

VISUAL CONNOTATIONS EVOLUTED UNDER THE SATRAS OF MAJULI: ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

Satras, Thans or Namghar signifies the Neo-Vaishnavite Monasteries of Assam. Satras are the institutions which sophisticatedly established by the saint Sankaradeva and his disciple Madhavadeva. These institutions played a vital role to mould the religious and cultural heritage of the Assam and North East since the 16th century. It is a unique type of institution which is more than a worship house, Buddhist vihara, or a Hindu Math. The place where the saint Srimanta Sankaradeva stayed and preached through congregational prayer and religious discourses came to be known as Satra. It is more like a mission, or institutionalization of a sacred philosophy with the objectives of – to make the religion simpler and approachable to everyone and to dissolve the levels of casts and creeds in worship and establish amity, love and integrity among the society. It is thoroughly responsible for shaping and stabilizing the Assamese society for the last five hundred years and developed as the centre for the spiritual and cultural urge of the people. To communicate this new philosophy Sankaradeva himself created various acoustic and visual art forms. He inscribed and translated worship songs in the form of Kirtana, Dramas in the form of Bhaona, communiqés of the epics like Mahabharata, Ramayana, Bhagawata, in the form of illustrated Manuscripts. Sankaradeva himself conceptualized and architected the buildings of the ‘Than’ and ‘Satra, are also adorned with wood carvings reliefs and sculpture so the devotees and the spectators can instinctively connect themselves with the spiritual milieu. Thus the vivid Art forms has been originated and developed simultaneously through the years and wove the culture of the place and now surviving in catastrophe.

The rationale of the paper is to understand and explore the importance of vivid Art forms, developed through the cultural reformations under the patronage of the Satras of Majuli, Assam. Thus, as required by the nature the main objective of the paper is to study these experiments and procedure of the Artistic manifestations by socio-cultural reformations. Such Art forms were consisted quite unique practices moreover suggested and developed by the Srimanta Sankaradeva himself to reach up to the maximum people comes from every class of the society and to accumulate them under one umbrella of Neo-Vaishnavism.

KEY WORDS: Srimanta Sankaradeva, Neo-Vaisnavism, Satras and its visual implications, Bhaona, Mukha or Masks.

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