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The Study Of The Ancient Temples Of Tezpur

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Abstract

Assam, one of the seven sisters of North-East India, is a collage of various cultural factors, which makes it special in the entire peninsula. Sonitpur, which is a historical district of Assam, plays an important role in the cultural background of Assam. It is located in central Assam and is a combination of numerous cultural as well as religious tribes. The Shaiva-Sakta temples, Namghars, Vaishnav Satras etc. provide a vivid picture of the rituals, traditions, beliefs and magnificent architecture of ancient Assam.

The whole Sonitpur district is evenly distributed with Shaiva, Sakta, Vishnu, Gauriya and Ganpatya temples. These religious institutions have witnessed daily worshippings of innumerable devotees from time immemorial. These temples have, both directly and indirectly, helped in establishing and strengthening the morality as well as spirituality of the population.

Key words : Tezpur, Shiva, Sakta, Ganpatya, Vishnu.

INTRODUCTION

Likewise India, Assam is also a rainbow land of different religions. Religion is undoubtedly an important fertilizer in the evolution of mankind. Proper analysis of the entire process of evolution of human beings shows that a society cannot exist without any religion. Thus, we can say that it is religion that holds our existence as well the existence of the society. Religion, however, has different meanings. The dictionary says that 'religion is good company.' According to the rationalist philosophers, 'religion is that part of human psychology which gives birth to complete devotion towards the supreme power, i.e, God.' According to Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, 'religion is the intro spection of truth.'

We cannot, and must not, ignore religion in the current age of scientific development. In fact, science and religion are the two sides of the same coin. Religion has many rituals, traditions and beliefs attached to it. This results in the formation of many temples, Devalayas, Satras, Church, Mosques, Gurudwaras etc. all these institutions bind the population with an invisible thread of unity and system.

Assam is a north-eastern state of India which is very prosperous in terms of religion and culture. Likewise the other districts of Assam, Sonitpur is also a very cultural district with a historical background. It has many Shaiva-Sakta Temples, Vaishnav Satras, etc. which reflects the cultural identity of Assam.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

It is the natural tendency of mankind to have a desire to protect themselves from natural calamities, destruction, diseases and other negative ‘forces’ which might harm them. Eventually, mankind created many religious institutions such as Temples and churches which, they believed would protect them from flood, volcanic eruptions, thunder, cyclone, diseases etc.

The religious flow of Assam is not different from that of India. Likewise India, Assam also witnessed the formation of Shaiva and Sakta Temples, Vaishnav Satras and Devalayas. Sakta, Shaiva and Vaishnav- these three sub-divisions of Hindu religions are the most prominent and will continue to spread themselves in the future.

Society and religion walks hand in hand. Thus, the diverse tribal society of Sonitpur is also within the religious boundaries. The emergence of shaiva and sakta religion which came along with the union of shiva–parvati in pragjyotishpur of ancient kamrup and the intertwining of shaiva-vaishnav traditions during the union of Hari-Har are significant events in the religious background of the district. It is important to be noted that the maximum Temples in Sonitpur are of shaiva and sakta traditions. The important temples of Sonitpur district are Mahabhairav Temple, Bhairavi Temple, Bhairavpad, Rudrapad, Tingeshwar Temple, Sukleswar Temple, Haleshwar Devalaya, Henguleswar Temple, Ketekeshwar Devalaya, Sidheswar Temple, Hudupora Than, Ganesh Temple, Hanuman Temple, Dakshinakali Temple, Satyanarayan Temple, Lakshmi Narayan Temple, Ganesh-Shiv Mandir, Surya Mandir, Pagala Shiva Mandir, Panchayatan Mandir, Nandikeshwar Devalaya, Dulal Madhav Devalaya, Saubhagya Madhav Temple, Naagshankar Temple, Bhulaguri Temple etc. for the sake of convenience and proper analytical study, we can divide these temples, devalays and religious institutions into six parts –

1. Shaiva Temples
2. Sakta Temples
3. Vishnu Temples
4. Gauriya Temples
5. Ganpatya Temples
6. Other Temples

1. SHAIVA TEMPLES

The major deity of this division of Temples is Shiva. These Temples have made significant contributions to the popular beliefs and traditions of the district. These Temples generally have a Shiva Linga which is worshipped by the devotees. The Shaiva Temples of Sonitpur are –

(i) **Mahabhairav Temple :**

This Temple is situated at the top of a small hill in eastern Tezpur. According to popular beliefs, king Ban built this Temple in the Dwapar Age.

(ii) **Shiva Temple of Da-Parbatia :**

This Temple is located in Western Tezpur. Due to the strong winds of Time, this ancient Temple is in ruins. Built in the 5th – 6th century CE. Only the entrance gate of the temple is now prominent.

(iii) Da-Chuburi Mandir :

This Temple now in ruins is situated in the Da-Chuburi region which is in the western side of Da-Parbatia. There are two 9 feet tall, 2 feet width stone pillars in the eastern side of the Da-Chuburi Namghar. Historians have discovered the painting of Dwarpalikas and Dwarpals in the pillars of the ruins. There are also numerous holes in a stone pillar which are 1 metre tall and 1.5 metre wide. These holes are believed to be a many-faced Shiva. This pillar has striking similarities with the Shivkashi Shiv linga of channel.

(iv) Bhairavpad :

This temple is situated in the Ouguri hills of Dekargaon which is located in the banks of Brahmaputra in Western Tezpur. According to popular beliefs, this place contains the inscription of the right footstep of lord Shiva, Which gives it the name ‘Bhairavapad’, i.e., foot of lord Shiva. This footstep is 2 feet long and 8 inches wide.

(v) Rudrapad :

This Temple is located in the Bhumuraguri hills in the banks of Brahmaputra. According to popular beliefs, one of the stone ruins contain the inscription of the left footstep of Rudra. P.D. Choudhury says about the time period of the for mansion of this Temple. “The Temple was constructed during Siva Singha’s rule. This temple does not exist now. Big stones lie at the site.” The annual Shivratri is often celebrated in this Temple.

(vi) Tingeshwar Temple :

The Tingeshwar Temple is located in the Ouguri Mountains in South-West Tezpur. The local people believe that king Tingeshwar built this temple. The walls and floor of this Temple are made of stone. Clearly the name of this Temple is based on king Tingeshwar.

(vii) Sukleshwar Temple :

The Sukleshwar Temple is located near the Haleshwar Temple Historians do not know who built this Temple. Though the Temple does not exist anymore in its complete state, there are still ruins of the Temple which are made of bricks and stone.

(viii) Henguleshwar Temple :

The Henguleshwar Temple is located in Da-Parbatia. Stone scriptures can be found in various parts of the Temple. Historians do not know who built this Temple. According to the local people, the Shiv Linga of the Temple has the ability to ‘grow’ continuously.

(ix) Sidheshwar Temple :

This Temple is also present in Da-Parbatia near a place called ‘Saudar Par’. The Shiv linga of the Temple is 3.5 feet tall and 2 feet wide. This Temple is also called ‘Forest Temple’ locally, as the Shiv linga was discovered while cutting forests.

(x) Kailashpati Temple :

The Kailashpati Temple is located in the path that leads to Parbati Nagar. The line of Bel trees located near the Temple imprecise its significance and also beautify the environment.

(xi) Pagla Shiva Temple :

The Pagla Shiva Temple is located in the Ban Parbatia village. The Shivalinga, according to legend, was in a different location. However, historians do not have reliable sources for the origin the name of the Temple.

(xii) Ketekeshwar Devalaya :

The famous Ketekeshwar Devalaya is located in the Ketekibari village which is in eastern Tezpur. According to legends lord Shiva himself showed up in the dream of a devotee and said that he wanted to live in the location without any kind of Temple. He said that he would receive the offerings of his devotees under the open sky. The local people says that original Temple was broken due to natural calamities. The Shivlinga in the Ketekeshwar Temple is declared the tallest Shiv linga in the world. The Temple has a peaceful environment and is enough to calm the minds of the devotees.

(xiii) Haleshwar Temple :

The Haleshwar Temple is located in eastern Tezpur. Haleshwar (or Harpeshwar or Harupeshwar) was the prominent deity of the Shal Stambha dynasty. According to local beliefs, the original Temple was made of gold. The Temple of Dekargaon was built by Rudra Singha in 1705. According to legend, the Shiv linga was found while ploughing. The Temple was built in the place where the Shivlinga was found. It was named Haleshwar because it's Shiv linga was found while ploughing (The Sanskrit name of plough is Hal).

(xiv) Naagshankar Temple :

This Temple is located in the NH15 which is 58 kilometers away from Tezpur. According to local beliefs, the Temple got its name from 'Naabhi Shankar'.

(xv) Singari Temple :

This Temple is of miles south from Dhekiajuli region of Tezpur. People call it 'Singari' Temple because it is located on a hill.

2. SAKTA TEMPLE

The Sakta Temples grew evenly with the popularity of Shaiva Temples. Like the other Temples, these Temples also strengthen the unity and spiritual spheres of human life. The following Temples play an important in the significance popularity as well as history of the sakta Temples.

(i) Bhairavi Temple :

This Temple is located in the Bhairavi hills of new Kalibari region of Tezpur. Locally, this Temple is also known as 'Maithan'.

(ii) Dakshina Kali Temple :

This Temple is located in front of the Darrang College, This Temple was built in 1966 using modern marble stones. It has a 3 feet statue of Goddess Kali.

3. VISHNU TEMPLES

Those Temples in which lord Vishnu is worshipped and praised by singing Bargeets or by reading the kirtan with a melodious tone follow Vaishnav traditions. This tradition in Assam was started by Shri Shri Sankardeva and his leading follower Shri Shri Madhovdeva. This tradition become popular, and vaishnav Temples can be found evenly in Sonitpur.

(i) Hudupora Than :

The Hudupora Than is situated in east Deurigaon which is 4 kilometers away from Tezpur. A large gateway of this than is constructed near Misson Chariali. A distance of 1.5 kilometers we can reach the than by going through village paths. It is believed that, if a devotee wishes anything with complete devotion and offers a hand-made gamosa, his wish is fulfilled.

(ii) Lakshmi Narayan Temple (Tezpur) :

This Temple is located near Kanaklata Civil Hospital in central Tezpur. It is filled with devotee's every day.

(iii) Koliya Goshain Than :

The Koliya Goshain Than is located near the banks of manshira River in Balipara region of East Tezpur. Charunanda, the son of Swarupananda, built this Than during the rule of Pramatta Singha. The Than is handsomely built with a tin roof that spreads over 600 sq. ft. Every year, the Tithis (or the birthdays) of the Mahapurushas are celebrated in the than.

(iv) Saubhagya Madhav Temple :

This Temple was built in the Madhav village near Jamuguri Haat of Tezpur. It was built by Rudra Singha in 1700 CE. It was named after a prominent Brahman, Saubhagya Kandali. It is believed that the devotees are granted 'good luck' (Saubhagya) if the completely devote themselves in praying since it brings 'good luck', it is named the Saubhagya Madhav Temple, as believed by some people.

4. GAURIYA MANDIR

The Temples which worship lord surya or the religious places where the devotees of lord surya. Collectively behave religiously, those Temples are under the Gauriya tradition although, some Temples worship lord Shiva along with lord Surya, still historians can tell that these Temples were originally Gauriya Temples by looking at their architecture and the puja systems. In Sonitpur, many Gauriya Temples developed in the ancient ages some of them are.

(i) Surya Mandir (Tezpur) :

This Temple is situated beside the Tezpur Deputy Commissioner office. The ruins of this Temple were found in 1906. The archaeologists confirmed that it was a huge Temple by looking at the shapes and sizes of the stone-ruins. Only two stone-ruins can be found in the area. Another large circular stone has the statue of a lion sitting in the back of an elephant.

The Chitralkha Udyan, Bamuni Hills and other regions also have statues of lord Surya which assures us that indeed Gauriya traditions flourished in ancient Sonitpur.

5. GANPATYA TEMPLE

Almost every part of India was lord Ganesha as its prominent deity. In Sonitpur too, there are many Ganpatya Temples some of them are –

(i) **Ganeshghat :**

The banks of the Brahmaputra in Southern Tezpur has a statue of Lord Ganesha Cut in a stone. According to Legends, Lord Vishwakarma Himself made this statue during the rule of a king Ban in the Dwapar age. The statue is 3 feet tall and lord Ganesha is sitting on a throne of lotus flowers. According to archaeologists, the status was made during the 9th – 10th century.

(ii) **Ganesha Temple :**

This Temple is located in Ouguri Hills in western Tezpur. The original Temple cannot be found, but we can still find art forms scattered in the place.

The Sonitpur District has numerous Temples, Thans and Devalayas other than the fore mentions Temples. These places are packed with devotees every day. All these places showcase the spiritual greatness of Sonitpur.

CONCLUSION

Through our study “The Study of Ancient Temples of Tezpur”, we have shed light on the significance of ancient Temples and Thans, the religious traditions, architecture, festivals, and the local beliefs associated with them. By the analytical study of the Temples of Tezpur, we have come to the conclusion that Shaiva tradition is more popular and flourished Than any other tradition.

It can also be said that the Sonitpur region is a proud witness of the flourish of Shaiva traditions. All the ancient Temples, Thans and Devalayas have directly and indirectly, conserve the emotions and religious sentiments of the people. The study of these Temples will definitely help in the social, cultural as well as historical study of the Sonitpur District.

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