CHAPTER-III

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

AND PRACTICES
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I. Beliefs and practices of the people of the kingdoms of Kāmarūpa and Kamatā:

Brahmaputra valley was inhabited since remote past by the non-Aryan people called Kirātas or Asūras and Mlechas, who had their own culture and religious beliefs. But the Vedic culture gradually infiltrated into the valley at least in the first century A.D., if not earlier resulting the slow conversion of the non-Aryan tribes to Hinduism. Kālikā Purān mentions that Naraka a political adventurer from Mithilā (Orissa) killed its Kirāta ruler and founded the kingdom of Kāmarūpa, brought a number of Brahmanas and settled them in this land. It was followed by almost all of his successors and thus with the settlement of Brahmanas the process of his assimilation of the Aryans and the non-Aryans had begun, which almost radically changed the local beliefs and customs wherever it was possible.

With the contact with non-Aryans, the Vedic religion also underwent changes mainly in two ways - first in the creation, chiefly illustrated by the Epics and Purānic literature of a galaxy of deified personages; Secondly, in the adoption of deities, religious myths, and also cults derived from the races beyond the Brahmanic pale. Some of these gods and goddesses developed into special cults along sectarian lines.¹

The worship of the Śiva was the popular form of religion of both the aboriginals and the Aryanised people. Saivism which was the dominant religion of the ruling dynasties and also the Hinduised population upto the twelfth century A.D., bears certain affinities with the Bodo tribal deity Sivrāi-Bāthau. Śiva who is represented by a linga in Hinduism, while by a cactus shoot in the Bodo traditional religious beliefs. Hara and Pārvati are sometimes worshipped in popular Hindu religions as Burhā Gosāin (old god) and Budhi Gosāni (old goddess). The Bodos also worship them similarly.²

The Kalika Purana claims\(^3\) that before the advent of Naraka, Śiva was the guardian deity of Prāgījyotisa. The prevailing traditions in Assam shows that king Bana Sūra of Sonitpur was great devotee of Lord Śiva\(^4\), who on behalf of his devotee was said to have fought with Lord Krishna in Sonitpur.\(^5\) According to Kalika Purana, the number of sacred places in Kāmarūpa connected with Śiva worship is larger than that of places associated with Visnu or Devi worship.\(^6\) It is said that Śiva worship was first introduced in early Assam by Jalpeswar, a king of the tract of land in North Bengal known as Jalpāguri, and formerly included in the ancient kingdom of Kāmarūpa. He is also said to have founded the temple called Jalpeswara Śiva.\(^7\) The inscriptions of the Kāmarūpa king Bhāskaravarman (7th century A.D) contain definite references to the worship of Śiva in his kingdom.\(^8\) A grant of Vanamala (835-865 A.D.) of Sālastambha dynasty states that Bhagādatta worshiped Śiva with great humility and penances.\(^9\) His successor, Brājādatta also devoted to Śiva.\(^10\) Both the king Hajarvārdaśava (A.D. 815-835) and his son Vanamala built the beautiful Śiva temple of Hetukasulin at Hārupeswara in Tezpur.\(^11\) In the Nidhanpur grant Bhāskaravarman invokes Śiva in the initial verse. Harcha Charitra of Bānabhata mentions that Bhāskaravarman worshipped no other god than Śiva.\(^12\) It is also mentions that from his childhood Bhāskaravarman firmly resolved never to do homage to anybody except the lotus feet of Śiva.\(^13\) It seems that Saivism at that time was a fully developed religion with its various sub-cults from different names by which Śiva was worshipped in the land. Lord Śiva is involved as Parāmeswara\(^14\) (the supreme

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5. L. Devi. Asam Buransi. P.23
6. Kalika Purana. Ch. 77, 78, 79. Pp. 296ff; (the number of places associated with Śiva, Vishnu and Devi are respectively fifteen, four and five); B. K. Barua: op. cit. Pp. 160ff; MGK. P.10
7. B.K. Kakotि.: P.12; ABGB. Pp. 32f; B. K. Barua.: P.162.
10. Tezpur Copper Plate V.8
11. Ibid. V.24; M. M. Sarmā. P.103
13. Ibid.
14. Nidhanpur Grant. V.4
Lord; Maheswara\textsuperscript{15} (the great Lord); Iswara\textsuperscript{16} (the Lord); Mahāvarāha\textsuperscript{17} (the great Boar); Ādideva\textsuperscript{18} (the first god); all these names denote Śiva’s position of supremacy over all other gods. His beneficient nature is indicated by the names of Sambhu\textsuperscript{19} (the benign one), Sankara\textsuperscript{20} (the beneficent), and Prājādhīnātha\textsuperscript{21} (lord of the people). Rudra is his name which signifies his destructive or fierce character. The various names attributed to Śiva alone convey a fair idea of the popular conception of the god.

The inscriptions mentioned above also refer to the temples dedicated to Śiva. Ratnapāla (A.D. 1010-1040) one of the succeeding kings of the Pāla dynasty is stated to have filled up the earth with white-washed temples wherein the images of Śiva was installed.\textsuperscript{22} Hieun-Tsāng, when visite Kāmarūpa noticed hundreds of Deva temples in the land many of which were probably dedicated to Śiva.\textsuperscript{23}

From the examination of the various sources it seems that all the royal families of the ancient Kāmarūpa were devotee of Śiva. In the land grants of almost all the monarchs there are invocations of Śiva addressed with any of his appellations. In the Assam plates of Vallabhadeva (1185 A.D.)\textsuperscript{24} there are evidences to show that Saivism continued to be prevalent in the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{25} Vallabhadeva’s grant recorded that the parents of Vallabhadeva got him as a boon from Śiva, who has been delighted by their great austerities. It is relevant to mention that at the end of the Pālas of Kāmarūpa in the middle of the twelfth century A.D. the kingdom was broke up into a number of smaller kingdoms. Of these in Kamatāpura, during the reign of king Durlabhanārāyana, roughly assigned to the thirteenth-fourteenth century, Hema Swaraswāti wrote two Assamese Kāvyas entitled Prahlāda-Charitra and Haragauri

\textsuperscript{15} Grant of Balavarman. Vv. 1-2
\textsuperscript{16} Grant of Vanamala. Vv. 1-2
\textsuperscript{17} Gauhati Grant of Indrapāla. V. 2
\textsuperscript{18} Suvankarapataka Grant. V. 1
\textsuperscript{19} Gauhati Grant of Indrapāla V. 2
\textsuperscript{20} Bargaon Grant Vv. 1-2
\textsuperscript{21} Gauhati Grant of Indrapāla V. 2
\textsuperscript{22} M. M. Sarmā: P.186; L. Devī. P.47
\textsuperscript{24} M. M. Sarmā: P.273f.
\textsuperscript{25} CHAHB. Vol. I. P.316f.

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Samvāda. In the earlier work the poet introduces himself as a son of one Rudrasaraswati, and in this connection the poet makes a reference to Kamatanda and Durabhanāyana.26 In the later work, the poet gives the name of his grand father as Pasupati. The names Rudra and Pasupati both meaning Śiva, tend to show that Saivism was popular also during the thirteenth century. The Prahlāda-Charitra is concerned with the theme of devotion to Visnu and Haragauri Samvāda is concerned with the theme of Śiva’s marriage with Pārvati and the birth of Kārtika. In those days people seems to have been equally disposed to Śiva and Visnu with any sectarian rigidity. Another poets Kaviratna Saraswati, Rudrakandali, Mādhava Kandali author of the various classical works of the period recorded the popularity of Śiva among all the royal and enlightened class and also in the masses. Their works shows that there was a peaceful co-existence of the cult not only Śiva and Visnu, but also Devi and Visnu. Śiva is often referred to as Bhairava. Accordingly people in those days used to worship Bhairava alone as the best religion.27 Until the coming of the neo-Vaisnavism, the cult of Śiva worship was a very important aspect of Hinduism in Assam. Even Kusumbarā the father of Sankaradeva, the founder of the neo-Vaisna movement in Assam, was a worshipper of Śiva and had Sankaradeva as his son only by offering puja to the Gopeswara Śiva of Singari.28 According to Bhusana Dvija, one of the traditional biographers, Kusumbarā worshipped Śiva in the form of a linga for having a son.29 Even Sankaradeva is said to be an incarnation of Lord Sankara (Śiva).

Śiva is not conceived in the abstract form alone. He appears as a concrete divine figure with familiar myths and legends clustering round him. He was also worshipped in the Linga form. From the large scale discovery of Lingas all over the state denotes that Śiva was chiefly worshipped in the form of Lingam, an upright pillar or rod of stone erected on a pedestal called Yoni. The Yogini Tantra a sixteenth century Sanskrit work of Assam states that the number of Lingas in Kāmarūpa exceeds a million.30

30. B. K. Barua : P.165

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Besides there were and even now are various tribal modes of worship of Śiva. Indeed Śiva was the Aryanised form of the popular tribal god of the time and was adored as Burhā, Bābā, Bāthou Śivarāi etc.31 In the dynastic history of the Koch kings of Koch Behār, it is narrated that the Koch kings worshipped Śiva in both Brahmānical and tribal rituals. In this context it is recorded that on the eve of his expedition against the Āhoms, king Naranarayana offered worship to Śiva according to the Brahmānical rites. But thereupon there was a protest from his tribal soldiers who demanded that Śiva should also be worshipped according to their tribal customs, offering rice, swine, buffaloes, he-goats, pigeons, ducks and cocks, wine by performing dance of dancing women (deo-dhani).32 The king then allowed his tribal soldiers and as well as he recognised and legalised this tribal mode of worship by issuing of an order. According to this on the north bank of the Brahmāputra river, people were allowed to practice their rituals in aboriginal forms of worship, and the people on the south bank would worship their god in Brahmānical rites.33

Thus it becomes clear that Śiva cult or Saivism was a living religion both amongst the aboriginals and the Aryanised peoples of the valley even after the coming of the neo-Vaisnava movement. It is to be stated that there are still innumerable ruins of Śiva temples all over the state. Beginning from Jalpaiguri in the north Bengal down to upper Assam, the ruins can be seen which point to the great popularity of the sect in the period under discussion.

**Saktism:**

Saktism the cult of worshipping a female goddess as the supreme deity in her different manifestations viz. Devi, Durgā, Kālī, Kālīkā, Chandi, Umā, Kāmākhyā, Tārā, Chāmundā and so on, was also prevailed in early and medieval Assam.34 She is adorned with sexual rites and the sacrifice of animals.35 Scholars believe that originally a local tribal goddess, and the deity was subsequently Hinduised and equated with Durgā or Pārvati, the wife of Śiva.36

32. *DRV*. Vv.324 - 228; B. K. Barua : p.165
33. *DRV* V.337; Ibid.
34. *CHAHB*. Vol. III. P.222
K. Kakati pointed out that the word Kāmākhyā in its Sanskrit form has been derived from the Austrie word “Kāmoi” meaning the land of the dead.\(^{37}\)

Various literary sources and existing remains witnessed and also traditionally Kāmarūpa has been recognised as one of the main seat of the Sākta cult with its chief temple at Kāmākhyā as its centre. The genital organ of Sati is said to have fallen here when Śiva was moving with the corpse of Sati\(^{37a}\) and hence it earns an all India recognition. Kālikā Purāṇa\(^{38}\) and Yogini Tantra\(^{39}\) vividly describes the Panchamakara, (i.e. matsya or fish, mansā or flesh, madya or wine, mudrā or parched grain and moithuna or mystic symbol of maithuna or sex), way of worship of the Devi here.

R. C. Hazara rightly observed that with the spread of Saktism Kāmarūpa attained importance as a seat of the Sākta cult and greatly influenced the religious life and practice of the people of Eastern India, so much so that, works like the Kālikā Purāṇa, Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa, Brihaddharma Purāṇa etc., highly glorify Kāli or Kālikā the principal deity of Kāmarūpa.\(^{40}\) It appears that Kāmākhyā was worshipped by some of the primitive tribes of the land and was later on included within the Aryan pantheon with due honour and prestige. After the Kirātas were driven out, Naraka introduced the vedic way to worship Kāmākhyā, at the instance of his father Visnu.\(^{41}\) After Naraka’s death Kāmākhyā was no longer the primordial Mother Goddess but became the amorous wife Pārvati who lived in inseparable companionship with her husband Śiva for secret love. Thus a new motif came into play and fresh conceptions have been ascribed to the goddess. The wife-goddess Pārvati in time was again assimilated to a virginal goddess of beauty and sex, Tripūra, and a considerable section of the Kālikā Purāṇa’s had been devoted to the exposition of the rites of her worship.\(^{42}\)

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37. MGK. P.38; AFDK. Pp.48 – 49
37a. The legend of Daksha Yajna may found in Kālikā Purāṇa, Ch.16.
39. Yogini Tantra, Purba Kānda. Ch.VI; Utter Kānda. Ch. VII
41. Kālikā Purāṇa. Ch.38
Another important centre of Devi worship was the temple of Tamreswari at Sadia where the goddess was worshipped with even human sacrifice. This Tamreswari is no other than the goddess Dikkaravāsini whom, Kalīkā Purāṇa describes as the presiding deity of north-eastern part of the Kāmarūpa. She has two forms Tikṣna-Kāntā or Ugratārā (dreadfully attractive) and Lalitā Kāntā (gracefully attractive). Tikṣna-Kāntā is black, potbellied and with one lock of matted hair (Eka-jata). Her attendants are Bhaga, Subhaga, Chamundā, Karālā, Bhīsānā, Vikālā, all dreadful names. She is to be worshipped in the same manner like the goddess Kāmākhyā, her most favourite offerings consisted of strong liquor, human sacrifice, madaka (honey), flesh, curry, coconuts, and sugarcane. B. Kakati, suggests that from her epithets Ugratārā, Ekjaṭā, she seems to have been of Buddhist origin. There is another Ugratārā temple at Gauhati, built by Āhom king Śiva Singha (A.D. 1714-44). The Buddhist goddess Ugratārā later received into Hindu Tantras and taken as manifestation of Durgā or Kāli. In this way, all local and independent deities, such as Umā, Kāli, Karālā, Chamundā, Gauri, Chandikā, and Vijayā - all came to be considered as manifestations of Kāmākhyā or Durgā in different circumstances. The other form Lalitā Kāntā is white in complexion, she possesses a fresh youth and graceful limbs. The other noted place of Devi worship is situated at Jayantia hill of present day Meghalaya known as Jayanteswari who was also worshipped with human sacrifices and offerings. Likewise Mālini Thān, a place on foot hills of present day Arunachal Pradesh also a place of Devi worship during this period.

The forefathers of Sankaradeva (1449-A.D.) the great neo-Vaisnavite preacher of this land were also Sākta Bhuyan. Sankaradeva’s great grand father Chandivara was given the title Devidasa by king Durlabhanārāyana (of 14th century) for his deep devotion to goddess Candi. Sankaradeva’s great disciple Mādhavadeva was a staunch Sākta before his conversion to Vaisnavism. All these indicate that Saktism was a prominent cult in the mediavel Assam.

43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.: MGK. Pp.60f.; Kalīkā Purāṇa. Ch.80. V.31
45. Ibid. Ch.80. Vv.37,38,40,52; B. K. Barua: P.168
46. MGK. P.60
47. B. K. Barua: P.168; Kalīkā Purāṇa. Ch.80. Vv.35 - 42
48. Ibid. Ch.80. Vv.52 - 55
The extensive ruins of Devi temples and numerous icons of the goddess in her various forms, particularly in the symbols of Yoni cut out from stone also prove the wide spread prevalence of Saktism at that time centering round the Sākta pithas more particularly of Kāmākhya.

Tantricism a form of worship associated with magic charms, the use of wine, efficacy of mantras and sex worship was also developed. Tantricism is the type of religion described and prescribed in Tantras and Purāṇas. Some of the Purāṇas and the Yogīnītantra are concerned mainly with the erstwhile cult of Saktism.

The symbols of worship for the Tantrists are linga and Yoni placed together. The tantrists believe that woman personified in the fame of yoni is the source of all creations through her association with man symbolised as linga.

Visnu worship was also evidently in prevalent in the Brahmaputra valley from very early times. The kings of Kāmarūpa of Varmana, Śālastambha and Pāla families used to trace their lineage from Lord Visnu through legendary Naraka. Bānabhatta in his Harsacarīta describes Bhāskaravarmāna as a descendent of the Vaisnava family (vaisnava vamsah). The earliest recorded reference to the worship of Visnu in Kāmarūpa occurs in the Badaganga Rock inscription (554 A.D.) of king Bhūtivarmā (510-555 A.D.) where he is mentioned as Parāma-daivata-Parāmbhattāraka. The Umāchala rock inscription speaks that a cave temple was built by king Surendra Verma for worship of Bhagawata Balabhadrā. Most of the Pāla kings of the Kāmarūpa took Visnu’s name as their personal names implying that they were all worshippers of Visnu. The adoption of Visnu’s name as a personal name became common during this time. One of the rulers of Pāla dynasty was known as Gopāla, another...

53. CHAHB. Vol. III. P.222.
54. MGK. P.34f.
55. In the Śānti Parva of Mahābhārata, Vishnu is called Prāgyotisa - Jyestha; M. M. Sarmā. op. cit. Pp. 20, 133, 185.
important ruler Indrapāla (1040-65 A.D.) adopted the name Achyuta.\(^{59}\) Ratnapāla (1010-1040 A.D.) compared himself with Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.\(^{60}\) Dharmapāla (1095-1120 A.D.) assumed the epithet Visnu.\(^{61}\) All these signify their devotion to Vaisnavism.

The worship of \textit{avatāra} or incarnations is, of course a notable feature of Vaisnavism of the period. The inscriptions of Vanamala, Balavarman, Ratnapāla, Indrapāla, and Dharmapāla mention the Boar - incarnation. The \textit{Kamauli} grant of Vaidyadeva (1138-1150 A.D.), begins with an invocation of Hari in the form of Varāha.\(^{62}\) Other incarnations of Visnu mentioned in the \textit{Kālikā Purāṇa} are Haya-griva (worshipped in Hājo), Matsya or Fish incarnation, Mādhava in the form of Bhairava, and in the form of Bāsudeva Kṛṣṇa.\(^{63}\) Visnu as Hayagriva is still worshipped in the temple of Hayagriva Mādhava at Hājo.

The prevalence of Vaisnavism in Kāmarūpa in the period under study can be learnt from the sculptural and archaeological remains also discovered in the state. Remains of the discoveries of the deity indicate that Vaisnavism prospered fairly well in Kāmarūpa from the seventh century onwards. The system of Visnu worship in the land including all kinds of rituals and offerings are fairly narrated in \textit{Kālikā Purāṇa}.\(^{64}\)

Besides these three major cults, there were some other \textit{Purānic} god and goddess worshipped in individual form. The sculptural representations of such gods - Ganesha, Kārtika, Indra, Agni, Kuvera, Sūrya etc. signifies the prevalence of worshipping of these gods in individual forms. These cult may have been developed from sixth century onwards but there is however no definite ideas of their cults. Sculptures of Ganesha are met with in almost all temples of Assam but no sufficient evidence is available to prove the prevalence of Ganapataya. However a copper-plate of later period (1392 A.D.) witnessed about which opens its prasasti with the adoration of Ganapati - "\textit{namo ganapataya vande}".\(^{65}\) Vallabhadeva’s Grant also

\(^{59}\) Ibid. P. 199; Guwākochi \textit{cop. Pl.} of Indrapāla. line 62
\(^{60}\) Ibid. P. 186; Gauhati \textit{cop. Pl.} of Indrapāla V.9.
\(^{61}\) Puspabhadrā \textit{cop. Pl.}
\(^{63}\) Kālikā Purāṇ. Ch. 73, 74, 79, 80; Neog. \textit{Pabitra Asom} Pp. 13ff.
\(^{64}\) Kālikā Purāṇ. Ch. 88.
\(^{65}\) S. Barua. \textit{Some Ancient Relics found in North Lakhimpur}. JARS III. Pp.39-47.
invokes him as Lambodora. The Kālikā Purāṇa refers to the worship of most of these gods and describes in detail the procedure of their worship. Kuvera seems to be very popular among the semi Hinduised people of the state. Likewise Sūrya or sun worship seems to have received a special reverence among the Hindu Brahmanical rites. The formation of the "Prāgyotisa" itself, points to this fact. The earliest reference to Prāgyotisa as a centre of worship is found in the Griha Sutras where it is stated that one should visit the sacred country of Prāgyotisa before sunrise (tato niskrāmya Prāgyotisam puyadesam, upagamāyā anudit āditya). Prāgyotisa-Kāmarūpa was also known as Udayācala where, according to Mārkendya Purāṇa, was a temple of the sun. Tārānātha also mentions that sun-worship enjoyed a special favour in early Assam. He mentions that it was a Buddhist monk, Dhitika, who flourished as early as the third century B.C. was responsible for converting one Siddha Brahmana of Kāmarūpa from sun worship to Buddhism. The discoveries of the remains of temples and icons of the deity throughout Assam further signifies the prevalence of the sun worship during the period. The Da-Parvatī door frame of Tezpur, Sri Sūrya Pāhār in Goalpārā, Navagraha temple at Gauhati and some other sculptural remains point out the prevalence of this cult in early Assam. 'Māgha Bihu' the national festival of both tribal and plains people of Assam, associated with the fire cult and harvesting rite, also signifies the prevalence of sun worship from very early times in Assam. The extent of prevalence of Buddhism in early Kāmarūpa is a matter of controversy. However some literary and archaeological evidences witnessed the prevalence of Buddhism in Assam. Hieun Tsāng records that the few Buddhists in the country, for the fear of persecution had to perform their devotional rites in secret. The expression dharma, found in the

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66. Vallabhadeva’s grant. V.I.  
67. Kālikā Purāṇa. Ch.79, give descriptions of the sacred places in Assam connected with the worship of various gods and goddesses.  
70. Alaka Chatopdhyaya & D.P. Chatopdhyaya (tr & ed), Tārānātha’s History of Buddhism in India. Reprint, Delhi, 1997, P.47.  
71. In Goalpārā there is a hill known as a Sūrya Pāhār, there are large number of Sculptures and icons scattered, it is believed to associated with Sun worship.  
Nidhanpur Grant of Bhāskaravarman led some to believe that Buddhism did exist in Kāmarūpa at an early period. Justification in this connection can be made on the reason behind the regular worship of the Mādhava at the Hājo temple in Kāmarūpa by the Buddhist of the neighbouring countries of Bhutān, Nepāl and Tibet, considering it as the holy place of Lord Buddha.\(^{73}\) Kalhāna, the Kāshmirī historian of the twelfth century A.D. also states that Amritaprobha, the daughter of Kāmarūpa king probably of the fifth century A.D. and wife of Meghabāhana of Kāshmir took to Kāshmir a Tibetān Buddhist preacher called Stunpā who was her father's guru.\(^{74}\) It is recorded to have built a Vihara in honour of the guru call Lo-Stunpā. This shows the prevalence of the faith about the time in Kāmarūpa long before the visit to Kāmarūpa by Hieun-Tsāng.\(^{75}\) During the rule of the Sālastambha line there were Buddhist scholars in Kāmarūpa, such as Abhinavagupta, to defeat whom Sankarachāryya the one of the greatest Hindu scholar of the post Gupta period came to Kāmarūpa.\(^{76}\)

The prevalence of the faith is also supported by some icons of the Buddha found in the some temple ruins including that of Hājo, Kāmākhya at Nilāchala, Singari and Tezpur.\(^{77}\) The main temple of Hājo, Hayagriva Mādhava temple is still visited by large number of pilgrims from Tibet who considered it to be the place of Nirvāna of the Lord.\(^{78}\) The Tibetān scholar-preacher Tārānātha refers that one Aswabhava, a Buddhist preacher, preached the Mahāyāna doctrine in Kāmrūpa.\(^{79}\) The Buddhist Charyas, points to the fact that the existence of Buddhism having much affiliation to tantricism and Saktism in its professional aspect are to be found in the land since eight to ninth century. The Guwahati Grant of Indrapāla the word 'Tathāgata' has been inscribed,\(^{80}\) scholars think that it is a clear indication of the Buddha. Tāntrik-Buddhist days, Kāmarūpa became one of the important pithās in Eastern India and most of the Vajrāyaṇ, Siddhas are associated with this land securing patronage of the Pāla

\(^{74}\) M.A.Stein.(tr), Rājatarangini. London..III, Vv 9-10; CHAB. P.160; K.L.Barua.P.97.  
\(^{76}\) Ibid.  
\(^{77}\) Ibid.  
\(^{79}\) Tārānātha. P. 199.  
\(^{80}\) CHAB. P.160.
rulers. The Pala rulers not only patronised Vajrāyana but some of them even acquired mastery over the tantric lore. The wide spread prevalence of the cult is proved by the voluminous Tāntrik works dealing with magic and sorcery which are written or compiled in Assamese. In fact magic, sorcery, sacrifice, wine and sexual exercise became widely popular and common to all these sects. Under the circumstances, Tantricism, Saktism, and Vajrāyana Buddhism - all these sects had a common beliefs and practices. Nāthism, which was one of the most popular beliefs of the land, also bare with them the same beliefs and practices, particularly in the practices of Tantra, mantra, magic and sexual exercises.

Thus it can be surmised that the religious beliefs and the practices of the people of early Assam till about the growth of neo-vaishnavism in the sixteenth century, were a mixture of all these beliefs that grew out of both tribal and non-tribal practices and were much popular in the time during our period of study.

II. Beliefs and practices of the people of Koch kingdom

It is discussed elsewhere that the Koches not only curved out a new kingdom on the ruins of the Kāmarūpa-Kamatā but also established their authority over an extensive territory and thus emerged as a threat to the Āhoms in the east and the rulers of the Gauda in the west. They also formed a defensive alliance with the Mughal Empire. For this arrangement the people of western Assam felt more secured under the Koch rulers, which led to a large scale migration to the Koch kingdom. The neo-Vaishnavite preacher Sankaradeva, Mādhavadeva, Dāmodaradeva also went there and under the patronage of Naranarayan and his successors worked hard to introduce their religion. Thus they gained wonderful popularity among the masses and within a short time opened a new chapter of cultural progress in the Brahmaputra valley. Koch Behār thus was the base wherefrom a force was set in motion, which started smashing many a tribal barrier and brought a radical social transformation in the region.

82. Ibid.; Ibid; Ibid.

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Religion:

In the Koch kingdom, during our period of study prevailed the heterogeneous sects and beliefs among the masses. Hinduism was usually confined to the ruling families or to a certain areas of the capital cities. The non Hindu tribes worshipped their deities and performed the religious rites in their own ways as there was no any interference from the royal house. For the political benefit of the kingdom the Koch kings, patronised both Brahmanical and tribal worship, even they themselves accepted Hinduism and were elevated to the Kshatriya status by the Brahmin priest. But the neo-Vaishnavite movement of Sankardeva brought a major change in the existing systems.

The most popular deity of the people of the Koch kingdom was Śiva and the origin of the Koch kings has been connected with Him. All the coins issued by the Koch kings mention the name of Lord Śiva.84 The founder of the Koch kingdom Viswa Singha worshipped Śiva at the Bāneswara Śiva temple at present Koch Behār of west Bengal. Hāria Mandala, the father of Koch king Viswa Singha, and twelve other Mech chiefs associated with the Mandala, are described in the Darrang Rāj Vamsāvali as devotees of Śiva.85 The some records account the worship of Śiva, both according to Hindu scriptures as well as the tribal rites. King Naranarayan made an arrangement of Śiva worship in both the Brahmanical and the tribal rites, to please his soldiers at the time of war against the Āhoms. Subsequently he issued an order allowing the worship in the different temples lying on the northern side of the Gohāin Kamal Āli (road), according to the tribal mode associated with wine and flesh, while those lying south of the road were left to the Brahmaṇa priests.86 This indicates that Śiva was the dominant deity among both the tribal and Hinduised people of the kingdom. Bhuyans were also the devout worshipper of Śiva. It is found in the Kathā Guru Charit that Sankaradeva was named so because he was born at the blessings of god Sankara or Śiva.87 Śiva is reverenced among a number of tribes as Bātho, Bāthau, Bāthau-Brāi or Bāthau-

85. DRV. Vv. 50-53.
86. Ibid. Vv. 334-337.
87. KGC. P. 20.
Śivarāi, Burhā and Bābā etc, and worshipped with Vāmāchāra88 (left handed practices) practices. Gait notices the particular mode of Śiva worship among Mech people which was later modified and became a part of Hinduism. They began to identify themselves as Hindus of the Saiva sect, and worshipped Śiva under the name of Batho and his consort Kāli as Bali Khungri. To the former the Āngia-Mech sacrifice buffaloes, goats and pigeons; while his wife has to put up with the less respectable offerings of pigs, fowls, and goats, which the Jāti-Mech offer indifferently to either.89

Śiva was worshipped in various forms like those of Bhairava, Pasupati, Natarāja, Gopeswara, and Kirāta etc. In the Tantras a Mahabhārava form of Śiva came to be recognised. In this form Śiva gave himself up to unrestrained use of wine, women and flesh.90 The tribal concept that he was the God of diseases and death as well, was accepted to Hinduism in his form as Mahākāla Thākur. The worship of Śiva in this form was very popular among the Hinduised Koches of North Bengal.91 In the Kālikā Purāṇa and Yogini Tantra Śiva appears more often as a Bhairava than as a normal god and therefore vāmācarā practices could be legitimately held in the Śiva temples.92 The temple of Jalpasa Śiva at Jalpaiguri within the Kamatā and the Koch kingdoms, the Bhairava temple at Kamatāpur are fairly old and these two temples are beyond the present political boundary of Assam,93 and also within the present state of Assam following other Śiva temples have been in existence, attracting pilgrims and devotees, since the medieval times. Besides the existing notable temples there are many other minor Śiva temples and religious Thāns (sthānas) sacred to Burhā Gosāin or Pagalā Gosāin (Mahadeva/Śiva) through out the state, where people express their sense of devotion either out of gratitude for fulfilling their desire or from their innate and sincere devotion even today.

88. SHTN. P.81.; Pabitra Asom. P. 256.
89. SHTN. P. 81.
90. MGK. P. 20
92. MGK. P. 20.
93. S.N. Sarmā. 192.ff.
Alongside the primordial male deity, the people of the Koch kingdom also worshipped a primordial female deity called Burhi, Jakāni, Thākurāni, Kuri, Mechini, and Bali-Khungrí etc. The female deity was accepted to Hinduism as Durgā, Pārvatī, or Kāli, the consort of Śiva. Kāmarūpa, that is Assam, has earned celebrity as a centre of the Sakti and Tāntrik cult since the early medieval times. Kāmarūpa, Purnagiri, Uddiyānā, and Jalandhara were the four famous centres of Tantricism in India. The Kalika Purāṇa, an eleventh century works and Yogini Tantra, a sixteenth century works and Kāmākhya-Tantra, composed in Assam bear witness to the prevalence of the Tāntrik Sakti cult centering round the goddess Kāmākhya and her different manifestations. Their mode of worship as narrated in the above and some other works usually follow the Tāntrik procedures. It is believed that goddess Kāmākhya only a Sanskritised form of “Kāmkhi” or “Khām-māi-khāi”, the primordial female deity of the Bodo Kachāries who were so numerous in the Koch kingdom. The Koch kings of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the followers of the Sakti cult. They worshipped the deity in both her tribal and Sanskritised forms but they also patronised Vaisnava saints and scholars as well. The founder king Viswa Singha made offerings to Mechini before his accession to the throne and later he worshipped the goddess according to the vedic rites at the Kamateswari temple. It is narrated in the DRV, that Viswa Singha used to worship Durgā, while he was a cowherd boy by sacrificing grasshoppers to the deity and also one of his cowherd companion. Naranarayan the successor of Viswa Singha, rebuilt the temple of Kāmākhya and made liberal provisions for its maintenance by granting land and serving men. Pariksitnarayan (1603-1613) the king of eastern Koch kingdom used to worship Durgā annually.

95. S.N. Sarma. 186.
96. Pabitra Asom. P.257.
97. DRV. V. 102.
99. Ibid. Vv. 78-82.
In association with Saktism, Vajrāyana, the later form of Buddhism, a queer mixture of monistic philosophy, magic, and erotic, having absorbed various rites and rituals, gave rise to the cult of Tantrism. The Tāntrik ritual admitted the five M's namely madya (wine), māṅga (flesh), matsya (fish), mudrā (Parched grain), and maithuna (sexual union), and for this secret meetings were necessary. Numerous references associated with this cult are found in contemporary sources. Kathā Guru Charit, describes how a votary worshipped the Devi at the cost of all his belongings and Thān used to offer his own blood to the deity as a result of which his body turned cotton white. The Brahma priests tried to impose the religious order on the common people and in connection with Varnaśrama dharma as prescribed in the Kaumudi books. The Yogini Tantra which mainly deals with the worship of Devi with all left handed practices was composed in Kamarūpa during this period.

There also prevailed certain minor cults viz the worship of snake goddess Manasha or Mārāi. Among the tribes, Manasha was worshipped as Bisahāri or remover of poisons. It is therefore believed that the cult of goddess Manasha developed out of both Aryan and non-Aryan beliefs on snake worship. The reason to believe the prevalence of the practice in the Koch kingdom was that as DRV records how the Koch general Chilarai worshipped this goddess by reciting mantras to get the mother of the Bengal Pāḍshā, recovered from a snake bite. Likewise another goddess Sitalā or Āi, the goddess of small pox was also worshipped. The goddess adored with a special kind of songs called - Āinam which are still being practised by the woman folks of the Brahmaputra valley. The tribal people both Hinduised or not worshipped a number of male and female deities. Bodo Kachāris of present Kamarup district still worship their primordial male and female deities called Burha-Burhi. Likewise, they worshipped ‘Bullibriu’ (river Bharali), ‘Mainābri’ (goddess Lakshmi) etc. The Hinduised Koches of North Bengal worshipped certain female deities like Bhāndāni, Pethāni and Tistu Bhuri (river Tīsta) and male deities like Hudumdeo, Riski Kistho, Balibādra Thākur etc.

101. KGC. Pp. 117f.  
102. D. Nath. opcit  
103. Ibid. P.167.  
104. DRV.Vv. 516-528.  
105. D. Nath. P.170
Nāthism a minor sect of religion prevailed in the kingdom which was a sub sect of Saivism. Challenging the caste system and superiority of the Brahmans, the progenitors of Nātha sect hinduised the teaching of the Buddhist Tantras, had gained its greater popularity. Nāthism derived its inspiration from the Vajrāyān. The Nāthas are also known as Yogis, various forms of yoga practices having been once cultured among them, and also as Kātānis on account of their profession of the rearing of silk cocoons and spinning of silk yarn. Contemporary literary sources testify, to the prevalence of this sect under the early Koch rulers. The worship of Guru Gurakshanātha, supposed to be the progenitor of the Nātha cult, is still prevalent among the followers of the sect of Koch Behār and its neighbouring regions which they use to perform in the months of Bhādra (July-August) or Fālguna (Feb-March). The different types of yoga exercises seem to have been also practised in Assam from early times. Sankaradeva also came across yoga-sāstras in his early youth. Kathā Guru Charit also refers to a yogi who made his abode in the house of Naranarayana.

Some itinerant yogis went about exhibiting before people different yogic feats.

**Bhakti or Neo-Vaisnavite movement:**

The founder Koch king Biswa Singha is said to have patronised the disciples of Visnu with gifts. There is also ground to believe that the dynastic title “Narāyana” of the Koch kings must have in imitation of the name Narāyan of the Supreme deity of the Hindus. Raghudev the king of Koch Hájo rebuilt the Hayagriva-Mādhava temple at Hájo and granted lands slaves and servants for its maintenance. He is said to have worshipper of Mādhava (visnu). It also appears that scholars studying Bhāgavata Gitā, Purāṇ etc. in the court of Raghudev. However although the Visnu worship was prevalent during the period, it was just a minor cult and was quite different from that of Sankaradeva’s concept.

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106. SHTN. P. 89.
107. Ibid.
109. SHTN. P. 90.
111. HAG P.49.
112. D. Nath. opcit. SHTN. P.86.
113. DRV. Vv. 679-687.
In fact the neo-vaisnavite movement under the stewardship of Sankaradeva during this period in Assam was a response to the Indian Bhakti movement. Under the prevailing conditions in Assam at the time when ignorance and superstitions were widely rampant, there was no doubt the need for rationalising men’s religious attitude. There was also the need for uniting the heterogeneous tribes and their different faiths and beliefs through the bond of common faith and to create conditions for their harmonious living. Sankaradeva (1449-1569) being well realised the need of the society made a long twelve years pilgrimage to different holy places of India, where he entered into religious discussions with different theologians and could study the religious trends of the period. He then initiated a faith conforming to the main principles of Bhakti, which could revolutionise the entire face of the life of the people and lead to the formation of a broader civil society. Lateron his faith was highly acclaimed by the common people as a relief from the Brahmanical rite and rituals etc. It had united the diverse tribal communities of the region and gave a culture, to be identified later as Assamese culture.

Sankaradeva’s faith which come to be known as Eksarana Nāma-Dharma as it taught devotion to one God only through simple Nāma-Kirtana or divine services as in the form of community prayer. Sankaradeva was primarily a religious and social reformer and a speculative thinker. His purpose was not to propound a philosophy based on religion, supported by discursive reasoning and abstract thinking, but to propagate a simple system of faith based on devotion He could rightly perceive that society of his time was in need of a reformed religion rather than a well-formulated philosophical system. He advocated only the Dāsya attitude of Bhakti, in which the votary is to consider himself as the servant of God. Sankaradeva’s concept of religion comprised mainly of four principles - the comprehension of Parām Brahma, the all-pervasive Supreme Being in the form of Visnu as extolled in the Vedas; Eka-Sarana or absolute and undivided devotion to the Supreme God in the form of Sri Kṛṣṇa as extolled in the Geeta, and Nāma-Kirtana or divine services in the form of

115. CHAB. P.447.
116. CHAHB. Vol. II.P.237.
prayer, and Sat-sanga or fraternity or the pious divine as enjoined by the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.\textsuperscript{117} Sankaradeva taught equality of all human beings and accepted disciples from amongst the tribesmen and even from the Muslims and placed them all in equal footing. Thus among his disciples we find one - Chāndsāi, a Muslim; Govinda, a Gāro; Bhattadeva, a Brahmin; Paramāṇanda a Mīri; Jayananda a Bhūtiā; Narahari an Āhom; Srīrāma a Kaivatra; Mādhava of Jayanta a potter; and Dāmodara a Baniyā or trader.\textsuperscript{118}

Sankaradeva brought about a change in the religious outlook of the people through his teachings, and also generated a strong community feeling among his disciples. This satisfied the feudal requirements of the time. But there was no congenial atmosphere for him and his disciples in the Āhom kingdom, which disfavoured his teachings. As because his new concept was an open revolt against the old intellectualism of the Brahmanical philosophy, on one hand and the misguided tantricists on the other. His concept Bhakti was the way open to all, irrespective of any caste barriers, it gives the same religious footing to the Brahman and Chandala alike. Moreover he rendered the sacred scripture, the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa into simple Assamese songs and verses, which even the illiterate could sing or recite or enjoy. His teachings amounted to a challenge to the Brahmanical priesthood by minimizing the importance of that oligarchy and even trying to by-pass it in some respects. The non-vaishnavite cults certainly were hard hit, and the significance of this feet in this country of tantricism and tribal faiths need hardly be emphasized. The priestly class thus affected, took up the challenge, and offered Sankara open hostility and as well as lodged complaints against him to the Āhom king Suhungmung (1497-1539 A.D.) with an allegation Sankara had tampered with their old faith and religious practices. The king must have possibly alarmed at such dissatisfaction among the people living in a locality of much strategic importance. Besides the tragic incident of his son-in-law Hari's execution and the confinement of his follower Mādhava in the Āhom capital

\textsuperscript{117} The four principles in the condensed form are -Guru, Deva, Nāma, and Bhakata. Sankaradeva's religious teachings were being mainly based on Bhāgavata Geeta and Bhāgavata Purāṇa, his creed was called Bhagavatī Dharma. Popularly it was called Mahāpurushiya Dharma and officially Eka-Sarana-Dharma.

\textsuperscript{118} KGC. Pp.140,255; SHTN, P. 369.
brought it clear to Sankara that he could no longer hope to see peaceful thriving of his order in the Ahom kingdom.119

All these incident led Sankara to think for migration to the Koch kingdom in the year 1547.120 Sankara’s life in the Koch kingdom is marked by a comparatively calm; which gave him the opportunity to fulfil the mission of his life.121 The contemporary Koch kingdom was a remnant of the central part of the ancient Hindu-kingdom of Kāmarūpa. The advent of Sankaradeva was not welcomed by a section of Brahmana. However the Koch king Naranarayan being highly impressed by Sankaradeva’s depth of knowledge and his saintly character, not only established him by appointing him as the Gomāstā (administrative officer) over the modern Barpeta region, but also donated him lands to establish a Satra at Bhelādūngā (later known as Madhupur) near Koch capital.122 Kathā Guru Charit states that king Naranarayan even wanted to accept initiation from Sankaradeva but it was declined as because it was not his principle to initiate a king.123 However Chilarai got his initiation from Sankaradeva and became an active patron of the new creed. He also married the daughter of Sankaradeva’s cousin, Rāmarāya. With both the king’s and the commander-in-chief’s support at his back, Sankaradeva and his follows felt completely secured in their movements and the Vaisnava order thrived vigorously.124 The people from all walks of life became converts to the new creed and within a short time neo-vaishnavism became the religion of the people in the Koch kingdom.125 It was there in the Koch kingdom that Sankaradeva could actually proceed with organising the vaisnavite society with its three components namely, Nāmā-Kirtana, Satra and Nāmghar. The Nāma-Kirtana or community prayer, which fostered community feeling, the Satra or religious headquarters of a Vaisnava teacher, which became the centre for disseminating spiritual knowledge as well as for imparting training in different crafts and the village Nāmghar, which as the parliament and the prayer hall of the village formed the hub of

119.  SHTN. Pp. 111 f.
120.  Ibid.
121.  Ibid. Pp. 113 f.
122.  Ibid. P. 120 ; KGC. P. 252 ; D,Nath. P.174.
123.  KGC. P. 281.
124.  SHTN. P. 119.
125.  D. Nath. opcit.
its moral and cultural life, they all brought a new orientation to the society. The practice of human equality on the spiritual plan and the organisation of the Satra and Nāmgār on democratic lines subsequently had a profound impact on the social and political life of people.\textsuperscript{126}

Although the movement brought about a significant change to the society, the Brahmanic rites of course continued to exist. But priesthood was no longer the monopoly of the Brahmanas. The contents of the religious texts so long confined to selected section of the society, henceforth came to be recited even by Chandālas or untouchables. Again, the new religion was a crusade against caste exclusiveness and untouchability. It had deep sympathy for the lower castes and down-trodden classes. In it, all people Brahmanas or Chandālas, were treated as equalles. This catholicity had a wide appeal to the lowly and down-trodden, who had most willingly accepted the new faith. Further, as a result of its propagation blood sacrifices and other Vāmāchārā practices associated with religion were greatly reduced and the tribes of the valley became gradually Hinduised, learned advance civilization and culture. Diverse sections of the people were now brought under the fold of a common faith which also gave them a common linguafranca in the form of Assamese and a common culture.\textsuperscript{127}

III. Beliefs and practices of the Koch rulers:

Hāriya Mandala, the father of the Koch king Biswa Singha, and twelve other Mech chiefs associated with the Mandala are described in the \textit{DRV} as devotees of Śiva.\textsuperscript{128} When Biswa Singha rose to the power, the story was set afoot ascribing his birth to Śiva, and the Koch kings soon came to be known as the descendent of Śiva.\textsuperscript{129} Biswa Singha the founder Koch king is supposed to be begot by Mahadeva (Śiva) in the guise of a Kirāṭa in the wife of Hāriyā Mandal, a Kachāri chief. On the basis of this mythological origin the kings of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{126} SHTN. Pp. 448 ff.
\item \textsuperscript{127} D. Nath, Pp. 175ff.
\item \textsuperscript{128} DRV. Vv. 50-53
\item \textsuperscript{129} In their coins the Koch kings invariably apply the epithet - "\textit{Sri Sri Śiva - Charana - Kamala - Madhukarasya}"; Coinage of Cooch Behār, Pp. 86 ff.
\end{itemize}
Koch dynasties of both Koch Behār and Assam claim their descent from Śiva. The Vamsāvalis witnessed the worship of Śiva both according to Hindu scriptures as well as with tribal rites. The Koch kings themselves were devout worshipper of this deity whose name they inscribed in all their coins. After the conversion from tribal designation to Hindu fold Biswa Singha actively patronised Hinduism and encouraged the worship of both Śiva and Durgā. Śiva was sometimes as Bāneswar and Durgā as Kamateswari. But the most popular form of the goddess was Kāmākhyā as she was worshipped even with human sacrifice. DRV states that Biswa Singha discovered the ruins of the Kāmākhyā temple lying embosomed in jungle in the Nilachala hill. And while undertaking the project of rebuilding the temple, he issued orders to place a rati of gold in each piece of brick used in the construction. Thereafter Biswa Singha rebuilt the temple of Bhavāni (Kamateswari) at Gosānimāri within the present district of Koch Behār. He brought Brahmanas from Kanauj, Mithilā, Navadwip, Gauda and Benāras to conduct the religious rites of these temples and he became the worshipper of Devi. Thus the Koch kings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were also followers of the Sakti cult. As well as they also patronised Vaisnava saints and scholars. It is narrated in the DRV that the founder of the Koch kingdom, Viswa Singha (1510-1540) used to worship the goddess Durgā while he was a cowherd boy by sacrificing grasshoppers to the deity.

The greatest king of the dynasty Naranarayan was a devotee of the Devi and as well as also an ardent devotee of Śiva. It is mentioned earlier that it so happened that as he set out on a military expedition against the Āhoms, Naranarayan arranged a congregation of all the Kocharis on the bank of river Sonkos, made offerings of ducks, pigeons, wine, rice, buffaloes, pigs, cocks and goats and a shamanastic dance. After this Naranarayan again had an assembly of Bhutiās and Kocharis and made a binding dictum that thenforth the ritual would be performed by the persons belonging to the Kachāri, Koch, Mech communities in all

130. S. N. Sarmā. P. 183.
131. DRV. V. 114.; ABGB. P. 49.
133. ABGB. P. 41; HAG P. 49
134. Ibid.; DRV. V. 114.
135. Ibid. Vv. 326-327.
temples of the territory lying on northern side of the Gosāin Kamal Āli and by the Brahmanas in the temples of the territory lying on the southern side of the road.  

Naranarayan in the very beginning of his carrier built a temple and installed there in the idol of goddess Trisuta Devi, who was identical with Chandi wherein blood sacrifices were also made. Naranarayan and his brother Chilarai rebuilt the temple of goddess Kāmākhya with bricks on the Nilāchal hill. This rebuilding of the temple took place in 1565 A.D. and the same fact stands corroborated by two inscriptions containing three beautiful Sanskrit verses in all. It is narrated in the DRV that after building the Kāmākhya temple king Naranarayan and his brother Chilarai took a vow (vrata) and remained without food for seven days and got the inaugural function celebrated by offering three lakhs of homa and one lac of animal sacrifices, and made full provision for regular worship in the future. In this connection the king provided seven scores of servitors for the temple and issued copper plate charter to that effect. In Saktism the principal deity is called Sakti. The worship of this deity had a greater appeal to the royal families who were required to have more strength for remaining in power and were needed to get involved in lot of bloodshed in the frequent battles with foreign forces as well as the rebells form within from time to time. The Bhuyan rulers of Assam happened to be staunch Saktas. Same was the case with the Koch rulers, who were true devotees of the goddess. King Naranarayan introduced his dynastic worship of the ten armed Devi Durgā, which is still prevailing in a place Devi Bāri, at Koch Behār annually at the autumn season in a separate palace. In this Palace there is not worshipping the other god and goddess like Lakshmi, Swaraswati, Kārtika and a Ganesha except the Devi Durgā.

Although some claims that Naranarayan discovered the Hayagriva Mādhava temple at Hājo which was then in an abandoned position, it is however known from an stone inscription

136. Ibid. Vv. 335-337.
138. Ibid. Vv. 536-555; Ibid. Pp. 125 ff
139. CHAHB. P. 225.
140. KBI. P. 139.
that the temple was discovered by Raghudeva who also introduced regular worship of the deity by granting lands for its maintainance. \(141\) Although Naranarayan seemed to be devout worshipper of \( \text{iwa and Sakti his name has even been pronounced with high regard as a patron of the neo-Vaisnavite movement also.} \)

Educated in Benaras, the famous seat of Hindu learnings, Naranarayana was quite acquainted with the theories of Rajadharma. \(141a\) He therefore seriously kept a vigil on the philosophy as well as of the intricacies of the neo-Vaisnavism of Sankaradeva. Sankaradeva’s religion was based upon the principle of “Eka deva eka seva, eka bine nahi keva” meaning one should offer homage only to one God, i.e., Visnu.

Accordingly to the school of Hindu philosophy the king is the representative of God on the earth \(141b\) and hence the people should obey the king’s order as a command from the almighty. It helped the king to a great extent to keep the people and the state together. Moreover for establishment of a Satra, the neo-Vaisnavite preacher was always in search of a fertile area to grow more crops and of natural resources of livelihood like pure drinking water, fish, etc. It required a waterway. Thus the villages surrounding a Satra became economically self-sufficient. It helped the king in collection of more royal tax and revenues. In all probabilities, king Naranarayana was shrewd enough to exploit these aspects extended lavishly all patronisation to Sankaradeva and his followers. With the liberal grants from the Koch court, a number of Satras were established in the Koch kingdom. It is said that Naranarayan even wished to become a disciple of the Vaisnava reformer which however did not materialise. \(142\)

It is mentioned earlier that the Koch kingdom was divided into two parts in the year 1581 A.D., which gave birth the kingdom of Koch Hajo. According to DRV, Naranarayan remained childless till late in life. \(143\) Therefore Raghudev the son of Chilarai had been thought to be the

\(141\) M. Neog (ed), Prachya Sasanavali, Guhati, 1974, Plate no. 5.

\(141a\) The Dharma in ancient India did not represent the narrow concept of Dharma of today. In those days Dharma was synonymous of the sum total of the rules and regulations about duties. The main task of the king in ancient India was to protect the people and their property. The king was expected to uphold the values of truth and Morality. This was supposed to be the Raja Dharma or the duty of the king. Vide, S.C.Pant, Hindu Polity, Lucknow, 1983, Pp. 61-63; G.P. Singh & S.P. Singh, Kingship in Ancient India, New Delhi, 2008, Pp. 113-114.

\(141b\) S.C. Pant, Hindu Polity, Pp. 43-44; G.P. Singh & S.P. Singh, Kingship in Ancient India, New Delhi, 2008, Pp. 56-57

\(142\) KGC. Pp. 280 f.

\(143\) DRV. V. 618; HAG Pp. 56 f.
heir apperant. But the birth of a son to Naranarayan named Lakshminarayan caused a frustration of Raghudev. Moreover Raghudev was instigated by some officers and councillors. Having lost his hope to the throne Raghudev proceeded to Barnagar on the bank of the river Mahah with a section of subordinate officers and declared himself king instead of beginning an open revolt against his uncle. Naranarayan advanced to Barnagar with his army to capture Raghudev. Raghudev then finding no way out decided to challenge his uncle with a contingent comprised of his hundred wives. An enlightened and experienced human Naranarayan then dominated the king Naranarayan for which he could not tolerate the situation and hence retreated without an exchange of arms. Naranarayan thus in a great dilemma, if he would take an action against Raghudev. Eventually he preferred a division of his kingdom into two parts. Accordingly he made over to Raghudev the territories east of Sonkosh and retained the western part of the kingdom for himself and his descendents. The Persian chronicles called the eastern part of the kingdom as Koch Hajo and the western part as Koch Behar respectively. The Assamese chronicles also referred to them as Kamrup and Behar respectively.

Raghudev's kingdom included the modern districts of Goalpara, Barpeta, Karinrup, Darrang, and a part of Sonitpur upt to the river Bharali. His dominions extended south from Goalpara boundary and included the territory between the old course of the Brahmaputra and the Garo hills, which now forms the northern part of the district of Maymensing. Its capital was Barnagar, near which Raghudev built a new city called Ghilajaypur or Bijaypur with a very strong fortress. The western division, Koch Behar with its capital at Kamatapur included present Koch Behar and a part of the modern district of Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Rangpur. This partition greatly weakened the power of the Koches.

144. KBI. P. 120; Ibid.
144a. DRV, Vv, 659-667; Prachya Sasanâvalî, Plate no.5.
147. KB. Pp. 56; PAB. P. 58.
148. CHAHB. P. 95; CHAB. P. 215.
149. Ibid; DRV. Vv. 627, 637, 684-685.
150. CHAHB. P. 95.
and led to the intervention of foreign elements in their internal affairs which subsequently resulted in the western kingdom's losing its independence, and the eastern kingdom getting annexed to the Mughal Empire in later times.

Raghudev the king of Koch Hajo was a devout worshipper of Mādhava (visnu). Darrang Rāj Vamsāvali mentions that Raghudeva re-built the Hayagriva Mādhava temple at Hājo, and granted land, slaves and servants for its regular maintainence. It also appears that there were scholars studying the Bhāgavata Purāṇa regularly at there. On the other hand Parikshit Naranarayan (1603-1613 A.D) the son and successor of Raghudev, deviated from his father's pantheon used to perform the worship of Goddess Durgā annually. It did not mean that he totally neglected Vaisnavism. He simultaneously continued the policy to patronise the neo-Vaisnavism also. However the king being influenced by one Rāmeswar Giri a Sākta priest against Dāmodaradeva a devout Vaisnava apostle of Sankaradeva, who did not approve the animal sacrifice at the time of annual Durgā pujā, externed him from his kingdom. When one constable (dhопdharā) came to Dāmodaradeva with a royal order to worship the goddess with sacrifice Dāmodaradeva boldly declared ‘Place my neck above and that of bali (sacrificial animal) below, and cut them both asunder it if you have strength in your body. I may go and face the king, but will not worship the goddess. I acknowledge no ten armed but only Hari.’

151a Damodardeva Charit (Gurulila), Vv, 524-546.