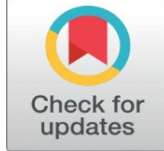
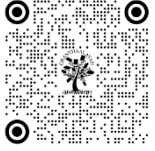


SANSKRIT STUDIES IN THE RIVER ISLAND MAJULI: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The Sanskrit Language is the basis of Great Indian civilization and culture. The Sanskrit language and its diverse cultures have established India in a remarkable position in the realm of world civilization. Among all the languages in India, Sanskrit has occupied a prominent place from the distinct past to present. The field of Sanskrit language across India is persistent and Indianness is never complete except for it.

Keywords: Sanskrit, Majuli

1. INTRODUCTION

The Sanskrit Language is the basis of Great Indian civilization and culture. The Sanskrit language and its diverse cultures have established India in a remarkable position in the realm of world civilization. Among all the languages in India, Sanskrit has occupied a prominent place from the distinct past to present. The field of Sanskrit language across India is persistent and Indianness is never complete except for it.

If we look at the history of Sanskrit education in Assam, we can say that it spread as soon as the Aryans entered in Assam. In this context we may say "The origin of Sanskrit education in Assam traced back from the sources beginning of the Christian era after the migration of Aryans to Pragjyotisha or Kamrupa". In addition, the royal copperplates and inscriptions rescued in Assam were also written in Sanskrit besides other languages. The Kalika Purana, the Yoginitantra and other literary works also testify to the widespread use of Sanskrit in Assam at one time. The name of this kingdom is known to have been called Prayogjyotispur due to the widespread practice of astrology. The medium of astrology was Sanskrit. It is important to note that the Mahapurusha including Shankardev, Madhabdev, Anirudhadeva, Bhattadeva, Harideva etc. who appeared in Assam, had initiated a new chapter in Sanskrit freshness. It is important to note that the Sanskrit language flourished under the patronage of the Ahom kings also.

The essence of our discussion is the promotion and spread of the Sanskrit language from the past to present in Majuli. Majuli is one of the largest inhabited mid river deltaic island. Majuli consists of a multiplicity of ethnic groups, which have contributed immensely to its rich and colourful cultural heritage.

The same argument on which Sanskrit education proves to be prevalent in Assam can be recognized in Majuli also. Historians say that the Ratanpur region of present day upper Majuli was the capital of the Arimatta king. Therefore, like other parts of Assam, it can be felt that Sanskrit language exists in this land. The Neo- Vaishnavism movement of Srimanta Shankardeva(15th century A.D.), the founder of the Nava-Vaishnava religion, gave a new impetus to Sanskrit. In Majuli, the Mahapurusas established the Satranusthanas for the purpose of spreading the Nava Vaishnava religion. The foundation of Nava Vaishnava movement was established on the scriptures written in Sanskrit. For the same reason, Sanskrit education was and continues to be widely practiced in the Satra institutions established in Majuli. In short, the practice of Sanskrit gained momentum at that time.

2. SANSKRIT EDUCATION IN MAJULI

The Satras have a special influence on the academic, cultural and spiritual aspects of Majuli. Therefore, the Satras have also played a major role in the practice of Sanskrit language of Satra- centric Majuli Island. Therefore, the role of the Satras must be discussed first when discussing the Sanskrit language practice in Majuli.

Just as a thorough knowledge is essential for the proper performance of Vedic rituals, so it is essential for the proper management of Satra institutions knowledge of Sanskrit language becomes necessary. In addition to know the inherent intentions in the original scriptures and the subject of religion, the knowledge of Sanskrit is essential for the Satradhikaras. Therefore there was an atmosphere of Sanskrit education in the Satra institutions of Majuli. There was also a provision for a Sanskrit scholar to acquire knowledge of Sanskrit education.

Shri Shri Auniati Satra was established in the days of the Ahom King Swargadeo Jayadhvaja Singha and the founder of this Satra Niranjandev began the Introduction of Sanskrit education in the Satra. He studied the Vedas, Upanisadas, Puranas etc. and wrote a Kavya Called 'Mahamoha'. The 11th Satradhikara of this Satra, Dattadev Goswami was a skilled Sanskrit scholar. There are many hymns, strotras, songs etc. composed by this Satradhikara among which a clear poem called 'Shri Krishnalilamritam'. He not only wrote books but also established a 'Sanskrit Tol' in the Satra for the promotion of Sanskrit language. Dhireswar Bhattacharya was the founder teacher (adhyapak) of this 'Sanskrit Tol'. It was the reign of Dattadev that Oja Sridhar Baruah wrote a Sanskrit book called 'Harisangeetam'. The 12th Satradhikara Kamaldev's time Sanskrit education was practiced more enthusiastically. He was a keen scholar of Sanskrit and for the devotees of this divine language a 'Sanskrit Chatuspathi' was established by this great personality. He was awarded the title of 'Asomtara' for his profound scholarship. The fourteenth Satradhikara Hemchandra Goswami, was awarded the title of 'Bhagawat Bhaskar' for his proficient Sanskrit scholarship. He appointed Sanskrit scholar Late Prankrishna Mishra at the Sanskrit Tol and provided Sanskrit education for all. He himself showed his own etymology by composing various songs and verses in Sanskrit. The fifteenth Satradhikara, Bishnu Chandra Dev Goswami also studied at the Sanskrit Tol and become proficient in Sanskrit education. There was a lot of promotion and dissemination of Sanskrit education through the efforts of the Satradhikara. The present Satradhikara Dr. Sri Sri Pitambar Dev Goswami is also a renowned Scholar in Sanskrit and absorbed to literature. He take measures to encourage modern methods of Sanskrit education by awarding gold medal to the candidate who passed the HSLC examination with the highest marks in Sanskrit. There was a flowing stream of Sanskrit education in this Satra since the time of the second Satradhikara, Keshav Chandra Goswami. Every Satradhikara of the Auniati Satra has sponsored Sanskrit education to the best of his ability. The Bhakat-Baishnavas are also advanced in the practice of Sanskrit language. Briefly, these efforts have resulted in the steady flow of Sanskrit education and as a result many invaluable resources of the Sanskrit language have been and are being created. The purpose of expanding Sanskrit learning easily, 10 days Sanskrit sambhasan campus also organized by the Satra.

Sri Sri Dakhinpat Satra, one of the Satra in Majuli is a stream of Sanskrit practice with the good efforts by the Satradhikaras and with the cooperation of the devotees. Banamali Dev Goswami to the present Satradhikara Sri Sri Nani Gopal Goswami also has a special etymology for the Sanskrit teachings. Banamali Dev was a Sanskrit scholar and composed many Sanskrit books. Sanskrit language continued to be practiced even in the days of Bishnuchandra Dev Goswami. The later Basudev Goswami had a passion for Sanskrit language, also wrote a book of verses called the 'Arjun Gita' which he translate from Sanskrit. The 11th Satradhikara Shubhadev Goswami also worked tirelessly for Sanskrit education. He has also translated the last part of the 10th Skandha, 11th Skandha of Sanskrit Bhagawat to Assamese.

The Satradhikaras themselves study Sanskrit and sponsors and also encourage others. Naradev Goswami had extraordinary proficiency in all scriptures for which he was known as 'Pandit Gosai'. Narayandev Goswami also gave advice and even financial assistance to revive the endangered Sanskrit language. He established Meragarh Narayandev Higher Secondary School. Haridev Goswami was also patron of Sanskrit education and himself a prominent Sanskrit Scholar. Dakhinpat Satra is the only Satra in Assam where the Satradhikara himself recites and explains the original Sanskrit Bhagawad Gita. Ramananda Dev Goswami was an extra ordinary scholar who was educated in Sanskrit in Varanasi. He was a scholar who translated the Bhagawadgita into Assamese, wrote various articles and songs. It is worth mentioning that this Satradhikar brought Surendra Nath Kataki Shastri from Janji, Sivsagar, Assam to the Satra in 1973 and established a Sanskrit Tol called "Nardev Sanskrit Vidyalaya". Since then, this institution has continuously contributed to the promotion of Sanskrit education.

Like other Satras in Majuli, Sri Sri Garmur Satra was influenced by Sanskrit education. It was compulsory for the Satradhikars and Barpujari to acquire knowledge of Sanskrit as religious rituals are worshiped through Sanskrit. Sanskrit education is mostly emphasized in the Shri Shri Garamur Satra. Compared to other Satras in Majuli, it can be said that Garamur Satra is influenced by Sanskrit education. For the Satra authorities and the priest, acquiring knowledge of Sanskrit is essential because religious rites and the process of worship are inherently linked with Sanskrit literature. Since the establishment of this Satra by Banshi Gopal Deva, the impact of Sanskrit education has been notable. Among the Satra authorities and devotees involved in spreading and expanding Sanskrit education in the Satra, the names of Bhadra Krishna Deva Goswami, Yoga Chandra Goswami, and Pitambhar Deva Goswami are noteworthy. As a renowned scholar of the Satra, Nityananda Bhagavati studied Sanskrit in Nava Dvipa during the time of Bhadra Krishna Goswami and earned the title of 'Vidyaratna.' During the period of Yoga Chandra Deva Satradhikar and Pitambhar Deva Goswami influence of Sanskrit education in the Satra was significant. Joga Chandra Goswami, Satradhikar of this Satra, received his Sanskrit education from Nilakanta Barpuzari. He was a reverend practitioner of Sanskrit and it was during his time and that the Banshi Gopal Dev 'Sanskrit Tol' was established. Sanskrit was taught and practiced traditionally. According to the tradition of this Satra, not only the Satradhikar, but also the Barpuzari, Bhagavati, and others involved, needed to be proficient in Sanskrit. Bapuram Barpuzari, Tiluram Barpuzari, Nilakanta Barpuzari, Hari Prasad Barpuzari, Vallabh Barpuzari, and Khagen Sarma were among those who exemplified this tradition. In this context, it is noteworthy that during the time of Pitambar Deva Goswami, Sanskrit education was not limited to a particular class but was accessible to everyone. Being an extreme expert of this subject, he introduced as prominent Sanskrit scholars and their discussions on Vedanta, Srīmad Bhagavat, and Sanatan Dharma serve as evidence. Outside Majuli, it is mentioned that in 1933, at the Kashi Hindu Mahasabha, he delivered a speech in Sanskrit and impressed everyone. Krishna Chandra Goswami is a great respected figure in the world of Sanskrit language. His disciple, Haridev Goswami, was sent to Bihpuria's Hemnath Chatuspathi to complete his Sanskrit education. In the context practicing Sanskrit traditions in the Garmur Satra, the names of Radhanath Goswami (Kandali Satra) and Kabiraj are specifically mentioned. In this Satra, the 'Mugdhobdh' grammar was particularly practiced.

The Sanskrit education of Majuli's Bengenati Satra is a very ancient tradition. Unlike other Satras, in this Satra, the tradition of Sanskrit education has been carried on since ancient times. At least Purnananda Deva, the Satradhikar, founded a Sanskrit school named 'Purnananda Chatuspathi', following the tradition of Sanskrit education. Satradhikar Ramakanta Goswami was a renowned scholar of Sanskrit scriptures. The next Satradhikar Lakhi Kanta Goswami, was also a learned scholar of Sanskrit and an expert in religious texts. Another Satradhikar, Bhabananda Goswami, is not only a modern educator but also a renowned Sanskrit scholar and an accomplished speaker. In short, the Bengenati Satra of Majuli has been a cornerstone of Sanskrit education, preserving the tradition and promoting the language through various challenges over time.

The Kamalabari Satra, renowned in Majuli, has long been a center for Sanskrit education. This Satra is established in the year 1595 by Badala Padma Ata. In earlier times, Satras didn't always have schools. Many Satras required the young disciples to receive their education from Sanskrit scholars. Although Sanskrit education has been continuous since the establishment of the Satra. It was during the time of Satradhikar Krishnakanta Goswami that Sanskrit education truly became institutionalized. Scholars were invited from Banaras to impart Sanskrit education. Subsequently, during the time of Satradhikar Lakhikanta Goswami, arrangements were made to invite Mahikanta Bhattacharya for providing Sanskrit education to the local youth. He even authored the book 'Byavastha Darpan' for this purpose. It's noteworthy that various disciplines like Kavya, Jyotish Shastra, and others were taught within the Satra. In 1959, under the guidance of Ghanashyam Dev as an instructor, 'Natun Kamalabari Sanskrit Tol' was established. Gradually, Girish Chandra Sharma

Shastri, Ramendra Kumar Bhattacharya, Khitish Chandra Sharma Shastri, Dipen Nath Sharma Shastri, Narayan Chandra Goswami, and others, had been nurturing the tradition of Sanskrit education in the school. With their guidance, the school continues to thrive as a center of learning and cultural heritage in Majuli.

Outside of the mentioned Satras, the Bhogpur Satra, with Tarun Chandra Shastri (Pradhan Adhyapak), Dr. Dattadev Goswami, has been imparting Sanskrit education among the devotees and even among the students of the nearby areas.

Furthermore, the influence of Sanskrit education is evident in several other Satras in Majuli. In short, the contribution of all the Satras in Majuli in the field of Sanskrit education is unmatched.

However, it is very regrettable that the Government of Assam has now officially closed down the 'Sanskrit Tols' run by the ancient system of education of Sanskrit language, the symbol of Indian knowledge system. This has deprived a major section of people interested in learning Sanskrit.

In recent times, Majuli has emerged as a notable center for modern Sanskrit education, moving beyond traditional methods and highlighting the importance of Sanskrit learning at various educational levels. Modern Sanskrit education refers to the teaching of Sanskrit in schools, colleges, and universities. In Majuli, Sanskrit has been part of the curriculum in several high schools, including Majuli Auniati Hemchandra High School, Auniati High School, Jengraimukh high school, Bengenaati R.K.D. High School, Karatipar High School, Sriram Bonamalidev H.S. School, Ahatguri High School, Ratanpur Miri High School, C.S.Raonapar H.S. School, Meragarh N.Dev H.S.School, Salmora High School, Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya etc. Moreover, several other high schools and several 'Shankar Dev Shisu Niketan' schools have incorporated Sanskrit into their programs. Additionally, higher secondary schools like Chamaguri Satra Raonapar Higher Secondary School and Meragarh Narayan Dev Higher Secondary School have offering Sanskrit as a subject. Many students from these institutions have successfully passed exams in Sanskrit, contributing to its growing popularity at the high school level in Majuli.

When it comes to the introduction of Sanskrit at the college level, Majuli College, a premier higher education institution of Majuli stands out as the sole institution. In the 1972 considering the interests of educational institutions and scholars Sanskrit was introduced as a subject at Majuli College. Dr. Tarun Ch. Sarma was the founder teacher of the department of Sanskrit. Despite of various obstacles, department of Sanskrit, Majuli College is trying to launch a major course (honours) in Sanskrit in under graduate programme.

In addition to these, various others are working personally to promote Sanskrit education. Various organizations like Rastriya Sanskrit Sansthan, Majuli Sanskrit Teacher Association, Sanskrit Bharati etc. have also contributed to the promotion and dissemination of Sanskrit language in Majuli.

3. CONCLUSION

Every now and then, a question arises: how will we ensure the advancement of Sanskrit education in Majuli in the future? To answer this, we need to focus on two aspects:

- 1) The position of Sanskrit in the holistic education system.
- 2) The relevance of the Sanskrit language in the context of Majuli's cultural heritage.

Firstly, it is undeniable that the rich cultural heritage, moral teachings, and knowledge repository inherent in Indian culture highlight the importance of the Sanskrit language. Consequently, we cannot overlook the possibility of Sanskrit education being integrated into the mainstream curriculum of India's education system. Secondly, examining the usage of this language in certain fields reveals that reviving Sanskrit education will undoubtedly bring fundamental changes to India's educational framework. In this context, we are hopeful that the status and prestige of Sanskrit education will be elevated. Consequently, there is reason to believe that Sanskrit education will see significant growth in Majuli alongside other regions.

In conclusion, if we deeply contemplate, it can be confidently said that the practical outlook on Sanskrit education in Majuli, the epicenter of Vaishnavite culture, will undoubtedly remain significant both now and in the future. As is often said, India stands on two pillars: the Sanskrit language and culture. Culture encompasses religious sentiments, thoughts, and ethics. As mentioned earlier, the Sanskrit language has been regarded as the bearer of religion and culture since ancient times, and its importance will continue to be acknowledged. Considering all aspects, it can be confidently predicted that the future of Sanskrit education in this majestic land, Majuli, is exceedingly bright.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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