

# Aesthetics And Religious Credence: A Study On Nath-Yogi People Of Dhubri District, Assam

Modanmohan Dev Nath

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Girls' College, Kokrajhar, Assam, India

## ABSTRACT

Assam is a land of unique diversity of casts and communities. The Nath – Yogis of Assam are the ethnic people live in Dhubri, intricately entwined with aesthetics and religious beliefs and ideas so much that become an integral part of religious, cultural heritage and social dynamics. The major livelihood of the people depends on agriculture, dairy, navigation, water transport and trade. The Rivers and tributaries are held as sacred and vital culture and religious rituals throughout the area. This research paper studies the socio-economic and cultural system of the said community with resemblance to the aesthetics and religious credence. The objectives of this study are to understand the importance of their religion and how these people have been enjoying their life with aesthetic. This paper would focus on the religious identity of Nath-yogi and their consideration with aestheticism. The present community is considered as Rudraja Brahmana and they are Shaiva.

**Keywords:** aesthetic, Rudraja Brahmana, Nath-yogi, credence, heritage

## Introduction:-

After decades of textual fixation, the study of Hinduism has taken a 'visual turn', which is unfolding to view a much wider map than the one which earlier scholars had held in their hands. There is an increasing interest in the window that the arts, in all their forms, open on to the more pervasive, popular forms of Indian religious life, as opposed to the elitist preserves of the written text. From dance to sculpture, song to architecture, craftwork to poem, myth, or sacred history, the arts present a range of cultural artefacts in which ever-fresh provinces of the imagination are laid bare before the eye of the scholar. An increasing focus on the arts demands an increasing awareness of the working of beauty and appeal, reality and appearance, taste and genre – in a word, aesthetic in Hindu culture. Aesthetic is too often seen as a peripheral field of theory, subsidiary to the works themselves and the idea they convey. But without hermeneutic key artworks will remain closed to us, or worse, we will read and interpret them wrongly as in a distorted mirror. Not only nineteenth century, but also modern scholars are still trying to solve 'the great difficulty of coming to terms with Hindu art'.

The reality of rivers impacts many areas of the economy, politics, culture, history, and social relations. From field study of entire area it is observed that majority of the villages of the said ethnic community are situated on the bank of tributaries of the mighty Brahmaputra. As the Nath-yogi indigenous people are Rudraja Brahmana and followers of Lord Shiva, they have at least one public Shiva Temple each of their native villages. This community does have close relationship with the rivers and tributaries in their socio-economic and cultural aspects. Here, this paper will study the socio-economic and cultural system of Nath-yogi people of that particular area. These rivers and tributaries have become an integral part of religious, cultural heritage and social dynamics. The Brahmaputra and its tributaries that drain this locality are responsible for lying out the land fertile. The major livelihood of the people such as agriculture, dairy, navigation, water transport and trade are dependent on rivers and their assimilation with aesthetic. Rivers and tributaries are held as sacred and vital for people's culture and religious rituals throughout the area.

### **Objectives of study:-**

1. To focus socio-economic and cultural system of Nath-yogi community of the study area.
2. To analyse the importance and influence of river and tributaries on Nath-yogi Community of that particular area and how these create aesthetic pleasure.
3. To understand the value of religion that dependent upon activities of human being.

### **Research Questions-**

- 1) What is the Socio-cultural system of Nath Yogis under the jurisdiction of Bilasipara circle, Dhubri District?
- 2) What are the roles played by the beauty and scenic articulation of rivers and temples for the protection of identity and culture of the Nath Yogis in this particular area?

### **Methodology:**

The study had conducted based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary sources of data had been collected from the field study and interview to the selected sample respondents. The sample respondents had selected mainly from the Bilasipara Circle and interview had been conducted through an interview schedule. The selected Village Heads (Gaonburha) of the Nath Yogi Community of that particular areas had also be taken as a sample respondent who had been interviewed through questionnaires to collect information about the socio-cultural systems and economic states including the role of the rivers and tributaries. Importance of the temples and rivers of this land in protection of culture, tradition and identity had also been considered for sample study. A sample of 20 respondents had been taken for sample study.

The sample respondents had been selected through purposive sampling method. So, Historical method, Interview method and Field study method were used in this regard.

The secondary sources included all sorts of published books, journals, magazines, articles, and government records, various document of the Nath Yogi Socio Political and Cultural organization. Descriptive and analytical methods used for analyzing and interpretation the data. The universe of the study had been of undivided Goalpara district of Assam. A total of 10 villages selected and 20 from each village had been taken as sample respondents for interview.

### Sampling Frame and Sampling Design:-

The samples were drawn from each village through purposive sampling method. The sampling technique was purposive as it was considered that a little section of the Population of Nath Yogi Community People in Bilasipara Circle.

The Present study mainly targeted 10 villages from Bilasipara Circle where majority of the people were from Nath Yogi Community.

Sl. No.	Village name	Population (Aprox)	River-tributaries near-by	Temples
1	Alengmari	2500	Gaurang river	Shiva Mandir
2	Bakuabhangi	150	Gaurang river	Shiva Mandir
3	Udmari	2600	Gaurang river, Chara Beel	Shiva- Kali Mandir
4	Bhandarkuthi	300	Bhandani Beel	Shiva Mandir
5	Shuripar	300	Duduar Beel	Shiva Mandir
6	Borkuthi	250	Duduar Beel	Shiva Mandir
7	Bamunkura	300	Bamunkura & Basuakura Beel	Shiva Mandir
8	Lutapara	2200	Kachua Babaji Beel	Shiva- Kali Mandir
9	Helagari	876	Kachua Babaji Beel	Shiva Mandir, Laxmi Mandir
10	Laupara	1000	Assamdanga Beel	Shiva Mandir
11	Athiabari	300	Assamdanga Beel	Shiva Mandir
12	Paikandara	300	Bherbheri Beel	Shiva- Kali Mandir Mandir
13	Manglerdabri	200	Deepa river (brook)	Shiva Mandir
14	Shiberdabri	250	Deepa river (brook)	Shiva Mandir
15	Haraltari	150	Deepa river (brook)	Shiva Mandir, Kali Mandir
16	Chinamari	150	Deepa river (brook)	Shiva Mandir
17	Chokapara	300	Deepa river (brook)	Shiva Mandir
18	Dhulapara	250	Deepa river (brook)	Shiva Mandir
19	Hapapara	250	Deepa river (brook)	Shiva Mandir
20	Gopigaon	2300	Deepa river (brook)	Pagla Baba (Shiva) Mandir, Kali Mandir
21	Salkocha	.....	The Brahmaputra	Bhole Bohm Mandir, Kali Mandir, Pagla Baba Mandir, Chandardinga
22	Duduakuthi	.....	.....	Dhel Thakuror Mandir
23	Sonaluguri	.....	.....	Kali Mandir
24	Takimari	.....	.....	Kali Mandir
25	Chinabari	.....	.....	Shiva Mandir
26	Saltari	.....	.....	Ratanti Siva-Kali Mandir
27	Surjyakhata	.....	.....	Shiva Mandir
28	Raniganj	.....	.....	Anchalik Shiva Mandir, Jagaddhatri Mandir

### Discussion: -

#### Religious perspectives:

Nath-Yogi tradition has extensive Shaivism related theological literature of its own. Their unconventional ways challenged all orthodox premises, exploring dark and shunned practices of society as a means to understand theology and to gain inner power.

Nath tradition was influenced by other Indian tradition such as Advaita Vedanta, and in turn influenced it to the movement of Vaishnavism, Shaktivism and Bhakti movements through saints such as Kabir and Namdev.

At least 95% of total population amongst Hindu are followers of Shaivism in Bilasipara circle of Dhubri district. This research study observes so many temples in each of their villages publicly like Shiva Mandir, Maa Kali Mandir, and Maa Manasha or Padda Mandir, Narayan-Tulshi Devi Mandir, Kali Mandir etc. at their own home. Besides these temples there are Shri Ganeshdev Mandir found in some others home. These people observe Maa Laksmi puja at their home individually as well as publicly. The students of that locality perform Shri Saraswati Puja and the persons relating to mechanic and business usually perform Shri Biswakarma Puja.

All the village people of this area especially the women folk take fast or veg. food on every Monday and perform Laksmi puja on every Thursday reading holy books and reciting songs (Sankirtans) in evening time.

Some of villagers perform Manasha puja on the last day of Saon (Assamese) month and the Devi is being drowned away the idol on the river after all the performances being completed. Almost every family perform Manasha puja with Maroi songs at the marriage ceremony and all other rituals.

The Nath-Yogi people perform Ma Bhagavati Puja in each of their village. This religious performance be done at the bank of any rivers and they drowned all the materials relating with puja away on that river. So it is called Bhashani puja.

The people of this community observe religious songs such as Sankirtans, Eknath (Om Namah Shiva) songs, songs of Sonarai or Beghrah Devata, Euri songs, Bihu songs, Ainam, Kushan songs etc. The women folks perform all religious rites to satisfy their Dharmadevata-Yam (God of Religion) sacrificing duck's eggs.

The people of this locality named Bihu as Bishua. It is the important feature of Nath-Yogi people that they celebrate Garu Bihu on the first day Bohag month. On that they bring their cattle on the river for bathing. On the festival of Kati Bihu, all the families lit the lights on their fields, bank of rivers, and temples etc. Some of them lit the sky-light (Akash-banti). These people observe Bhogali Bihu with a very pompous manner, and they arrange picnic parties collecting fishes from near-by rivers for the same. It is mentioned here that this Nath-Yogi people have been participating in all the public functions of Santanta dharma such as Durga puja, Kali puja, Rash Puja, Rathajatra of Lord Jagannatha and so on.

**Celebrating ceremonies month wise :**

Sl. No.	Month (Assamese)	Ceremony	Performance
1	Bohag	Bishua (Rangali Bihu)	Garu Bihu
2	Jeth	First seed planting paddy	Ganga water with Tulsi
3	Aahar	Guru Purnima	Worshiping Gurus on full moon.
4	Shaon	Manasha puja	Worshiping Manasha Devi
5	Bhad	Shiva Chaturdashi	Fasting and worshiping Shiva
6	Ahin	Maa Durga puja	Fasting and worshiping
7	Kati	Kartic puja	Worshiping Kartic by Women
8	Aaghon	Gorokh puja	Song of Gorokhnath
9	Puh	Khichiri Utsav	Publicly celebrating in temple
10	Magh	Nath Panchami	Saraswati puja celebration, initiation
11	Phagun	Shiva-Ratri	Fasting & worshiping Shiva.
12	Chot	Ashoka Asthami	Bathing on the river Brahmaputra

**Folk - culture of Nath-Yogi people**

The Nath-Yogi people have been following the ten reformation system (Dasha Karma-Samskar) of their life time from birth to death as their traditional custom and rituals- ceremony such as Garvadhan (conception), Panchamrita bhakkhan (five- nectar feeding), Shaad-Bhakkhan (seven feeding), Sasthi (Sixth month's feeding), Namkaran (naming ceremony), Annaprashan (rice feeding ceremony), Choodaakaran (shaving the body's first hair on the head ceremony), Upanayan (the thread ceremony), Diksha (initiation), Bivah (marriage). Besides, these people follow their traditional customs on toloni (second marriage), corpse burial system, and impurity etc. and to rectify from these aspects people consider the river water as holy and sacred one.

The rivers have great impact on the occasion of social marriage of the Nath-Yogi society. The river water is considered as holy and sacred water for all ceremonial purposes. For example, on scheduled marriage day both the families especially the women folks of bride and bridegroom collect river water at dawn before arriving the birds and fowls on earth. This collected river water is used for sacred bathing of both bride and bridegroom. On this very special occasion of marriage day both the families of this society perform all religious activities like Pitri-shraddha, tarpan (Vedic practices), and worship etc. and all the useless materials are bound to drawn away on the rivers after completion.

The rivers impact on the burial system of the Nath -Yogi's society. After completion of burial process, all the people go to river for bathing then they return home with soaked clothes. On the tenth day of deceased, the Nath-yogi people engaged on funeral procession go to river bank again with a barber for shaving and take curd-chira as their lunch. It is further mentioned that the Nath-Yogi priest associated with Shraddha performance erect a river as Baitarani River as it is believed the soul of that deceased person may pass on the obstacle river and attain Heaven. So the importance of river is found everywhere in Nath-Yogi community of this area.

## Impact of River:

Agriculture requires control of stocks of water stored in soil, and of the flow of water across landscapes. In the river basin, extensive constructed systems provide rapid drainage of precipitation from watersheds, so that soils can warm and dry rapidly in the spring, allowing summer crops to grow. Water is essential for the growth of crops and animals, of course, but there are many other links. Most of the Nath-Yogi People of this area are dependent on agriculture. The mighty Brahmaputra is mainly fertilizing the crops fields. Every year the floods of Gaurang river havocs the fertile lands initially prepare for cultivation. The agricultural landscape becomes victims of floods every year on the months of July and August. Agriculture and water resources are also linked by their vulnerability to extreme weather events—both droughts and heavy rainfall create challenges—and by the need for rivers to transport products. Therefore, we must think about the future of agriculture if we are to think about the future of the river. In this essay, we argue that the future holds major opportunities for agriculture to improve water resources, if society can seize them. Yet, food and water are indispensable life-support systems of civilization, and their continued availability—and the health of critical elements of these systems, such as rivers and farm economies—must be ensured.

## Conclusion:

To conclude, it may be mentioned here that the relationship between aesthetics and religious experience contributes to the highest achievement of Indian philosophy and religious experience as a whole. Its doctrines and more in general its attitudes to life are still able to appeal to us by ever growing interest of contemporary spiritual seekers and scholarly research. It is very important to give prominence to a basic aesthetic flavour as the more or less hidden background of the activities of this ethnic group. Since aesthetic speculation in India always developed side by side, the portrait of this very special religious men (Nath-yogi people) are innate graceful, elegiac aesthetic resonance, easiness. We attribute to aesthetic experience, having beauty as its basics, a transformative power in that it is able to create a crack in wall of everyday life thus opening the way to liberation, creating an intermediate state. The study of the psychological dimension of the encounter is another essential feature of the present research.

## References:

1. <https://openrivers.lib.umn.edu/article/agriculture-and-the-river-the-universitys-role-in-societal-learning-innovation-and-action/#:~:text=Agriculture%20requires%20co>
2. <https://www.google.com/search?q=rivers+and+its+economic+importance&sxsrf>
3. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303785358\\_Brahmaputra\\_and\\_the\\_Socio-Economic\\_Life\\_of\\_People\\_of\\_Assam](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303785358_Brahmaputra_and_the_Socio-Economic_Life_of_People_of_Assam).
4. 'JUGABANI' a mouthpiece of Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani Published by Shri Ait Nath, Scy. And Edited by Shri Hiranya Kumar Nath, Scy. Sahitya Parishad, Assam, M.G. Printing & Publication, Guwahati-28
5. Deka, N. and Bhagawati, A.K. (2015) "Wetlands in a Village Environment: A Case from Brahmaputra Floodplain, Assam", Transactions, Institute of Indian Geographers, Vol. 37, No.1, pp.35-45.

6. Sumathi Ramaswami, 2003. *Beyond Appearances? Visual Practices and Ideologies in Modern India*, p. xiii. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
7. Partha Mitter, 1977. *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art*, p. 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
8. <https://research.uniroma1.it/aesthetics-and-religious-experience-indian-civilization-textual-philosophical-and-psychoanalytic>

