

Title: A historical study on Shri Shri Bantijala Vaikuntha Temple of Gohpur.

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Abstract:

The present study focuses on the historical temple of Lord Shiva. It is also called Shri Shri Bantijala Vaikuntha temple district of Biswanath. The study explains the historical background and significance of study area. The researcher has adopted a descriptive research method in the present historical study. In addition, historical methodology is adopted for observing, recording, describing, analyzing, interpreting the data, which is collected during the courses of research. The study describes the recent status, condition of this temple and its influence over the social, religious and economic status of Gohpur.

Keywords: Shiv temple of Gohpur, historical background, socio- economic and religious status.

Introduction:

According to the Hindu religious beliefs, Shiva the supreme power has played an important role in the formation of Indian culture. Known as Shiva or Mahadeva in the Northern part of the country and Thillai in South, the deity is considered among the three main energies behind the formation of this Universe. Mostly represented in mythologies as a Yogi or a peaceful entity, Shiva is also described as a fierce deity in ancient religious scriptures in the form of a Nataraja. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari and Saurashtra to Assam he has been worshiped in different forms as the destroyer of evils and rescuer of the innocents. There are lots of Shiva temples found in India. Among them one of the famous temples is Shri Shri Bantijala Vaikuntha Temple of Gohpur. This Shiva temple of Gohpur is not just a pick of religious souls but food for the thoughts of history buffs. The Shiva temple was established in 1983, begun with a golden statue of Lord Shiva by late Baputi Mahanta with the co-operation of worshipers of Shiva. After the death of Baputi Mahanta his younger brother had taken charge of this temple. After a long run on 20th June of 1983 a new

building was constructed near the former Shiva temple which is still known as Shri Shri Bantijala Vaikuntha Temple. Nowadays this shiva temple is famous for the public not only of Gohpur but also of its surrounding people of every caste and community. In the temple Shiva puja, Shiva Ratri, marriage ceremonies, Vishnu puja, Hanuman Puja etc are performed. Its establishment day also is performed every year. The temple is almost 75 feet high and 18 feet wide and a well constructed building. The first Pujari (Priest) of this temple was Tusheswar Sharma and after his death Deben Sharma was engaged to perform puja and after him Sri Atul Sharma is engaged here. There is a governing body to conduct the various sides and activities of the temple. This study has been prepared to learn the historical background of the Shiva temple which is situated at Gohpur in the District of Biswanath.

Objectives of the Study:

- 1) A brief study about the historical background of the Shiva temple
- 2) A study about the recent status and condition of this temple.
- 3) Influence of this Shiva temple over the social, religious and economic status of Gohpur.
- 4) Its importance as a socio-solemnity of this temple of Gohpur for the tourists and visitors.

Significance of the study: The Shiva temple of Gohpur (Shri Shri Bantijala Vaikuntha Mandir) has its own history, reputation and influence over the public. Because of its ancient history which carries religious and socio-cultural feelings of the public makes this temple more famous. This paper carries historical information of the Bantijala Vaikuntha Mandir. There are many socio-cultural and religious information of various types of caste of communities of its Surroundings. In the history of this temple we find the event of the great freedom struggle of Assam against the British. The history of the temple therefore is an attestation of the event the war against the British which withhold the memory of many freedom fighters of chaiduar-Gohpur. It can be assured that by the study of the historical background of this temple the forthcoming generation may have various types of knowledge of their own area. The temple has also an economical influence over the local public. During the celebrations and puja's held in this temple many visitors and tourists come to enjoy all these events which help to develop the economic status of it. To know about the historical past of this temple this study may contribute significantly to the next generation.

Review of Related Literature: The study of a historical place depends on different types of writings and literature. These take part in a great deal. A number of writings help to study about the historical famous temple of Gohpur. A book in this context, 'Buranjiye porokha Biswanathor prantor' composed and published by a famous writer Nityananda Gogoi from Biswanath Chariali in 1990 gives many information about the temple, many things about the temple and its influences are also found in a book composed by Sarbananda Borah of Kamdewal 'Itihashe Garaka chaiduar'. In this book there is a lot of information about this temple. Besides these we can find valuable bio-data's of this temple in the writings of local writers, in different magazines etc.

Methodology: To prepare this project report the data were collected from the primary and the secondary sources. The primary sources were collected by a field study. During the time of field study various sources were found. A few persons of Gohpur had been interviewed to collect the Present and past biodata of the temple. In the Shiva temple many images, inscriptions were found and a great number of socio-cultural aspects and religious assimilation, beside these many past and recent information of this temple are found from the priest, employee or workers and from the persons of temple managing committee. The secondary data are collected from books and articles that were written on the temple. These are: 1) 'Pabitra Assam' by Moheswar Neog 2) 'Buronjiye Porokha Bishwanathor Prantor' by Nityananda Gogoi 3) 'Sonitpur Juge Juge' by Dilip Kumar Saikia.

Area of Study : The Shiva temple of Gohpur (Shri Shri Bantijala Vaikuntha Mandir) is one of the famous and oldest temples of Assam. It is situated on the bank of Borpukhuri tank which is geographically famous all over Assam as because on the bank of the Borpukhuri tank, in front of this shiva temple Swahid Kanaklata and Mukunda Kakati was shot dead by the British Daroga. The boundary area of this temple is the Gohpur police station in the East, Gohpur daily market in the west, Gohpur higher secondary school in the North and Gohpur Borpukhuri tank and 15 No. National highway in the South.

Result and Discussion:

In this study it is tried to present many information and various types of necessary qualities and result after field study of this Shiva temple. During the field study, much information was found from the secretary of the temple managing Committee Sri Sudhir Biswas and from the present Pujari Sri Atul Sarmah and also from a great number of local neighboring

people and writers. The distinguished acquirements found about Shri Shri Bantijala Vaikuntha temple of Gohpur are as follows -

a) Historical background: According to a myth in the Nineteenth century beginning a police constable had found a small golden statue of Lord Shiva while taking bath in the Borpukhuri pond. The constable then put this statue under a big wooden apple tree. But that place was not safe. So he Selected a place where there was a big plump tree and put the statue under the tree. He used to go there in the morning and to pray in the evening. A temporary shed was constructed there under the plump tree. Thus, a Praying place for the police constable was built. A few persons of the locality Known as Late Baputi Mahanta, Late Drona Mahanta, Late Ratia Kalita, Late Besai Gogoi, Late Purna Gogoi, Late Madhav Gogoi, Late Chandi Lahkar helped to improve and improvise the very Shed of Lord Shiva and a neighboring person named Baputi Mahanta was engaged to look after the shed of Lord Shiva with the financial help of the above mentioned Persons and money collected by donation a temple constructed with wood, bamboo etc. In the year of 1937 Late Bogiram Mahanta had taken charge to look after the temple as a pujari. A small shelter was built there and Late Bogiram Mahanta lived there alone. He used to perform pujas and look after the Mandir well. It was known to the neighboring people that a Shiva temple was established there at Gohpur just beside the Police station. A few local persons came forward to help for the improvement of the temple. They were Late Ramesh Saikia, Thaneswar Duwara, Liladhar Saikia, Khagendra Nath, Abhinab Mazumdar. After a long time the pujari Bagiram Mahanta passed away. He left an amount of Rs. 4041.00. It remained as a capital for the temple. Late Bogiram Mahanta was a very hardworking, active person who left the temple as a founder. On 20th June of 1983 the Shiva temple was newly constructed just beside the old temporary hut. The construction of the temple was done by a doner who was the office in charge of Gohpur Police Station named Late Gopal Borah with a group of doner persons and well wisher public of Gohpur named as Late Dibakar Hazarika, Chandra Borah, Gopal Borah, Dambaru Bhuyan, Purnadha Sutia, Amal Barah, Pabitra Borah. These persons also collected a good amount of money with the help of its Shiva Ling and a statue of Lord Vishnu was brought from Rajasthan in 1983 and was placed inside the newly constructed temple. On that very day of establishment of the new temple a ceremony also was solemnized.

b) Present condition of the temple : The Shiva temple has a governing body which conducts its various sides and does its developing activities. It is not only a religious place but also a place of social-solemnity for the public of different castes and communities of

Gohpur area. It is also such a pious place for marriage. ceremonies, Sangkirtan of different castes are Performed. The temple governing body has given all sorts of facilities like drinking water, wide Place to perform ceremonies along with well accommodation.

c) Influence over economic and religious status: This temple is the most sacred and socio-cultural place which has an economic importance also. The good advantage of communication helps the people to assemble here for various social activities and rites. People come from different Places to fulfill their wishes having good belief on the influences of the temple. A marketplace is also established near the temple. The marketing place helps the people to extend their living area turning to a good economic place for which the whole area, the surrounding has become a populous one changing to be an economic place for the People to develop their economic sides to live in a proper hygienic way.

d) Different types of puja and statues at the temple: There is a huge Shiva Linga and a statue of Lord Vishnu inside the main puja building. There are architectural statues of Lord Ganesh, Hanuman and Kautik just at the front door of the temple along with the concrete statue of tiger, ox and deer. The puja and ceremonies of these Gods are performed in the temple by the public.

e) Temple as a Patron of Music and Arts : Musicians rendered classical songs during the festivals considered it as an honor and privilege and to sing in front of the deity. Very often eminent scholars conduct religious discourses in this temple. To make people to achieve sense of pleasure Musical instruments displayed as an art. By all these, temple supports various artisans and given lessons of good morals and arouse religious feelings among people.

f) The Temple as a Consumer : The temple was the biggest consumer of the locality as an institution requiring a variety of commodities and services for its day to day conduct as well as on special festival occasions. In the early stages the requirements of the temple were probably few, some rice for offerings, flowers, sandal, milk, ghee and oil for lamp etc, all these were required. The increase in the offerings festivals resulted in the increase of the articles required by the temple manifold. The items constantly required by the temple are rice, pulses, gram, pepper, mustard, turmeric, jaggery, salt, betal, Kumkum, Coconut, milk, Camphor,fruits, ghee, butter, curd, honey oil. Not only in the perfumery and food article but in other articles like cloth, jewels, wooden objects, gold, silver, and brass metal lamps, decorative articles and the like is required. In the locality, the temple still continues to be the biggest consumer. In this way, the temple encouraged and

stimulated local trade and industry. Thus from the foregoing account it is seen that Shri Shri Bantijala Vaikuntha temple of Gohpur filled a large place in the social and economic life. The temple played a constructive and leading role for the large social and moral well being of the people of Gohpur.

g) An attractive place for the tourists: It is observed that tourists from different Places visit this famous Shiva temple. The different types of people of different castes of Hindu religion often come to this temple for Pray and celebrate religious activities. It is necessary that good accommodation is done along with food and lodging facilities then this temple and the place will have become more attractive and well known and famous for the tourists.

h) Aids from public and Government : The Public of Gohpur area have contributed for the development of the temple. The public administration of Gohpur is also doing different activities on behalf of the government for the improvement and development of this temple. Still it has not been completely developed. The building of the temple, marriage campus and building and its sheds building for Perform Kirtan or other social and ritual ceremonies should be extended as necessary for the public people. The neighboring public has helped for its necessary needs. The local MLA has provided facilities for drinking water and grants to solve other increasing needs and problems of the temple. One of the public persons has constructed the main entrance gate, designing well with two concrete statues of elephants on both sides of the gate..

Conclusion:

The Shiva temple of Gohpur, Shri Shri Bantijala Vaikuntha Mandir established in 1983 has an exemplary position in the history of Gohpur. By the help of this study we come to know about the historical background and status of the temple. It has tried to enlighten how this temple helps the public of its surroundings and also the outcomes about the religion and socio-cultural ceremonies and activities as well as its influences over religious, social and economic status. It is expected that if the local administration of Gohpur sub-division or the government of Assam provide more financial help for the development of this temple then this ancient religious temple will be more reputed and more effective for the people; it will be a well famous monument as well as an exemplar. The public should also raise a helping hand to Cooperate for its prosperity.

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