

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

The Sattras are the institutional framework through which the works on the Neo-Vaishnavite movement of Srimata Sankaradeva, Madhavdeb and the later Gurus has been carried forward through the ages. It is this Sattriya tradition which has evolved over the period and is still a vibrant spiritual heritage of our country.

There are both Grihasthya (householder) and Uddasin (celibate) Sattras. The Grihasthya Sattras more than 800 in numbers are spread across the state while the Uddasin Sattras, few in numbers are mostly concentrated in Majuli. There are of course Uddasin Bhakats in small numbers spread across the state in Namghars and Sattras, but the large concentration is in Majuli.

The Uddasin Sattras are a great heritage of this tradition where even today boys in their childhood comes to the Sattras to live a committed Sattriya life and take the works of the Mahapurushas forward. It is said that there are around 700 such Uddasin Bhakats spread across the state whereas around 80 percent of them i.e., 560 of them are concentrated in Majuli.

Considering the importance of these Uddasin Bhakats as a significant pool of human capital for spiritual work as conceived by our Gurujon's, we decided to do a survey on these uddasin bhakats to find their status on a few important aspects concerning their lives.

We had accordingly conducted a survey through the questionnaire method and collected data from 476 Uddasin Bhakats. These bhakats are from five Sattras in Majuli and one Sattra from Jorhat. In each of the Sattras there are boha's (residential quarters) where a Burha Bhakat playing the role of a foster father looks after the Sattriya education of few bhakats. He is the guardian of such bhakats under whom they are groomed for the Sattriya life and to serve the society. In many of these Sattras though there are no designated or declared Burah Bhakats, the senior Bhakat looks after the younger ones as the Guardian Bhakat.

We have accordingly collected responses from 176 Burah / Guardian Bhakats and 300 Bhakats from these 176 boha's of the respective Sattras, thus a total of 476 Uddasin Bhakats.

### **1. Age-wise presence of Burha / Gurdian (B/G) Bhakats in Sattras**

First, let us look at the age-wise categorisation of such bhakats.

59 % of the B/G Bhakats are in the age group of 56 years and above. They are the experienced lot whose knowledge and expertise should be documented and the challenges facing the tradition should be understood from them. They are the ones who have seen the evolution of the Assamese society from the spiritual point of view and will be able to share as to how to strengthen the society today.

The health of this group should be taken care of specially those above 70 years (28% of them) for they are the setting sun of this tradition.

33 % of the B/G Bhakats in the age group of 31 to 45 years are the most potential ones to spread the tradition across the state. Of course they have to be equipped with proper training and exposure before they spread out to serve the society.

7% of the B/G Bhakats are in the age group of 16 to 30 years who should be moulded and groomed by the experienced Burah Bhakats. They should be trained and motivated to equip them to carry forward this tradition. Proper training of this group is a must.

## **2. Skills of the Burha / Gurdian Bhakats**

Trying to understand the skills of our Bhakats, we had a question where we listed 16 different skills and had asked the Burah Bhakats to evaluate themselves out of 10 points on the respected skills as well as evaluate the Bhakats in their respective Boha's in the same lines.

Though the Burah Bhakats gave themselves marks as well to their Bhakats, we found that it was biased and hence took this question only to find the presence in the respective skills.

### **Presence of Skills of the B / G Bhakats**

We found that in 8 of the 16 skills the presence of the Burah Bhakats was there in more than 10 percent. In rest of the 8 skills, the presence was less than 10 percent.

The maximum presence was in the skill of Bhaona (37%), which is of course a collective skill. The other skills which reflected were Gayan (35%), Namlaguwa (34%), Nritya (33%), Bayan (32%), Bamboo & cane Works (22%), Pathak (17%) and Puthi Porha (13%).

It is seen that the basic skills of preserving and taking the Sattriya tradition ahead are not in a healthy state.

## **3. Responsibilities of the Burah / Gurdian Bhakats in the Sattras**

There were 60 different responsible positions declared by the B/G Bhakats, yet only in 3 of the responsibilities the presence was there across the Sattras.

21% B/G Bhakats held the responsibility as Bayan, 19% as Gayan and 18% as Namlaguwa. The next 2 positions where Bhakats held responsibility were 10% as Pathak and 6% as Oja.

It is only in 5 positions responsibilities are being carried out across the Sattras and general in nature. For the rest of the 55 responsibilities it is specific to a particular Sattra.

It is seen that the tradition of Bhaona and along with it the skills required for the same like Gayan, Bayan and Nritya has been kept going and to that extent there is the presence of the skills and the responsibility too.

#### 4. Livelihood of Burah / Guardian Bhakats

34 % of them said agriculture was their major source of livelihood and 22% gave Sattriya as their next important source.

#### 5. Details of Bhakats in Boha (inputs from Burah / Guardian Bhakats)

176 Burah / Gurdian Bhakats have 300 Bhakats in their respective Boha's. The ratio per Boha is 1.7 Bhakats

51 percent of the bhakats falling in the age of 16 to 40 years which is half of the bhakat population is the most potential pool for furthering the cause of the Sattriya way of life. Investment in the training and capacity building of this potential group should be given for strengthening the Sattriya culture.

The next important group of bhakats falls in group A i.e., up to 16 years of age (36 percent) on whom care should be taken for their well being, health and Sattriya education and the requisite investments should be made thereon.

#### Bhakats and Skills – as evaluated by B / G Bhakats

47% of the bhakats had their presence in the skill of Nritya, 35% in Bhaona which is again a collective skill, 33% as Gayan and 30% as Bayan. The next skill where they had their presence is Namlaguwa (13%). As in the case of the rest of the 11 skills it was less than 6%.

#### Presence of Bhakats in Boha's

25% of the Boha's (a majority of them) did not have any Bhakat.

23% of the Boha's have 1 Bhakat ; 22% of the Boha's have 2 Bhakats and 20% of the Boha's have 3 Bhakats.

#### Bhakats coming from

A majority of the bhakats i.e., 51% have come from Lakhimpur and 19% are from Majuli.

#### Bhakats Responsibility

Amongst 49 varied responsibilities, the presence of the Bhakats was in the following responsibilities - Bayan (17%), Gayan (17%), Natuwa (12%) and Nritya (7%).

#### 6. Boha Financials

**Table 6.1 – Per Annum Expenditure of the respective Sattras**

<b>Exp. (INR)</b>	<b>Auniati</b>	<b>Dakshin</b>	<b>Kamalabari</b>	<b>Natun K</b>	<b>Uttar K</b>	<b>Bhogpur</b>
<b>No. of B/G Bhakats (boha's)</b>	80	17	19	36	12	12
<b>No. of Bhakats</b>	161	15	20	55	27	22
<b>Total Bhakats</b>	241	32	39	91	39	34
<b>Per Annum</b>	62.42	13.60 lakhs	11.10 lakhs	22.00 lakhs	7.52 lakhs	11.42 lakhs

	lakhs					
<b>Mthly Avg.Exp./per boha</b>	6710/-	6800/-	4870/-	5100/-	5700/-	8000/-
<b>Range of Exp. per boha/p.m.</b>	1210/- to 17440 (0 to 3 Bhakats)	2846/- to 13433/- (0 to 1 Bhakat)	990/- to 14940/- (0 to 4 Bhakats)	860/- to 16400/- (0 to 3 Bhakats)	3817/- to 7733/- (1 to 5 Bhakats)	4700/- to 21250/- (3 to 4 Bhakats)

The above Table 6.1 depicts the per annum expenses of each of the Sattras, the monthly average expenses in a boha and the range of monthly expenses in a boha.

The figures tell about the variance in expenditure both intra and inter Sattras.

We had asked the B/G Bhakat to **specify the expenses of their boha in a month for 6 different heads**. The percentage expenditure of the bohas of each of the Sattras is given below in Table 6.2

**Table 6.2 – Percentage Expenditure under different heads for respective Sattras**

<b>Expenditure Heads</b>	<b>Auniati</b>	<b>Dakshinpat</b>	<b>Kamalabari</b>	<b>Natun Kamalabari</b>	<b>Uttar Kamalabari</b>	<b>Bhogpur</b>
Food & Grocery	43	63	47	41	45	67
Education	9	15	5	13	23	6
Cooking Gas	3	12	9	7	9	0
Firewood	0	0	0	0	0	20
Electricity Bill	4	5	5	5	6	2
T V Recharge	3	2	2	2	2	0
<b>Others</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Significantly in the ‘other’ category expenditure, almost all the Sattras spending was high, giving enough scope for further detailing.

### **Income of the Sattras**

The data tabulated in Table 6.3 below gives a view of the income levels in the Sattras. The Bhakats were reluctant to provide information on this account. There was no information from Sri Sri Kamalabari and Sri Sri Bhogpur Sattra.

**Table 6.3 - Per Annum Income of the respective Sattras**

<b>Inc. (INR)</b>	<b>Auniati</b>	<b>Dakshin</b>	<b>Kamalabari</b>	<b>Natun K</b>	<b>Uttar K</b>	<b>Bhogpur</b>
<b>Per Annum</b>	148.34 lakhs	2.98 lakhs	No Response	7.53 lakhs	0.63 lakhs	Inconclusive Data
<b>Mthly Avg.Inc./per boha</b>	15452/-	1772/-		1850/-	475/-	
<b>Range of</b>	3000/- to	833/- to		417/- to	250/- to	

<b>Inc. per boha/p.m.</b>	51333/-	11633/-		9333/-	1083/-	
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Sri Sri Auniati Sattra, their major income was from the 'Sahar's'. Sahar's are certain villages earmarked for respective boha's of the Sattra to go and collect donations in kind (rice and other groceries) and also in cash. This has been a tradition since the establishment of the Sattra. It is therefore the society which takes care of some aspects of the Sattra even today. The sahar's are those geographical locations where the Sattra have their followings.

The next important source of revenue for the Sattras (except Sri Sri Auniati) is agriculture and Sattriya training and performance.

The Table 6.4 below gives the percentage income from the few sources of income for the respective Sattras.

**Table 6.4 – Percentage Income under different heads for respective Sattras**

Income Sources	Auniati	Dakshinpat	Kamalabari	Natun Kamalabari	Uttar Kamalabari	Bhogpur
Domestic Animals	4	49	No Response	14	34	No Response
Land / Agriculture	1	4		58	Refer Note*	
Workshop & Training	2			27	46	
Donations	12	22				
Sattradhikar	5	22				
Others	9				20	
Sahar	20					
Business	15					
Bisoni	14					
Pension	7					
Salary/Comm./Fees	6					
Sattra Responsibility	3					
Skill based labour	2					
<b>Total</b>	100	97	0	99	100	0

**\*Note:** Income from rice has not been assessed for Uttar Kamalabari Sattra. Sattra bhakats are self sufficient in rice.

### Collective Assets in the Boha's

We tried to find out the collective assets present in a particular boha.

In today's time to beat the heat most of the boha's has either a ceiling or a stand fan. It is seen that slowly the boha's are also getting equiped with an inverter to take care of power cuts and as on date **21% of the boha's has an inverter**. TV sets has penetrated into the boha's and today **43% of the boha's has a TV Set**. The traditional system of cooking with firewood has come down considerably and today **83% of the boha's has LPG gas for cooking**.

An important aspect is that of the presence of cows in the boha's and the land holding of the Bhakats. 63% of the boha's have domesticated cows and the total cow population is 451 numbers. The cows are being looked upon by the bhakats but finding it difficult with each passing days. Few Bhakats rear their cows in Chapori. 47% of the boha's reported land holding and the total size comes to 747 bighas. But the tilling of land is no longer done by the bhakats and is given on 'adhi' to others. Bhakats are happy to receive half the produce.

Below in Table 6.5 is given a list of 10 assets and its presence in the boha's in the respective Sattras.

**Table 6.5 – Presence of Collective Assets in Boha's in the respective Sattras**

Sattra	T V	Inverter	Ceiling Fan	Stand Fan	Water Filter	Gas Stove	Tube well	Pukka Sanitation	Kuccha Sanitation	Cow	Land
Auniati	48	31	75	32	22	75	80	60	19	55	0
Dakshinp	6	3	15	2	15	15	16	15	1	9	9
Kbari	7	6	16	5	8	16	Govt. Supply	19	0	8	18
N Kbari	11	7	25	16	14	27	34	21	8	24	35
U Kbari	3	4	12	1	7	12	10	10	2	8	12
Bhogpur	0	0	4	2	5	1	2	12	0	7	9
<b>Total Boha's</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Percent</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>47</b>
										<b>451 cows</b>	<b>747 bighas</b>

## 7. Passing away (expiry) of Burah Bhakats

163 Bhakats have passed away till since the last four decades. Of this 163, 39% has passed away since 2000. 37% of them have passed away during 1985 to 1999 and 25% passed away prior to 1985.

A major percentage i.e., 39% has passed away in the age group of 79 years and below which is not expected of a Burah Bhakat considering their Sattriya lifestyle and longevity.

## 8. Bhakats leaving the Sattra

251 Bhakats have left the Sattras till date.

35% of them have left since the last 8 years i.e., since 2010. 32% of them have left during 2000-09 and 20% have left during 1980-99. From this trend it is seen that with the passing of time there is an increase in the Bhakats leaving the Sattras.

If we look into the age in which the Bhakats leave a Sattra, we have found that 45% have left the Sattra in their 20's and 27% in their teens. The two reasons which have been mostly cited are - family responsibility (27%) and financial responsibility (14%).