

Lecture on Hajo: a symbol of Socio-Cultural Integration

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, North East Regional Centre, Guwahati organized a talk entitled, 'Hajo: a symbol of Socio-Cultural Integration', under its monthly program series.

Hajo is an ancient pilgrimage centre for Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims. The term 'Hajo' is derived from *Bodo* dialect where 'Ha' means 'high' and 'Jo' means 'land', thereby implying it as 'highland'. The place is known for its ancient temples as well as other monuments, housings, sacred artifacts.

Hajo is also known as *Panchatirtha*, where one temple is devoted to Lord Vishnu, one to Lord Ganesha and three to Lord Shiva named as Kedar, Kameswar and Kamaleswar temples. The Hayagriva Madhava temple, which is one of the most significant and important temples in Hajo is devoted to Lord Vishnu, who is worshiped here in his *Narashima Avtara*. The temple is visited and worshiped both by Hindu and Buddhist devotees. According to one popular belief among the Buddhist devotees, it is believed that the Lord Buddha attained his mahaparinirvana in this place. The Ganesha temple at Hajo was constructed during the reign of the Ahom King Pramatta Singha between 1744-1751.

Hajo is also famous for *powa mecca*, a holy pilgrimage of the Muslims. The term *powa mecca* means a quarter of land from Mecca which is a holy Islamic shrine. The mosque or the *powa mecca* which was initially built by Suja, a Mughul prince (Aurangzab's brother); was renovated during the rule of another Ahom king *Swargadeo* Rudra Singha, also known as an architect of ancient Assam between 1696-1714. Hajo, over the period emerged as the important place of worship and pilgrimage among the Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims, which is a unique phenomenon.

The talk was presented by Prof. Prabin Chandra Das, who is a former Professor in Department of Folklore Research, Gauhati University. The talk was Chaired by Prof. Dayananda Pathak, former Principle Pragjyotish College, Guwahati and senior faculty at Sankardev University, Nagaon. The talk was well appreciated by all for its educative and informative insight.



