

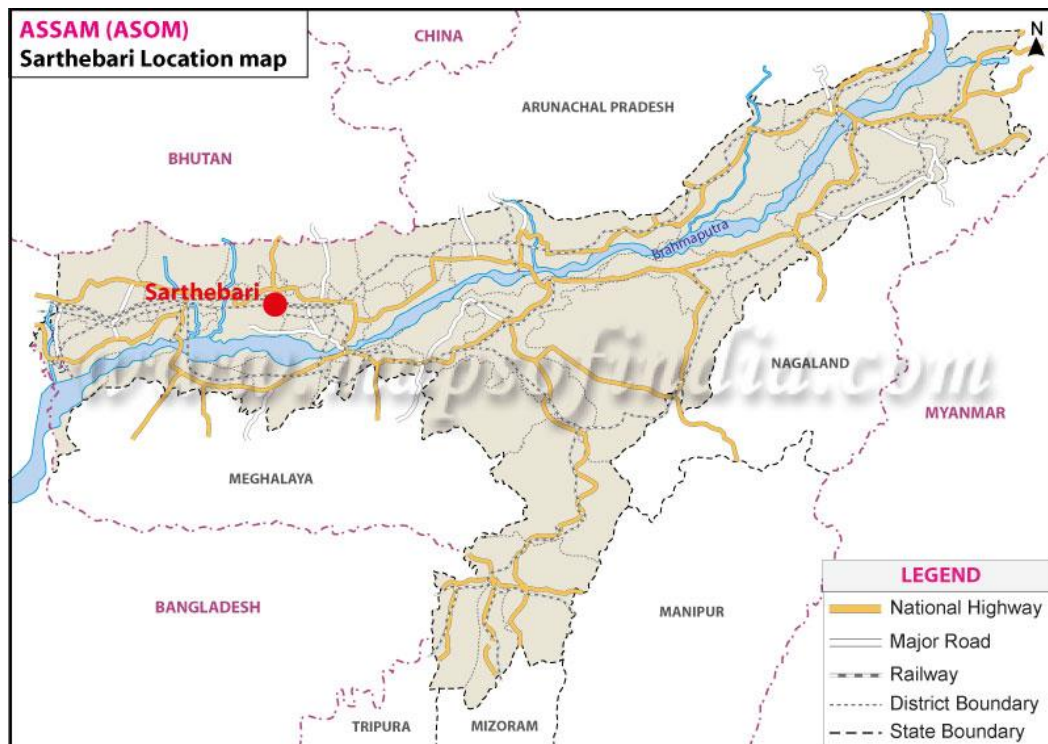
The online visit for August 2022 was proposed to undertake the following program.  
Awareness Campaign on

**Sarthebari** as a town and a town area committee in Bajali district in the Indian state of Assam. Sarthebari is home to the bell metal industry, the second largest handicraft of assam after bamboo craft. The nearby villagea are Amrikhowa, Pnchag Ram Panagaortop, Namsala, Gomura, Karakuchi etc.

**Hajo**, , a place of mainly pilgrimage for all religions. Hajo is one of the important historical and archaeological sites in northeast India as it preserves the history, inscriptions and architecture.

This was aimed to Study and let people know about these very important sites. It is a Promotional Tour and this visit (Online /offline) is expected to enhance Tourist Awareness campaign, School students awareness campaign , Tourist Stakeholder Awareness workshop.

## SARTHEBARI



**Sarthebari** is famous for its historic Assamese bell metal utensils and for traditional Assamese structure called **xorai**. The Bell Metal Handicraft is a metal casting technique and believed to be the oldest one. This craft belongs to the primeval times of the Mohenjodaro and Harrappa since the metal objects used in the preparation of the products are akin to that of the earliest civilizations. Bell metal or bell bronze is an alloy used for making bells and related instruments, such as cymbals. It is a form of bronze with a higher tin content, usually in approximately a 4:1 ratio of copper to tin (typically, 78% copper, 22% tin by mass). Of all the known metals and their alloys, bronze creates the best sound and resonance, and the sound it creates in one strike can last for a few seconds.

**Sarthebari** is a town and a town area committee in Barpeta district in the Indian state of Assam. Sarthebari is home to the bell metal industry, the second largest handicraft sector of Assam after bamboo craft. Bell-metal is an alloy of copper and tin and the craftsmen of this industry are referred to as '*Kahar*' or '*Orja*'. The objects made are mostly used in domestic and religious purposes.

The tradition is believed to have started ages back and the craftsmen still prepare the objects manually adhering to the age old technique by implementing the old tools required for burning and shaping the metal. Historically, this craft form dates back to the 7th century AD. Various written records reveal that the bell metal industry of Assam existed from the time of Kumarbhaskarvarman, the king of the Varman Dynasty, when, the Kumar of eastern India gifted drinking vessels to Harshavardhana of Kannauj. The existence of the skilled bell-metal masters can also be traced through the scriptures, where it is written that a pair of '*Bhortal*' or cymbal, a musical instrument was gifted to Hieuen Tsang, an eminent Chinese scholar during his visit to India and Kamrup. However, scholars believe that it was only during the

period of Ahoms that the industry got highlighted, as special interest was taken by various Ahom kings among whom Swargadeo Siva Singha was the most notable.

During the Ahom regime, the bell-metal industry in Assam has achieved the golden period. Everyone including the king, nobles and the subjects have been accustomed with the use of bell-metal utensils and as such bell-metal production of Sarthebari flourished. The Ahom king gave incentives to the artisans engaged in Sarthebari bell-metal industry. Encouraged by royal patronage, the artisans have enabled themselves to mould lovely looking *Sarai*, (a platter or tray) *Gudgudi* or hookah, *Temi-bata* (small lime container), *Pikdani*, (spittoon), *Bhog-jara* (water vessel with a spout) etc. The artisans have made bell-metal cannons for the battlefield use. The Ahom King and Nobles were complacent in using *Maihang kahi* (metallic plate) and *Maihang bati* (metallic cup) produced under special care by artisans of Sarthebari bell-metal industry. King Siva Singha is known to have showered laurels upon bell-metal artisan Jieu Dhan Kahar at the beginning of the 7th Century. Jieu Dhan Kahar was highly interested in pure art. As a token of recognition of his talent in art he was endowed with the title 'Chaudhary' along with a grant of 100 *bighas* (measure of land) of *nispikheraj* land. Jieu Dhan Kahar made a wooden tiger and its inside placed a pair of '*Bhortals*' (large cymbals) made of bell-metal, which produces roaring sounds while moving. This tiger was presented to his Majesty Siva Singha, Ahom King. The descendants of Jieu DhanKahar are using the Chaudhary title till date.

## **The Sarthebari Bell-Metal Industry of Assam**

In the Assamese society the bell-metal utensils occupy an important place in the life and economy of the people. Sarthebari in the Barpeta district is a place well known for its bell-metal and brass-metal industry. One who takes a stroll around the

village of Sarthebari can hear the sound of hammering the metal at the furnace from every passing household.

The common objects made by the artisans in Sarthebari are *kalah* (water pot), *sarai* (a platter or tray mounted on a base), *kahi* (dish), *bati* (bowl), *lota* (water pot with a long neck) and *tal* (cymbals). It is also believed that the utensils manufactured using bell-metal have certain medicinal properties and consuming food in these utensils keep intestinal problems at bay. Also, drinking water in bell-metal glasses aids in cleaning your body due to certain mineral present in these glasses. These were considered to be the prime reasons for serving food in such utensils to the Royal family of Ahom kings of the Great Ahom dynasty of Assam.



The technology involved in making the objects is traditional and simple. The main tools are anvils of different sizes locally known as *balmuri*, *chatuli* and *akue*, hammers, pincers, files, chisels and some minor equipment. Locally they are called *Dulari*, *Gasha*, *Saria*, *Piri*, *Khanta* (an iron instrument use for polishing the bell metal products), and *Pocker* etc. The other raw materials are polishing materials,

clay, jute fiber, rice bran, mustard oil, Charcoal, Borax, Zinc, *shalpatra* etc. No machinery is used in the process and from creating the mould to the final polishing, everything is done manually.



The objects made of bell-metal are heavier and bulkier in weight because of the extensive use of metal. This craftsmen inherit the knowledge from their elders and thus the industry runs on hereditary system. Modern tools and technology has not yet touched the lives of the artisans and they still adhere to primitive tools and equipments in bell-metal production. One major problem faced by the industry is the supply of raw materials which is usually purchased from the middleman.

Also, abundantly available cheaper objects made with aluminum , plastic etc, slowly engulfing the entire cottage industry market is another threat faced by the craftsmen of Sarthebari.





Bell Metal industry is one of the traditional industries in Assam. Bell metal products hold a special status in Assamese society due to its origin from ancient

times. The demand of bell metal industry is not only concentrated in Assam but also in other states and countries. But despite of this, the industry is facing problems which are hampering its development. The manufacturing of bell metal products are mostly done in Sarthebari and Hajo area of Assam. Moreover, the skill of manufacturing bell metal products is hereditary. So the production is limited to specific areas in Assam. This adds to the low expansion of the bell metal market. Therefore, the present study analyzes the attractiveness of the bell metal industry which will influence future entrepreneurs to enter into the industry. Bell metal, also known as Kanh/Kansha in India, is a specific binary Cu-Sn alloy containing 20–25% Sn (wt. basis) as major alloying elements, is the most popular ancient material in bells, utensils and artifacts manufacturing industries due to its golden appearance and excellent reverberating quality.

In Assam, the position of bell metal handicraft is next to handloom and textile. It is one of the important and popular types of metal used to manufacture different kinds of day to day utensils and decorative items . Though the bell metal works are also found in other parts of the country viz. West Bengal and Chhattisgarh, the composition of the alloy is different in Assam which is unique in nature. In Assam, the alloy is made by consisting 78% copper and 22% tin. Though tin and copper is the main raw materials of bell metal, the artisans of the handicraft use scrap bell metal utensils as raw materials. For giving required shape of the melted bell metal, the artist use charcoal as fuel to heat the metal.

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The objects made of bell-metal are heavier and bulkier in weight because of the extensive use of metal. This craftsmen inherit the knowledge from their elders and thus the industry runs on hereditary system. Modern tools and technology has not yet touched the lives of the artisans and they still adhere to primitive tools and equipments in bell-metal production. One major problem faced by the industry is the supply of raw materials which is usually purchased from the middleman.

In the recent decades, the demand for some traditional utensils made of bell metal has been reduced radically. In ancient times, Assamese people used different kinds of bell metal utensils in their day to day life. Those utensils are replaced for cheap aluminum and steel products. And some utensils like kalah, maihang, chundeni, joribata, etc today in day to day life. Though some items are still produced, their uses are concentrated only in traditional occasions like marriage ceremony or any religious activities. However, some new items are introduced on the basis of demand. The mass production of Bhutiyataal is a result of product adaptation. Likewise, items like wall hanging, statues of Hindu Gods and Goddesses, Table clocks, engraving are introduced as the demand of these products are increasing. It is found in the previous studies that the bell metal handicraft has been dying due to lack of demand

Apart from these various seminars and workshops should be organized to create the awareness among people towards bell metal products and by using print and electronic media publicity of the craft should be made. GI (Geographical



Indication Registration ) and trade mark for bell metal products of Sarthebari are of utmost necessary to preserve the authenticity of this craft. The government should provide modern machineries to the artisans which will help them to produce bell metal finished products by applying less effort and time.

The bell metal utensils have the capacity to kill germs and improve digestion and preserves food for long time. The people also consider it as a sign of aristocracy. So proper initiative should be taken for long term survival of this heritage folk craft of Assam by making all round development of the craftsmen engaged in this field.



## Hajo

Near to Sarthebari is an important place of Assam, Hajo, a place of mainly pilgrimage for all religions. Hajo is one of the important historical and archaeological

sites in northeast India as it preserves the history, inscriptions and architecture in a range of temples and monuments over about 1200 years.

Popular with Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists, Hajo is an ancient pilgrimage center. It is located just 24 km from Guwahati and is most famous for its Hayagriva Madhava Mandir. The giant ancient turtle in this temple is quite popular.

**Hajo** is a historic town set in the hills northwest of Guwahati, Assam, India. It is a meeting point of Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims due to the various pilgrimage sites on the different hills of Hajo. To the Hindus, the Manikut Parbat of Hajo is the site of the 10th-century temple ruins and the 11th- to 16th-century temples complex for Vaishnavism as well as shrines of Shaivism and Shaktism. To the Buddhists, particularly from Bhutan and Tibet, Assam is where the Buddha died and the Hayagriva temple in Hajo is a part of the sacred geography of the Buddha. To the regional Muslims, the Mughal era Poa-Mecca shrine on another hill of Hajo has the tomb of Giyasuddin Aulia built in the 17th-century.

Hajo is one of the important historical and archaeological sites in northeast India as it preserves the history, inscriptions and architecture in a range of temples and monuments over about 1200 years. It is also a site known for its tradition of preserving rare species of tortoises, with Hindus believing that they are a form of Kurma avatar of Vishnu.

## **Hayagriva Madhava Mandir**

**Hayagriva Madhava Temple** is situated on the Monikut hill. The hill is situated in Hajo of Kamrup District in Assam, India. Which is around 30 km to west of Guwahati. The Kalika Purana composed in the 11th century CE in Kamarupa talks about the origin of this form of Vishnu and his final establishment in the hill of

Monikut, where the present temple is located. The present temple structure was constructed by the King Raghudeva Narayan in 1583. According to some historians the King of Pala dynasty constructed it in 10th century. It is a stone temple and it enshrines an image of Hayagriva Madhava. Some Buddhists believe that the Hayagriva Madhava temple, best known in the group of Hindu temples, is where the Buddha attained Nirvana.



The giant ancient turtle in this temple is quite popular. It is known that the temple was constructed by the **King Raghu deva Narayan** in 1583. According to some



other historians King of Pala dynasty constructed it in 6th century. It is a stone temple and it enshrines an image of Hayagriva Madhav.

## **Powa Mecca**

Hajo is a town which has religious places of different faiths, such as Hindus, Muslims and the Buddhists. The Muslim place of pilgrimage in Hajo is Powa Mecca Mosque. The name of the mosque means one quarter of Mecca, which is the holiest city for the Muslims situated in Arab. It is said that by offering prayers in this mosque, devotees gain one fourth of the good grace that they would have gotten in the real Mecca. On the top of Garurachal hill, the Powa Mecca mosque stands. This is the tomb of the pioneer of Muslim religion in this area, Pir Ghiyasuddin Auliya. In 1657 AD, Sujauddin Muhammad Shah had built this mosque. At that time Shah Jahan was the

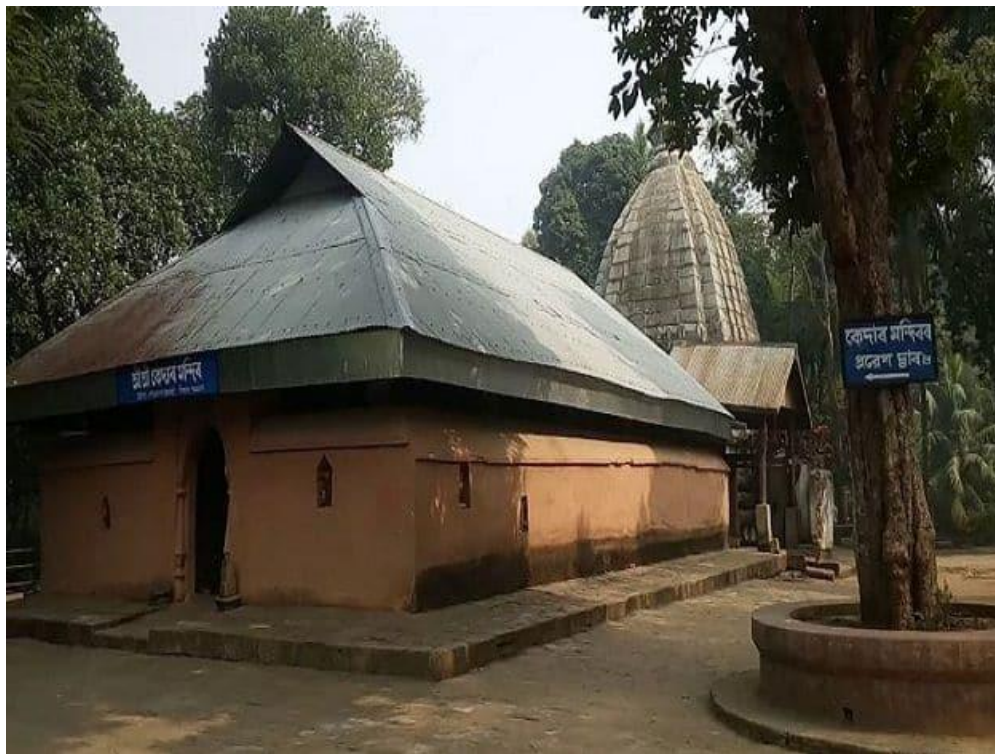


ruling Mughal emperor of India. The mosque is situated on the hill over the banks of the Brahmaputra River and is only 24 kms away from Guwahati. This is a shrine

where not only the Muslims, but the Hindus also come to offer their prayers. The temple of Hayagriva Madhaba is just on the side of the mosque.

## **Kedareswara Temple**

One sacred space, for the Hindus is the Kedareswara temple in Hajo. The reigning deity of the temple is the Hindu God, Shiva. This is a well known medieval Shiva temple established in 1753 by the king from Ahom dynasty, Rajeswar Singha, according to the inscription written on the walls of the temple. The shrine is situated on top of the small hill called Madanchalla. The uniqueness of this temple lies in the fact that it has the rare self originated phallic symbol, or Swayambhu Linga, that too in the Ardhanariswara, or androgynous form. The linga is generally kept covered in a metal bowl. Historically, this is one of the most important temples in India. And therefore, apart from the religious pilgrimage, history and archeology enthusiasts also often visit this beautiful temple of Shiva.





Kedareswara Temple

## Some places near Hajo

### Panch Tirtha

The Hara-Gauri temple is at the outer entrance to the Umananda temple. It is a small shrine. Located as it is on an island, the Umananda temple has unique riverine beauty. This temple is considered as one of the five panchatirthas in **Guwahati**.

**Hajo** is an ancient pilgrimage centre for three religions: Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims. In fact it is a 'Panchtirtha' One of the five holiest places. It lies on the banks of the Brahmaputra River, 24 km from the city of Guwahati in the Kamrup district of Assam, India.

Thus the temple of DouL Govinda at Rajadooar is central to the five shrine (Panch-Tritha) namely Manikarneswar, Dirgheswari, Ashwakranta, Kamakhya and Umananda. The Rudresswar Shiva temple is about three kilometers away to the north-west of Rajadooar. The Ahom king Pramatta Singha erected this temple in



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## **Khajuraho of Assam**

These are the ruins of the **Madan Kamdev temple complex**, whose erotic iconography has given it the nickname 'Khajuraho of Assam'. Further underlining its erotic nature is the ruined garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum) of a medieval temple. Madan Kamdev is located in Dewangiri Hill of Kamrup District at a distance of 15 km from Hajo. Madan Kamdev was brought to light in the 1970s during an archeological excavation. Ruins of several temples were revealed spreading across half a kilometer area. Radio carbon dating shows that the structure belongs to medieval period. The sculpture and intricate carvings is truly mesmerizing. Sculptures of Madan (God of Love), elephants, lions, Gods and Goddesses etc. are great pieces of architecture. This place is an excellent example of medieval period stone sculpture. It's a true wonder of North East India.

Madan Kamdev is a renowned pilgrimage centre and tourist spot of Assam. It is visited by tourists frequently. The temple has idols of lord Siva and Goddess Uma. However, the place is called Madan Kamdev. Nagara architecture has been used in the temple which has images carved out of monolithic rocks. Erotic images of male and female in sexually excited position have been sculptured in the temple. There is a sculpture of a six headed Bhairav, four armed Shiva, and terrible looking demon.

There is stone idol of Apsara, the divine dancer, that resembles the structures of the Ajanta and Elora. The structures in the temple are of immense interest to the tourists. A large number of tourists and devotees flock the place to worship lord Shiva, the main deity in the temple. Other than the sculptures there are also hills and rivulets around the temple. Tourists also come to the place for enjoying picnic

The temple is dedicated to lord Kamdev, the God of love. The partly ruined sculptures in the temple depict the love story of Kamdev and his wife Rati. The idol curved out of rock-stone resembles that of the idols of Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh. Sculptures in Madan Kamdev depict romantic association of god and goddess.

### **History of Madan Kamdev Temple**

The history of the temple goes back to mythological times. Mythology says that Kama or Madan, the god of love, was burnt into ashes by the anger of lord Shiva. Kamdev was reborn and was united with his wife Rati in this place. Madan Kamdev belongs to the Pala dynasty between 10 to 12 the centuries AD. The ruins of the temple area are believed to be the remains of more than 20 temples. The place was unknown to people since several years.

In 1981 excavation works were carried by archeologists. Temples of stone and brick were noticed by them at the site. These temples were in a ruined state. According to archeologists these temples were of religious importance. A water tank has been found in the area that suggests the existence of residential area.

### **Importance**

Madan Kamdev is one of the historical sites of Assam. The temple is scattered all around the Dewangiri hillock. The temple has an idyllic backdrop of green hills and flowing rivulet, griffins, nymphs, dancing fairies, gods and goddess in consummate

evolutions, walls, pillars, lintels and animals. There are temples made of brick and stone and rare sculptures in the Madan Kamdev.







Sculptures of Madan Kamdev