Sattrā* also. As per the members of the *Sattrā* Management Committee, only on Sunday the devotees perform *Naam Prasanga* and read the Bhagawata. Total land of the *Sattrā* is 25 bighas. Birth Anniversary of Saint Sankardeva and Saint Madhabdeva are celebrated here. Besides of these two great saints, death anniversary of Damodardeva and Harideva is also celebrated.

#### **3.4. f. Chinpora Bhithi:**

It is the place where Shrimanta Sankardeva landed from his boat at Barpeta on the bank of Palangdibari which is presently called Palangdi Hati. The saint stayed here for six months to propagate his doctrine. This place is located about 6 km north from Patbaushi Sattrā. At present the *Sattrā* consists of main entrance, *Kirttanghar*, ring well

made by Saint Sankardeva, a mango tree planted by the saint, *Math* and assembly hall. The total land of the *Sattra* is 5 bighas and seven lechas. At present the *Sattradhikar* of Bardowa *Sattra* is also the *Sattradhikar* of Chinpora *Sattra*. Total number of member of *Sattra* Management Committee is 22 and the term is allotted for three years. Daily three times *Naam Prasanga* perform in the *Sattra*. Every year the birth and death anniversary of Saint Sankardeva and Saint Madhabdeva is observed with day long programme. Besides these *Paal Naam* is performed in the *Sattra* in the month of January.

#### **3.4. g. Ganakkuchi Sattra**

This *Sattra* was established by Madhabdeva in 1593 AD. It is situated about 3 KM away from Patbaushi *Sattra*. The reformer stayed here for more than 18 years. The Koch king Raghudeva had offered the statue of *Chandi, Divuz Manmohan* made of brass metal to the *Sattra*. The Ahom king had donoted 64 bighas of land to this *Sattra*. Sankardeva stayed here for one night before leaving Kamrup to Coochbehar. The custom of taking of *padadhuli* (foot dust) was started from this *Sattra*. Shri Ram Ata had taken *padadhuli* of Shrimanta Sankardeva. There is no *Sattradhikar* at present. Women are not allowed to enter into the *Krittanghar* like Barpeta *Sattra*. There are some valuable relics preserved viz. Sankardeva's Paduka (a wooden footwear), one 12 inch *pira* (wooden tool) used by Madhabdeva, wooden mask, wooden statue, *Paatnaad* (ring well), Rangiyal (Flamboyant) flower and besides these some valuable books of *Saanchipat* (the bark of the sanchi tree prepared for writing on) are written by the two great saints Sankardeva and Madhabdeva are available.

The festivals like *Deul, Kirttan* in the Death and Birth Anniversary of Madhabdeva and Sankardeva, *Paal Naam, Krishna Janmastami, Bihu* are observed here.

### 3.4 h. Baradi Sattra

This *Sattra* was established by Saint Madhabdeva in 1546 and stayed here for a very short period. The Vaishnavite culture has spread far and wide from Baradi making it a centre of learning. The place is located about 2 km east of Barpeta town. Baradi Sattra is considered as the first *Sattra* of *Mahapurush* Madhabdeva. It is situated about 5 km away from Patbaushi Sattra on the southern direction.

The *Sattra* compound covers a plot of land measuring 2 ½ bighas. It comprises the *Manikut*, *Kirttanghar*, *Deul*, *Batchara*, *Bharalghar* (store house) of women devotees, *Rangiyal* flower garden, Library, Kalakristi Bikash Samity Ghar, Madhabdeva Rangamancha and Bakul (Spanish Cherry) tree. The *Kirttanghar* of Baradi Sattra was constructed in 1975. The length of it is 68 feet and breath is 37 feet. The *Manikut* is attached with main *Kirttanghar* of east site. The length of *bharalghar* is 37 feet and breath is 18 feet. Some essential items like utensils, *khol*, *taal* are preserved in it which are used in different occasion. There is an idol of Lord Gopal Krishna kept inside the *Kirttanghar*. The *Deul* of the *Sattra* is constructed near about 100 feet away from the *Kirttanghar* (prayer house) in North West direction. There are four statues of Lord Kirshna's engraved on the wall. Its construction was completed in 1965. The *Bharalghar* (store house) is used by woman devotees. *Bharalghar* (store room) is situated in the east direction of *Kirttanghar*. Its length is 36 feet and breadth is 14 feet. It was constructed in 1995. There are three rooms. Its' one room is used as store room and other two are used as guest house.

The *Bhakats* of the *Sattra* performs *Naam Prasanga* from early morning to night. The performances are allotted for three shifts like morning service, the afternoon

service and the evening service. They perform total fourteen items of *Naam Prasanga* in every day like Barpeta Sattra as follows-

1. The first item of morning prayer is the singing of two *Bargeets* -a *jagaran* and a *Leela* of Lord Krishna
2. The Second item is singing a *Bhatima*
3. The Third item consist of different parts- *Naam Daka*, *Naam Chanda* and *saran Chanda* of *jugal*, a *ghosha* of *Kirttan*, and saying Glory of Krishna or other celestial name of Lord Krishna.
4. The Fourth item comprises reading Bhagawata or Geeta
5. In fifth item reading any scriptures of Shrimamta Sankardeva.
6. In sixth item reading Naam Ghosha, Ratnawali, Ratnakar, Naam Malika.
7. It is like third item of morning prayer
8. In the eighth item they read Bhagawata also
9. The ninth item is singing Gunamala
10. The tenth item is the recitation from Leelamala
11. The eleventh item is the chanting of *Gurubhatima*
12. In twelfth item reading of Bargeet
13. The thirteenth item is like third item of morning prayer
14. In fourteenth items, they finish all the scriptures which are read in the Morning Prayer and Ramayan and Mahabharat too.

**Table 5. Annual festival of Baradi Sattra**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Name of months</b>	<b>Name of ceremonies</b>	<b>Duration</b>
1	Bohag (April-May)	Bohag Bihu	7 days ,
2	Jeth (May-June)	Birth Anniversary of Madhabdeva	1 day
3	Ahar (June-July)	Death Anniversary of Bhotaukuchi Ata	1 day
4	Bhadra (August-September)	Death Anniversary of Sankardeva	7 days
5	Bhadra (August-September)	Death Anniversary of Madhabdeva	10 days
6	Bhadra (August-September)	Death Anniversary of Badula Ata	1 day
7	Bhadra (August-September)	Janmastami of Lord Krishna	1 day
8	Bhadra (August-September)	Nandotsaav	1 day
9	Ahin (September-October)	Death Anniversary of Mathuradas Burha Ata	1 day
11	Magh (January-February)	Magh Bihu	1 day
12	Phagun (February-March)	Deul	3-4 days

#### **3.4. i. Bahari Sattra**

Bahari Sattra was established by Saint Harideva in 1453. This *Sattra* is situated 25 KM away from Barpeta town and falls under Brahma Samhati. Though Harideva at first followed Sankardeva's *Eka Saran Nama Dharma*, but after he propagated *Sanatan Bhagawati* Vaishnavism which is quite different from the earlier. According to his religion, worship of Idol is permitted. Koch King Malladev and his wife took initiation

in this *Sattra*. *Deul* festival, *Jethar Sabha*, birth and death anniversary of Harideva are the main festivals of the *Sattra*. Entire community of Bahari cooperates during these festive seasons.

#### **3.4. j. Satra Kanara**

It was established by Narayan Das Thakur Ata. This *Sattra* was about to extinct due to natural calamities. Floods created problem for running the *Sattra*. As a result the original habitants of this place shifted to Gojia and Ganakkuchi in Barpeta. The *Sattra* is located at a distance of 16 km from Barpeta.

#### **3.4. k. Jania Sattra**

This *Sattra* is located in Jania village which is in the western direction from Barpeta town. This *Sattra* was established by Purushottam Thakur Ata. In 1514, Madhabdeva handed over the charge of *Sattradhikar* to Purushottam Thakur in this *Sattra*. The death anniversary of Purushottam Thakur Ata is observed by the villagers.

#### **3.4. l. Keotkuchi Sattra**

This *Sattra* is situated 5 KM away from Patbaushi *Sattra*. Saint Mukundadeva, the follower of Damodarveda was the founder of this *Sattra*. This *Sattra* was established during 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Ahom king Siba Singha donated 365 bighas of land to the *Sattra*. This *Sattra* is under Brahma Samhati. Two times *Naam Prasanga* is performed by the devotees in a day. The birth and death anniversaries of Saint Damodardeva are celebrated annually.

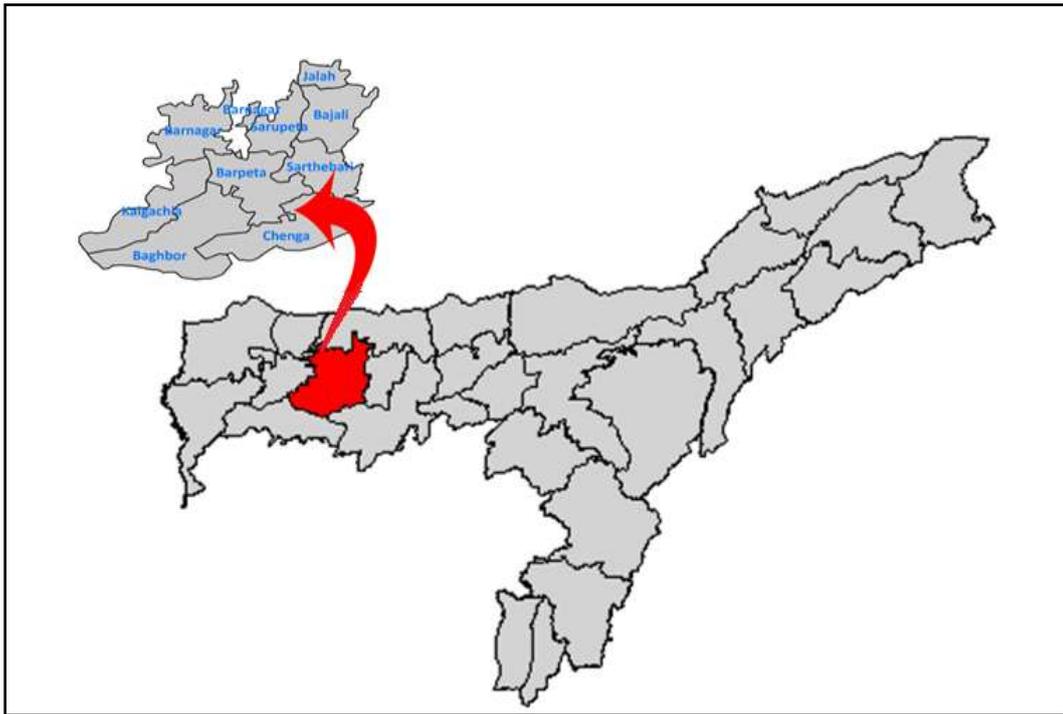
### **3.4.m. Boithaputa Sattra**

Saint Sankardeva and Madhabdeva established a *Sattra* at Sangattari village near Bahari by lightening an evening lamp. But due to course of time the *Sattra* was shifted to a place called Malancha on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra as that place was under erosion of river. Due to the great earthquake of 1897, the *Sattra* was totally damaged and again shifted to a place called Mailoichapara near Baghbor. The origin of the name came from the incident as in that place Madhabdeva took rest on boat. At present majority of the local people shifted to different parts of Assam but during the Holi festival they come and celebrate the festival with day long *Naam Prasanga*.

### **3.4.n. Gurumukhi Sattra**

This is situated at Sonkuchi village near the Barpeta Town. This *Sattra* is popularized as Gurumukhi due to an event. As a rumour, one day a betel leaf trader named Bhabananda Saud, later known as Narayan Das Thakur Ata was worshiping sun by throwing water in river Chaulkhuwa. At the same time one disciple of Saint Sankardeva, named Bhaskar Guru throwing water to the bank of the river. Bhabananda noticed him and asked the reason. Then Bhaskar Guru replied that he had supplied water to banana plant. Actually the banana plants were far from the river bank, so Bhabananda asked him again why he does like that as the water was not touching the plants. Then Bhaskar Guru replied that offering water to the sun is also like his activity. He also explained that God as incorporeal and only *Naam Prasanga* is the best prayer rather than worship. Later he attracted to his explanation and decided to meet Saint Sankardeva. After the meet he took initiation under Sankardeva and from that time he was known as Narayan Das Thakur Ata. The *Sattra* established in that place is known

as Gurumukhi *Sattra* as in that place he attracted to Sankardeva's Eka Saran Nama Dharma and changed his total life style.

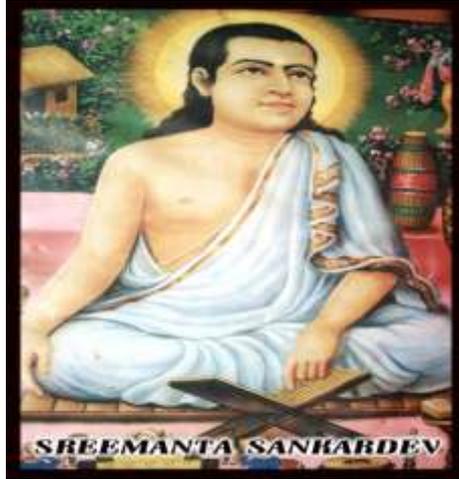


**Fig 3: Map of Assam Showing Barpeta District**



Source : Google Map

**Fig. 4 Satellite Map of Patbaushi**



**Plate 1: Saint Sankardeva**



**Plate 2: Saint Madhabdeva**



**Plate 3: Sattria Lata preserved by the Sattaradhikar of Kumarkuchi Sattria**



**Plate 4: Kamarkuchi Sattrra under Construction**



**Plate 5: Dalan, Barpeta Sattrra**



**Plate 6: Sundaridia Sattrra**



**Plate 7: Main Gate of Chinpora Bhithi**



**Plate 8: Ring well used by Sankardeva at Chinpora**



**Plate 9: Main Entrance of Ganakkuchi Sattr**



**Plate 10: Kanara Sattrra**



**Plate 11: Adi Sattrra Baradi**



**Plate 12: Kirttanghar of Rakhal Thaan**



**Plate 13: Bhari Dhua Ghat**



**Plate 14: Kirttanghar of Bhari Dhua Ghat Sattr under Construction**



**Plate 15: Baithaputa Ghat Sattr**