

Than & Sattra institution: a living heritage of Sankaradeva legacy

Sanjib Kumar Borkakoti

Associate Professor, A.D.P. College, Nagaon, Assam, India

drsanjib.borkakoti@gmail.com

Assam has a living heritage belonging to the legacy left by the medieval saint Srimanta Sankaradeva (1449 AD - 1568 AD). Known both as *Thân* & *Sattra*, this institution has survived five centuries and is still flourishing. Earlier it was known as *Thân* only. Later, the name *Sattra* also came to be used in the *Eka Sarana Nâma Dharma*, the religious order founded by the saint. The first *Thân* was set up at Bardowa in 1468 AD. Thus, Bardowa *Thân* has to be considered as the first unit of *Sattra* too. *Nâmghar* is an integral part of *Sattra*. The *Thân*, *Sattra* and *Nâmghar* control the socio-cultural lives of the people of Assam.

Srimanta Sankaradeva devised the model of *Thân* or *Sattra* in such a manner that the residents of that complex did not have to depend on the outside world for their requirements. The food requirements of the residents in *Thân* and *Sattra* were grown in the land owned by the devotees. *Thân* and *Sattra* were developed as ideal models for community living.

There was stress on those activities in *Thân* and *Sattra* which were eco-friendly and which could be pursued without impairing the productive capacity for the future generations. Moreover, cultural activities flourished to a great extent as well. Painting was a full scale occupation in the *Thân* and *Sattra*. In addition, Bamboo and cane are used profusely for handicraft items in the *Thân* and *Sattra*. Furthermore, Cultural activities like *Sattriya* dance, *Bargeet*, *Ankiya* plays evolved and flourished in the precinct of the *Thân* and *Sattra*.

Keywords: *Srimanta Sankaradeva, Thân, Sattra, Assam, Nâmghar, Eka Sarana Nâma Dharma, Bardowa, Sattriya dance, Bargeet, Ankiya plays*