

Management system of the historical temples of Upper Assam in the Post-Independence period

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Abstract

A temple plays vital role in shaping economic, cultural, social and spiritual life of the people of its adjacent area. This proposed work aims to understand the religious sentiments and social behaviours of a large section of the Assamese society which is closely connected with the temples. Assam is a place with rich heritage monuments which can be potential tourist destination. During the post independence period, the historical temples of Assam has been suffering from various problems such as granting of a small amount of annuity to the management committee, illegal acquisition of temple land, decreasing numbers of servitors related with the temples. It seems that the government was mainly interested in collecting the arrear of land revenue from the land previously belong to temples. The proper arrangement of the better management of the temple properties in the post independence period pursued along with the promulgation of Assam Act. IX of 1961 and was later amended in the year 1987 and 2011 respectively . The study intends to analysis the government policy regarding the management system of temples as well as the responses of the stakeholders connected with the institutions.

KEYWORDS: Temple Management, *Paik*, Annuity, *Seva Puja*, *Lakhiraj*, *Nisfkheraj*.

INTRODUCTION

Temple is a place where a devotee worships the gods and goddesses for earning *punya* for fulfilling the worldly desire, for gaining a place in the Heaven. The term 'temple' in Assam was known as *dol*, *devakula* or *devalaya*, *debaloy*, *than*, *ghar*, *pitha*, *matha* and *mandir*, *shala* etc. Gajendra Adhikary in his book , 'A History of the Temples of Kamrup and their Management' describes 'temple' as a masonry structure in intact or ruinous condition, bearing the endowments of land , men and properties, where daily worship was practiced or still being practiced. [1] Before the coming of the British in Assam i.e. 1826 AD, historical temples were regarded as the most significant socio-religious institution of Assamese society by which medieval rulers, specially Ahom kings legitimise their rule by patronising the temples as well as establishing Brahmans all over the state. The system of temple management in Assam is so deeply rooted that the colonial power continued the system with a reduced scale and legacy of the institution found even in present times. Donation of revenue free land was the chief feature of the temple management system in medieval period. Under the colonial rule, *Devottor* [2] land continued to be free from taxation. But the *Brahmottar* [3] and *Dharmottar* [4] lands were brought under the half of one usual rate of revenue. During the post independence period, the Indian government reframes the management system of the temples of Assam. An officer named S.K. Chakrabarty was appointed to investigate about the management of the temples of Assam. His work, 'A Report on the Administration of the temples in Assam and their lands' (unpublished) follows the enactment of the Assam Act IX of 1961.[5] Since then all the temples are now being managed by their respective managing committees under

the provision of the Act. In this paper, an attempt is made to analyse critically the changes and transformation occurred in the management system of temples in the post independence period. The study is mainly confined to Upper Assam districts i.e. Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Tinisukia, Sonitpur and Nagaon.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The temple is the most significant and typical monuments of the Indian architecture and admirably sums up and represent the subtle values of Indian Culture. The temples of various parts of India have been studied by different scholars in different perspective. Some serious works have already been done about the history of the temples of India as well as Assam. Burton Stein's edited work (*The South Indian Temples: an analytical reconsideration*), Krishna Deva (*Temples of North India*), H. Kulke's article entitled, 'Royal Temple Policy and the Structure of Medieval Indian Temples' published in *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa* edited by A. C. Eschmanne, H. Kulke, and G. C. Tripathi, Maheswar Neog, Banikanta Kakati, B. K. Borua, H.V.S. Murthy, N. D. Choudhary, P. C. Sarma, Gajendra Adhikary, are the most prominent scholars who have contributed in the study of historical background of the temples, architectural features, socio-economic importance of temples in different parts of India. Both Burton Stein and H. Kulke discussed the theory of 'nuclear area' to explain the environment surrounding a temple or temple complexes that was created by the royal authority with the help of *Brahmans* for maintaining influences upon the local inhabitants of the area and for earning legitimacy of their rule. Royal endowments to Brahmanas have been interpreted either as a factor of political integration or the emergence of a feudal order characterised by socio political fragmentation in Upinder Singh's work on *Kings, Brahmanas and Temples in Orissa An Epigraphic Study AD 300-1147*. This theory seems to be relevant in studying the management system of the temples in pre-colonial Assam in general and Upper Assam in particular.

The study of the temples of early Assam has drawn scholarly attention from various British Officers and Assamese scholars. Since the 1850's Lieutenant Colonel S. F. Hannay's article entitled, 'Notes on Ancient Temples and Other Remains in the Vicinity of Suddyah, Upper Assam' was regarded as a significant one in this line of study. In 1950's B. Kakoti's work, '*Mother Goddess Kamakhya*' and '*Purani Kamrupar Dharmar Dhara*' made significant contribution towards historical background of the temples of the Brahmaputra valley of Assam. In later period, Maheswar Neog's *Pobitra Asom* (1969), B. K. Barua and H. V. S. Murthy's, *Temple and Legends of Assam* (1965), S. L. Baruah's *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, H. K. Borpujari's edited work *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol-III, yield valuable information regarding the history and architectural works of Assam. But they were general in nature. However some valuable contributions have been made in the history of art and architecture of temples and royal buildings of Assam in the later period. Amongst the recent studies, mention may be made of P. C. Sarma's *Architecture of Assam*, (1992), N.D. Choudhary's *Historical Archaeology of Central Assam from the Earliest Period to A.D. 12th Century* (1985) and R.D. Choudhary's *Archaeology of the Brahmaputra Valley* (1985). Most of these works were mainly confined to the descriptive and analytical narrative of the chief characteristics of the architectural form of the temples of Assam. These works throws little light in respect of the management of the temples of the region and its importance in socio-economic, political life of Assam. Prominent historian H. K. Barpujari draws the attention of

contemporary scholars to the temple affairs by his research article, 'Control and Management of the Religious Endowments of Assam' (1826-1858) which was published in *Journal of the University of Gauhati*, Vol-XV, No. 1 Arts, 1964. This article throws light on the process of the management system of landed properties of temples and *Satra* institutions during the early British rule in Assam. Gajendra Adhikary can be regarded as one of the foremost scholars who sincerely tried to deal with the history, growth and management of the temples in Assam in general and that of Kamrup in particular from the time of legendary king Naraka to the present day, in his book namely, *A History of the Temples of Kamrup and Their Management*. But all these works left the management system of the temples of Upper Assam untouched. So, the present work intends to focus on the all aspects of the management system of the temples of Upper Assam.

The method of the study is historical and analytical. Both primary sources and secondary sources are extensively used. For getting authenticity and reliability of the sources the internal criticism is applied along with the external criticism. Field study is carried out by using two ways of investigation i. e. observation and interview. An extensive field survey is done for collecting data regarding history and management systems prevailing in various historical temples of Upper Assam. The field study includes mainly the interview and interaction with the president and the secretary of the managing committee and priest and servitors of the temples.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The process of disintegration of Ahom state began from the last phase of 18th century and by 1826 A.D. the Ahom had lost their sovereignty and independence to British. During the medieval period, the system of the temple and their management developed into an indispensable institution of the Assamese society. Looking into the significance of the system, British government decided to continue provision for the management of the temples. Under the colonial rule, *Devottara* land (*Bhogdani*) was regarded as *Lakheraj* which was exempted from regular revenue. On the other hand, the *Brahmottar* and *Dharmottar* lands were brought under the half of the usual rate of revenue and entitled as *Nisfkheraj* land. The system made holders of these grants greatly discontented. In early 1833 AD, according to the Court of Directors, religious institution in India should not be interfered by the British East India Company. Temple's affairs should be dealt entirely by their respective temple management authority. In 1842, British government withdraws all types of intervention including the supervision of temples of Assam. In the year 1863, the Hindu Religious Endowment Act was enacted with the purpose of dealing with the religious shrines as well as the pilgrims to the temples. According to this act, government decided to place the control of the management of the temples under a committee or "trustee" consisting of their own 'creed'. In the year 1887 A.D., Govt. of India declared the *Lakheraj* Estates to be inheritable and transferable. The *Devottara* land which was brought under ordinary cultivation, the local rates need to be assessed and revised every year. This rule was established with the provision of the Assam Land Revenue Regulation (1886).[6] However, the colonial masters did not take adequate measures to improve the management system of the temples of Assam up to 1947 AD.

After the end of the British rule in India, the preservation and the management of the historical temples were given due importance by the Indian Government. Soon problems had aroused regarding the ownership of land as well as the acquisition of the

right of the management of the temples among various sections like *Doloi*, *Bordeori*, *Borthakur*, *Patrathakur*, and the priestly classes. The Head of the religious and charitable institutions of public nature were the landlords who derived rent from the tenants of the temple land for their own financial benefits. In order to abolish the intermediary interests and to bring the tenants in direct contact with the state, an officer named S.K. Chakrabarty was appointed by the State Government of Assam to investigate into the prevailing management of the historical temples of Assam. His work, "A Report on the Administration of the temples of Assam and their lands" (unpublished) was submitted to the Government in the year 1955. In the year 1959, Assam State Acquisition of Land belonging to Religious or Charitable Institution of Public Nature Act, 1959, was promulgated. This paved the way for the enactment of the Assam Act. IX of 1961. All the temples of Assam are now being managed by their respective managing committees framed under the provision of the Act. According to the Act, the government decided to give annuity (Compensation) to the "Head of Institution" may be priest or *Borthakur* of the temple for the continuation of daily *seva puja* in the temple. However, the temple which doesn't make arrangement for daily *seva puja* the responsibility was shifted to a newly constructed Executive Committee for each temple under the president ship of the Deputy Commissioner of the concerned district.[7]

All *Devottara* land (*Bhogdani Land*) i.e. *Lakhiraj land* was acquired by the government along with the settled peasants and servitors and *Dharmottara* and *Brahmottara* Land (*Nisfkheraj land*) were settled with original grantee came under different Act. They are subject to some limitations prescribed under section 4 of the Assam Fixation of Ceiling on Land holding Act, 1956. This act made the *Brahman* and non-*Brahman* caste people previously attached to the temples free from rendering their customary service for the maintenance of daily *seva puja* in the temples. Thus, it seems that the government was only concerned with the realization of the arrear of land revenue from the land previously assigned to the temples. The proper arrangement of for the better management of the temples is still far behind. Due to the loss of economic interest in the administration of temples most of the *Bordeoris*, *Patrathakur*, *sevaitis*, abandoned these religious institution. Moreover, the annuity is not sufficient enough to upkeep the buildings and meet the necessary expenditure of *puja* and other rituals in the temples. The officiating priest and the concerned managing committee are asked to submit proper expenditure bill before the release of the next annuity. Sometimes these formalities are not observed properly and sometimes dispute occurs regarding the claim of the compensation money resulting in the unavailability of annuity in future.

In the year 1981, a voluntary organization namely *Assam Sadau Asom Devalaya Sangha* was established to protect the interest of historical temples of Assam. Since its inception the members of the *Sangha* has been demanding of increasing of annual annuity, releasing fund for repair of historical temples, for developing measures for transforming the temples into favourable place of pilgrimage. For improving the management system of the temples, the *Sangha* constantly tries to address issues like illegal acquisition of temple land, provision of healthy drinking water for pilgrims, building of guest house, security system of the temples, and uninterrupted power supply.[8]

Some Religious and Charitable Institution of Public Nature whose land was acquired by Govt. under the Assam State Acquisition of Land belonging to Religious or

Charitable Institution of Public Nature Act, 1959 did not take proper steps for the finalization of compensation. They did not file appeal within the stipulated times. Public Institution should not be made to suffer financially due to the ignorance or negligence or lapse of the Head of the Institution. Keeping this fact in mind, the state government was empowered to review the cases for correction of bonafide mistakes in the assessment of compensation. Moreover, it became necessary to increase the amount of annuity payable to Institution due to rise of market price of essential commodities for the proper maintenance of the Institution and to meet the costs of white washing and repairs of the damages caused to such institution due to natural decay or calamity. Further, it is found necessary for the satisfaction of the authority to have control over the annuity and also to audit the accounts of the Institution of Religious or Charitable in Nature.

According to the Act, it was decided to confiscate all the *Nisfkheraj* lands allotted to religious institutions and give compensation in the form of perpetual annuity to the institution for the maintenance and administering of the religious or charitable activities. There was no provision for the proper utilisation of annuities. So, most of the time the money received by the temple authority has been either misused or misappropriated. It was found that, the amount of the annuity was not usually sufficient enough to meet the expenses incurred in the management of the temple affairs. For example, In the year 1968, total 362 *bigha* and 12 *losa* lands of Dulal Madhab Temple of Kaliabar, Nagaon District was declared as government land according to *Devottor Land Annexation Act* of the Assam Government and was distributed *patta* among the person who occupied the land. At present only one *bigha* and two *katha* and three *losa* land was left in the name of the temple.[9] Since 1968, Assam Government Revenue Department granted a sum of Rs. 148.79 per year for the continuance of daily *seva puja* in the temple.[9] According to an official letter from S.C. Changkakoti, under Sect of Govt. of Assam, Revenue Dept. to D.C. Kamrup, Guwahatsi, related with the payment of compensation for acquisition of land areas, the Religious Acquisiton Act, 1959 and Payment of perpetual annuity for the maintenance of Sri Sri Nandikeswar *Devalaya*. Government of Assam sanctioned a sum of Rs. 13,707.60 only and Rs. 6853.80 per year for the payment of perpetual annuity under section 8 of Assam State Acquisition of lands belonging to Religion or Charitable Institution of Public Nature Act, 1952 for the maintenance of Shri Sri Nandikeswar *Devalaya* for the year 1975 and 1976 AD. The sanctioned amount of annuity should be paid to the Head of the Institution or President/ Secretary to the Managing Committees, the case may be for due performance of *puja* and other functions connected with the institutions. The accounts of the committee shall be subject to Annual Government Audit. Further, it was arranged that the expenditure is debit able to the head 304 Other General Economic Services III. Land, Ceiling I.A. land, Ceiling Compensation Funds etc. for the acquisition of land under Religious Acquisition Act and other charges in the budget for the year 1983-84. It was also mandatory to furnish the utilization certificate by the Head of the Institution or the President/Secretary of the Managing Committee. It became the rule for any further sanction of the perpetual annuity for the following years only after the submission of utilisation certificate by the managing committee of the temple.[10]

The temple which possessed highest land property during the post independent period in Upper Assam is Maghanua Temple of Lakhimpur district. At present almost 44 *bigha* land is under the possession of the temple campus. Hara Gauri Temple

Joysagar possessed only one *kotha* and one *losa* land which is the smallest amount of landed property of a temple within the area of Upper Assam.

According to an official letter dated 28th January, 1985 AD. by ADC., Sonitpur, Tezpur, relating with the collection of revenue from Nandikishore Temple. The revenue and other local rates for the assessment year 1955-1958 AD was fixed as Rs. 2340.02 and Rs. 935.93 subsequently.

According to an official letter dated 16th Nov. 1985 AD. by ADC, Sonitpur District, relating with the compensation of Nandikishore Temple. There is all total Rs. 58,830.40 was granted as compensation for the period of 8 years from 1977 AD to 1984 AD. with an amount of RS. 6853.80 yearly. The revenue and other local rates for the assessment year 1960-1968 AD was fixed as Rs. 4603.02 and Rs. 4603.02 subsequently. The increased local rates of Rs. 327.10 for the year 1959-1960 AD is also added with the previous two amount which constitute all total Rs. 10, 869.43 which was deducted from the total compensation money. In this way remaining amount Rs. 43,960.97 was delivered to the *Borthakur* of Nandikeshore temple.

During the period from 1969 to 1982, a sum of Rs. 3977.15 and Rs. 2994.87 were deposited in the treasury as the revenue and the local tax of the land belonging to the Nandikeshore temple.[11] Nandikeshore temple authority received government annuity regularly. The temple authority was allotted with Rs. 20,559.90 for the three years annuity i. e, 1985-87. After the deduction of govt. revenue, only Rs. 13,587.88 is granted as annuity. In this context, the state govt. urged the temple authority to submit the utilization of government annuity on regular basis so that the government official releases the temple fund without any delay.

Regarding the little amount of the grant assigned to the historical temples of Assam an organisation namely *Sadai Asam Devalya Sangha* appealed to the Assam government to increase the grant per year. But the government did not pay attention to this matter. Assam State Acquisition of Land belonging to Religious or Charitable Institution of Public Nature Act, 1959, was later amended in the year 1987 and 2011 respectively. In the year, 1987, Assam State Acquisition of Land Belonging to Religious or Charitable Institution Act, 1959 (Assam Act IX of 1961) was amended and hereafter called Principal Act (1987). It shall extend to the whole of Assam except N. C. Hills District and Karbi Anglong. It shall come into force at once.

The Sub-section 7 (a) of Principal Act (1987) stated that the State Government shall constitute a grant fund in aid of the Religious or Charitable Institution of Public Nature both by the way of recurring and non- recurring nature. According to Sub-section 7(b) of Amended Act of 1987, in case of grant in aid of recurring nature the amount of annuity shall be enhanced by 25% subject to minimum of Rs. 300/- in respect of religious institution whose perpetual annuity was originally determined at an amount not exceeding Rs. 1 Lakh. In this context, an official letter dated 24th October, 1995, from the Kaliabar Revenue Circle, Kuwaritol, Nagaon District contains the name of the historical temples of Kaliabar area along with the allotted annuity for the temple lands. Since 1995 AD, Rs. 1294.12 is given as the annuity to the manager of Dulal Madhab Temple, Rs. 736.02 is for Ambikanath Temple, Rs. 110.34 is for Kamakhya temple (Silghat, Nagaon), Rs. 1915.36 is for Nandikishore Temple and Rs. 6272 is for Soubhagya Madhab Temple.[12]

According to Sub-section 7(c), no subsequent revision or increase of annuity shall be permissible until at least a period of not less than 10 years has elapsed since the preceding fixation or re-fixation of annuity as the case may be.

According to Sub-section 7(d), in case of non-recurring grant in aid, a lump sum amount of Rs. 500/- shall be paid to the Religious or Charitable Institution of Public Nature on application by the interested persons/head of the Institution or by the State Government *sub muto*, if any repair or renovation work including white washing is effected or any damages repaired on account of any natural decay or calamity, subject to verification of the actual cost of repair or renovation work done and subject to assessment and satisfaction of the authority about the nature and magnitude of the loss caused to the Religious or Charitable Institution or Public Nature due to Natural decay or calamity.

In the Principal Act, a new section 25A is inserted after the section 25 which proposed the construction of a managing committee with the following members such as (a) The Deputy Commissioner or Sub-divisional Officer or his nominee- as President. (b) An Ex- Office Secretary to be elected by the *Deuris/Bordeoris*. (c) Five (5) elected members to be elected from amongst the devotees. The term of the Committee is fixed for three (3) years from the date of its constitution. The Members have a control over the nature of utilization of the annuity and verification of proper maintenance of the Institution.[13]

In the year 2011 again the Act of 1987 was amended and renamed as the Assam State Acquisition of Land Belonging to Religious or Charitable Institution of Public Nature (Amended) Act 2011. According to the Act in case of grants in aid of necessary nature, the amount of annuity shall be enhanced by 100% subject to minimum of Rs. 3,000/- in respect of all religious institutions whose perpetual annuity was originally determined. Further, the rate of annuity was declared fixed for all the religious institutions in existence on the date of coming into force of this Amendment Act, which may be re-fixed by the Government at an interval of every 10 years from the date of coming into force of this Amendment Act or such other earlier times as may be determined by the Government from time to time. [14]

Thus, it seems that the government was mainly interested in collecting the arrear of land revenue from the land previously assigned to the temples. The proper arrangement of the better management of the temple properties in the subsequent period was not given due importance. Due to the loss of economic interest in the administration of temples, most of the priestly class people along with the servitors abandoned these religious institutions. On the other hand, the annuity is not sufficient enough to upkeep the buildings and meet the necessary expenditure of *puja* and other rituals in the temples. The officiating priest and the concern managing committee are asked to submit proper expenditure bill before the release of the next annuity. Sometimes these formalities are not observed properly and disputes occur regarding the claim of the compensation money resulting in the unavailability of annuity in future. This type of development disrupted the smooth maintenance of the temple properties in future.

After the independence, the Indian government inherited the legacy of temple management with all its complexities. Ancient Monuments and Preservation Act of 1904 helped in the protection and preservation of most of the historical temples of

Assam as well as Upper Assam. There were two conditions that could be regarded as unfavourable condition for the survival of the historical temples. One is the Great earthquake of 1950 in Assam which cause serious damage to the temples of Assam and other is the ever growing vegetation on the surface of the temples due to frequent rain throughout the year. Government of India took initiative and preservation and conservation of ancient monuments are carried out by the Directorate of Archeology, Govt. of India.

Thus, 13 historical temples of Upper Assam are preserved and conserved by the Central Directorate of Archeology, Govt. of India. [See. Table: a] In this respect, it is found that Siva *Doul* of Sivasagar had been damaged badly due to the occurrence of earthquake. The stones for the reparation of the damaged wall of Siva *Doul* were brought from Kohima, Nagaland state. In the year 1953-54 AD 350 pieces of stones including pillar block were dressed in size by the expert masons from Manipur. However the fallen brick work in the main *sikhara* of Siva *Doul* was partly built up. During the years 1954-55 the missing *amalakas* of the temple and *mandapa* were rebuilt in brick in their original position. The golden pinnacle which had been fallen down from the *sikhara* was also repaired and replaced by skilled craftsmen and installed in its original height of 120 feet i.e. the top of *sikhara*. The loose masonry of the damaged façade was completely dismantled and renewed with stone of proper size quarried from Kohima. Proper bond with the firm core behind was provided by means of copper clamps embodied in cement concrete. In this way the Siva *doul* of Sivasagar had been conserved throughout the coming years. [15]

Keshavrai Vishnu Temple of Joysagar, Sivasagar District is one of the remarkable temples of Upper Assam which has been conserved by the Archeology Dept. since long ago. “The decayed plaster of the spire was renewed after the filling in of the joints and cracks. The missing and damaged brick work on the spire including the floral motifs was replaced and loose ornamental stones reset in their original position...Arrangements were made for proper drainage.” [16]A complicated problem aroused during the rainy season was the water stagnation in the sanctum of the temple. In order to drain the stagnate water; the bulged out masonry of the vault of the *mandapa* was reset. Thus, restoration as well conservation of the temple has been carried out in future.

Siva Temple of Negheriting, Dergaon, Golaghat District is one of the significant temples of Upper Assam. Being found the temple surrounded by weeds and plants, Directorate of Archeology, Govt. of India take initiative by cleaning the vegetation and cracks were repaired and four new doors were also provided to the four subsidiary shrines during 1957-58 AD and 1969-70 AD. Next year, the old and worn out plaster work of the *sikhara* of three corner temples was removed and new plaster applied reproducing the original features. Further the outer overhanging walls were underpinned, the damaged arch and the *mandapa* were repaired. Similarly during the period 1977-78 AD, 1978-79 AD and 1979-80 AD the *mandapa*, *sikhara*, and roof of the temple were repaired and re-plastered without hampering the original features of the temple.[17]

Bordol is another significant historical temple of Sonitpur. After the independence, first conservation work in the temple was carried in the year 1958-59 AD. Amongst the various work clearance of weeds and plants, uprooting of trees nearby the temple and restoration of the missing brick-work and renewing of the damaged plaster of the

temple. Later, during the following years-1962-63 AD, 1964-65 AD, 1965-66 AD the clearance of jungles, repairing and re-plastering the outer surface and the damaged part of the temple. In this way, more or less all the 12 historical temples of Upper Assam under the Central Directorate of Archeology, Govt. of Assam has been undergone through a phase of restoration.[18]

Directorate of Archeology, Govt. of Assam has been playing a significant role in the management of the temples of Assam. The department took the policy of conservation of the ancient monuments from time to time. The year of the conservation of the different historical temples of Upper Assam is mentioned in the following manner.

Minor works like pointing, jungle clearance, removing of old plaster work of the surface of the various historical temples and application of new plaster keeping the original features was carried on under the initiative of State Archeological Department, Government of India. The Archeological department of the Assam State carried out repairs to the following historical temples of Upper Assam, i.e. Raidongia temple (Dibrugarh Dist.), Basudev temple (Sonitpur Dist.), Maghanua Temple (Lakhimpur Dist.), Piyali Phukanar temple (Sivasagar Dist.), Hara Gauri Temple (Sivasagar Dist.), Barpatra Temple (Sivasagar Dist.), Namti Siva Temple (Sivasagar Dist.), Garakhia Temple (Sivasagar Dist.), Thaora Temple (Sivasagar Dist.), Rudrasagar Siva temple (Sivasagar Dist.), Jagadhatri temple (Sivasagar Dist.), etc.[19]

Most of the historical temples are declared as monuments of national importance under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (24 of 1958). The destruction, alteration, defacement, removal, or misuse of the monuments are regarded as the punishable offence up to two (02) years imprisonment and fine up to of Rs. 1,00,000/- or both under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains(Amendment and Validation) Act., 2010. Further the areas up to 100 meters and 200 meters of the monument were declared as prohibited area and regulated area respectively which restricts any kind of construction, reconstruction and mining operation. Exception can be made with the prior approval of the competent authority. Some indigenous non-political organizations such as *Tai Ahom Chatra Santha* shows its concern towards the preservation and proper management of the historical temples of Sivasagar as well as other monuments of Assam.

Donations from devotees are usually kept by the priest who is assigned to perform daily *seva puja* of the deity. Only a small amount of donation is spent or deposit for the maintenance of daily puja procedure. The ratio of the share of the priest or the temple maintenance is not fixed. However, no specific instruction is put forwarded by the managing committee headed by D. C. Decreasing order of landed property of the various historical temples affected the quality of the management system which was preserved in the past. Similarly, decreasing number of servitors and assigned people and responsible man power under the possession of temples also indirectly affect the quality of the management system of the temples.

During the three periods i.e. pre-colonial, colonial and post independence period, the rulers took different policy regarding the management of the properties of the historical temples. Mediaeval rulers used to donate lavish endowments in terms of land, *paiks* and materials for the temples. They made all the arrangement for the

management of the temples with an objective to earn legitimacy for their rule. But the British were mainly interested in the economic benefit of the landed properties of the historical temples. During the post independence period, almost all the landed properties of the historical temples of Upper Assam were confiscated by the government and left the temples with minimum properties. Thus, the historical temples of Upper Assam remained as mere religious institutions which were run out of the donations from the devotees.

CONCLUSION

Increased rate of annuity for the historical temples was an effective step towards the better management of these religious institutions. As it was noticed that during the post independence period, state government tries to constitute a better management system with the introduction of Assam State Acquisition of Land belonging to Religious or Charitable Institution of Public Nature Act, 1959, which was later amended in the year 1987 and 2011 respectively. So far as the administrative system and the policy towards the temple management of Upper Assam is concerned, all the three period i.e. pre-colonial period, colonial period and post independence period have witnessed significant changes in the administrative policy of the ruling authority. During the pre colonial period, the ruling authority made detail arrangement for administrative control over the historical temples of Assam with the help of their efficient administrative unit. Building of temples and the introduction of their management system is regarded as the tool for the legitimization of the rule of the government during that period. The administrative policy for the management of the temples undergone a drastic changes under the colonial master who were then mainly concerned about the realization of the land revenue from the temple lands. The British government left the legacy of their administrative policy which left a profound impact upon the Indian government. Most of the temples were treated as monuments to be preserved by the Govt. of India. Others were managed and controlled by a managing committee heading DC of the concerned district as Chairman. The issues relating to the historical temples of Assam and their management system has been addressed throughout the three phases of history i. e. pr- colonial, colonial and post independence period with different attitudes of the concerned ruling authorities. Though, this religious institution gradually lost its previous glory, it is the responsibility of the government and the local people of the region to re-explore and render careful efforts and attention for the promotion of the historical temples and their management system.

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- [9] Interview with Nabin Chandra Barthakur on 22nd July, 2011.
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- [11] An Official letter containing Order no PR T.170/79/31 dated 22nd March 1984 AD which was found in the house of Debananda Bhattacharya, Borthakur, Nandikeshore Temple, Sonitpur District, Assam.
- [12] An official letter dated 18/07/1988 by the office of ADC (Revenue) Sonitpur, Tezpur to Debananda Bhattacharya, Borthakur, Nandikeshore Temple. Sonitpur District, Assam.
- [13] *The Assam Gazettee*, Extra ordinary, dated 5th October, 1987, p. 691.
- [14] *The Assam Gazettee*, Extra ordinary, dated 25th May, 2011, p. 352.
- [15] . *A source book of Archaeology of Assam and other state of North Eastern India*, a compilation of reports reprinted from the archaeological survey of India, Annual Reports and Indian Archaeology- A Review, (1984), (both published by the Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, and published by Dr. Dharmeswar Chutia, secretary, Kamrupa Anusandhan Samiti, Guwahati, Assam, pp.42-70.
- [16] *Ibid*.
- [17] *Ibid*.
- [18] Nagarch, B. L. (1985) Preservation of Ancient Monuments in Assam, Bulletin of the Assam State Museum, Vol. VI, , published by Directorate of Museums, (ed.) R.D. Choudhury, Assam, Guwahati, Assam, pp.. 44-80.
- [19] *Ibid*.

Table No: 1

List of the temples in Upper Assam protected under Central Legislation (up to 1983-84):

Sl. No.	Name of the Temple	Place	Constructed during the period
1	Negheriting Shiva Doul	Dergaon, Dist. Golaghat	Rajeswar Singha (1751-1769 AD)
2	Vishnu Doul	Sivasagar, Dist. Sivasagar	Siva Singha (1714-1744 AD)
3	Devi Doul	Sivasagar, Dist. Sivasagar	Siva Singha (1714-1744 AD)
4	Siva Doul	Sivasagar, Dist. Sivasagar	Siva Singha (1714-1744 AD)
5	Vishnu Doul	Gaurisagar, Dist. Sivasagar	Siva Singha (1714-1744 AD)
6	Devi Doul	Gaurisagar, Dist. Sivasagar	Siva Singha (1714-1744 AD)
7	Siva Doul	Gaurisagar, Dist. Sivasagar	Siva Singha (1714-1744 AD)
8	Vishnu Doul	Joysagar, Dist. Sivasagar	Rudra Singha (1696-1714 AD)
9	Devi Doul	Joysagar, Dist. Sivasagar	Rudra Singha (1696-1714 AD)
10	Baidyanath Siva Doul	Joysagar, Dist. Sivasagar	Rudra Singha (1696-1714 AD)
11	Ghanashyam Doul	Joysagar, Dist. Sivasagar	Rudra Singha (1696-1714 AD)
12	Bor Doul	Biswanath, Dist. Sonitpur	Rajeswar Singha (1751-1769 AD)
13	Ranganath Doul	Joysagar, Dist. Sivasagar	Rudra Singha (1696-1714 AD)

Appendix IV, *A source book of Archaeology of Assam and other state of North Eastern India*, a compilation of reports reprinted from the archaeological survey of India, Annual Reports and Indian Archaeology- A Review, 1984, (both published by the Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, and published by Dr. Dharmeswar Chutia, secretary, Kamrupa Anusandhan Samiti, Guwahati, Assam.

Table No: 2

List of the temples in Upper Assam protected under State Legislation (up to 1972-88):

Sl. No.	Name of the Temple	Place	Year of Conservation
1	Shiva Doul	Na Pukhuri, Sivasagar District	1972
2	Vishnu Doul	Namti, Sivasagar District	1988
3	Devi Doul	Namti, Sivasagar District	1968
4	Rangnatha Doul	Joysagar, Sivasagar District	1969
5	Fakuwa Doul	Joysagar, Sivasagar District	1970
6	Haragauri Doul	Joysagar, Sivasagar Dist.	1972
7	Gorokhia Doul	Nazira, Sivasagar Dist.	1972
8	Piyali Phukanar Doul	Geleki, Sivasagar Dist.	1974
9	Thaora Doul	Thaora, Rajmai, Sivasagar Dist.	1975
10	Vishnu Doul	Kalugaon, Sivasagar Dist.	1975
11	Jagadhatri Doul	Kalugaon, Sivasagar Dist.	1975
12	Bogi Doul	Meteka, Sivasagar Dist.	1982
13	Lankuri Doul	Doulbagan, Sivasagar Dist.	2012
14	Raidangia Doul	Lejai, Dibrugarh Dist.	1979
15	Bezar Doul	Dimou, Dibrugarh Dist.	1982
16	Basudev Doul	Kalabari, Sonitpur Dist.	1972
17	Gardol	Kamargaon, Tezpur, Sonitpur Dist.	1987
18	Nandikeshar Doul	Madhav, Jamuguri, Sonitpur Dist.	1979
19	Hatimura Doul	Jakhalabandha, Nagaon Dist.	1978
20	Maghanuwa Doul	Narayanpur, Lakhimpur Dist.	1975
21	Bagharchkar Doul	Bagharchuk, Lakhimpur Dist.	1985
22	Ghuguha Doul	Dhemaji Dist.	1988

Source: List of Ancient monument and archeological site conserved by Directorate of Archeology, Govt. of Assam, Third print, 2010 (Assamese version) Published by Dr. Hemendranath Dutta, Directorate of Archeology, Assam, Adabari, Guwahati.