CHAPTER-VII

SCULPTURES OF ASSAM STATE MUSEUM
(Special Reference to the Style and Technique)

Assam has a rich field for research. Almost every place of this state abounds with historical objects and antiquarian elements. As far as the state Museum is concerned; it has preserved numbers of unique antiquities from different places of the region and of different branches such as epigraphs, sculptures, arms equipments and manuscripts, besides village life section, ethnographic section, painting section and miscellaneous section etc. All these valuable preservation help us to know the valuable heritage of the region.

Establishment of Museum:

In India certain Museums were initiated by some British scholars by the beginning of the 19th century. The establishment of the oldest public Museums like Indian Museum, Calcutta, the Madras Museum and the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay changed the outlook of Museums in India. Hence, the nature of the collection policy gave birth to different types of Museums, such as archaeology, art and culture, and of multipurpose objects. But in Assam the birth of A Museum occurred only in the last century. It was in April 1912, that a Research Society, named Kāmarūpa Anūsaṇdhana Samiti, was
established at Guwahati to carry on research in matters relating to art, history and literature. Due to the devotion and untiring efforts of some selfless workers, the Assam Research Society was established. This Society made rapid progress in the collection of antiquities relating to the history and culture of Assam, and within a short time framed the plan of a Museum, the establishment of which was the first and foremost objective of the Samiti. It was Rai Bahadur Kanak Lal Barua who made earnest endeavours to give material shape to the Samiti's objectives, and he did it. The Samiti, which was the pioneer organization in the field of historical and antiquarian studies of Assam, established the Assam State Museum (then called the Assam Provincial Museum) which was formally inaugurated by the then Governor of Assam, Sir Robert Neil Reid in 1940. The first building of the Museum was constructed with the money received from public donation and also Govt. grant. Rai Bahadur Naupat Rai Kedia of Dibrugarh donated a handsome amount for the construction of the Museum building. Till the year 1953, it was a non-govt. organization, when it was taken over by the state Govt. Late P. D. Choudhury was the first director of this Museum.

The Antiquities handed over to the Assam State Museum by K.A.S.

(Kâmrûp Anusandhān Samiti):

Stone articles:

i. Two images of Buddha on a black stone.

ii. Five Buddhas in a broken black of stone.
iii. Four seated Buddha in a piece of cylindrical sandstone.

iv. A terracotta plaque containing the seated image of Buddha.

v. Image of Viṣṇu in blackstone.

vi. A standing image of Viṣṇu without head and legs.

vii. Deopani inscribed image of Viṣṇu.

viii. Standing image of Viṣṇu in sandstone.

x. Image of Nārasiṁha in sandstone.

xi. A two-handed image of Nārasiṁha in sandstone.

xii. Standing four-armed image of Viṣṇu in sandstone.

xiii. Daśavatāra of Viṣṇu in a square slab of blackstone.

xiv. Image of Kṛṣṇa in sandstone having three pots.

xv. An acala-liṅga on a pīṭha.

xvi. An acala-liṅga without the pīṭha.

xvii. A pīṭha without the liṅga.

xviii. An image of Nātarāja Śiva in sandstone.

xix. An image of Śiva in sandstone with big belly.

xx. A defaced two armed image of Śiva standing between two pillars in sandstone.

xxi. Umā-Maheśwara-mūrtī in a slab of stone divided into nine compartments.

xxii. Maheśa-mūrti carved on a huge and massive stone.

xxiii. A white marble image of Kārtikeya.

xxiv. A white marble image of bull.
xxv. Image of Śiva in sandstone within a full-blown lotus.

xxvi. An image of Mahiṣamardinī in blackstone, broken, only three parts discovered.

xxvii. A skeleton image of Durgā.

xxviii. A lion-on-elephant decoration (Jagaddhātrī), broken; only five pieces recovered.

xxix. A standing female figure in sand stone, face slightly broken at right. (Form D C’s compound).

xxx. A standing female figure in sandstone. (Form D C’s compound).

xxxi. A standing female figure in sandstone, badly mutilated.

xxxii. Two sculptured stone pieces from Singri (a sculpture on stone containing two figures, one male and one female, in two different panels, the female figure wears a short etticoat, faces badly mutilated.

xxxiii. A sculptured stone containing male figure holding a sword in his right and a lion standing in the panel at the left.

xxxiv. A dvārapālikā in sandstone, broken at waist; headless, holds a club across the chest.

xxxv. A dvārapālikā in sandstone, holding a sword in her right hand and a mirror in her left hand.

xxxvi. A stone sculpture depicting amorous scenes in the two panels on a sand stone.
xxxvii. A stone sculpture depicting two erotic scenes: (i) animal and women, (ii) a man and a woman, with a standing female figure on another side of the stone.

xxxviii. A stucco head of a male figure, nose and ears broken.

xxxix. Figures of two lions with common head standing on two seated elephants having a common head.

xl. A cylindrical stone containing the figure of a flying Vidyādhara carved at one end.

xli. A sculpture containing the two male figures playing at Khol and Tāla.

xlii. Two hands carved on a sandstone.

xliii. A sculpture containing two full-blown lotuses with five buds in all, the fifth is common to both.

xliv. A slab of stone with eleven seated male figures in a row and also two others at side in the same row, below a women, cakra and a horse; a lotus behind the horse.

xlv. Creeper designed part of pilaster with two holes at the top from Numaligarh.

xlvi. Three heads of elephant in a row, tusks broken (from Guwahati).

xlvii. Three heads of elephant in a row, tusks broken; trunk of one of the heads is broken and lost (from Numaligarh).
xlvi. Busts of three female figures in a row in flying postures holding lotuses in hands; highly adorned.
xlix. Busts of two females figures in a row with smiling faces in flying postures, holding lotuses in hands, highly decorated.

1. Bust of a female figure in flying posture with a lotus in hand.

ii. Figure of lion standing on the hind legs, front legs are missing; protruding tongue and long tail, (D.C's compound.)

iii. A lion on the inscription in stone.

iv. A lion standing and turning backward, front legs partly broken

lv. Figure of a lion standing on crouching elephant turning its head backward.

lvi. A stone āmalaka with bands.

lvii. A plinth with four holes on the upper circular surface.

lviii. A decorated fragment of a pedestal with some raised lines and peculiar designs (from Guwahati).

lix. A gargoyle or waterspout with the makara head.

lx. A gargoyle or waterspout of the above type (small).

lxi. A broken part of probably a gargoyle.

lxii. A stone gate.

lxiii. A blackstone pot.
lxiv. A stone with lion and a female dancer with two musicians.
lxv. Numaligarh inscribed stone with ten holes.
lxvi. Stone cannon balls of various sizes of countless numbers.
lxvii. A decorated stupa like stone.
lxviii A stone (small) piece, probably with a Sarāī and stick.
lxix. A pedestal of block stone containing five pairs of feet on lotuses.
lxx. A stone with a seated four-handed female figure with another standing female figure to the left.
lxxi. A fossil.
lxxii. A square stone vessel.
lxxiii. A round stone cap.
lxxiv A few pieces of glazed stones.
lxxv. A piece of white glittering stone.
lxxvi. Three plates of stone.
lxxvii. Thirty-three pieces of Neolithic-implements.
lxxviii. Jayadavāra inscription of 1660 Śaka era (1738 A.D.)
lxxix. Vijayadvāra inscription of 1660 Śaka era (1736 A.D.)
lxxx. Gawahati Janārdana temple inscription of 1672 Ś.E (1750 A.D.)
lxxxi. Laṅka (Nogaon) inscription (not deciphered)
lxxxii. A slab of stone with inscription on two sides (not deciphered)
lxxiii. An inscription from the D.C's compound.

lxxiv. An inscription on stone, broken into pieces, of which only five pieces have been recovered from Mikir-āṭī.

lxxv. A rectangular stone with engravings on its four sides. Kāmarūpa Anusandhāna Samiti handed over the items listed above to the provincialised Museum (later on Assam State Museum) authority in 1938. K.A.S. had a good number of objects. The State Museum made a modest beginning with these valuable collection of Kāmarūpa Anusandhāna Sāmiti.

At present the following sections are organized in the Museum:

1. Epigraph
2. Sculpture
3. Miscellaneous
4. Geology
5. Art & crafts
6. Old costumes
7. Musical instruments
8. Literature section
9. Paintings section
10. Arms section etc.

The sculpture section of Assam State Museum (Guwahati):
The sculptures preserved in the Assam State Museum are housed both in the old and the new buildings. Almost all the sculptures preserved in the old building were collected from various parts of Assam and its adjoining areas. Majority of these sculptures were fashioned in the pre-Ahom period belonging to 6th - 13th century A.D. time range that roughly corresponds to the reign of the Varman, the Sālāstambha and the Pāla dynasty of ancient Assam. The remaining sculptures belong to the Ahom age. Some of these sculptures were influenced by tribal designs and tribal woodcarvings.

Besides, a good number of bronze sculptures are also preserved in this section. In the ground floor of the new building some sculptural objects are preserved in a hoard, which were discovered during the archeological excavation at Ambari. Some sculptures have been obtained from Bharat Kalā Bhavan, Banaras Hindu University.

In every sphere of sculptural icon, the concept belongs to the Brahmanical faith. A very small number of them testify to the existence of Buddhist faith in this region. The bulk of the sculptures of Brahmanical images can be divided into the following groups:

1. Śaiva images: They include various forms of Śiva along with the allied deities, Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya.

2. Vaiṣṇava images: They consist of all the incarnations of Viṣṇu and the goddesses Lakṣmī and Saraswati.

3. Sūrya icons
4. Brahmā images

5. Śakti icons (including Manasā)

6. Miscellaneous icons: They included all other images, such as Kūbera, Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Buddha etc.

1. Śaiva images:

Śaivism has been the most dominant faith in Assam from time immemorial, as is known from tradition, both literary and epigraphic. The Kalikā Purāṇa states that Śiva was regarded as the guardian deity of this territory even before the time of Naraka and that it was reserved by Śiva as his own royal domain\(^1\). The Tezpur grant of Vanamāla describes Bhagadatta as a worshipper of Śiva\(^2\) and according to the Nagaon grant, Bhagadatta’s successor Vajradatta had an unblemished faith in Śiva.\(^3\) In the historical times the Doobi\(^4\) and the Nidhanpur\(^5\) grants invoked Śiva in concrete form, with crescent on his forehead, as the holder of the bow and as besmeared with ashes. The Harṣacarita\(^6\) relates that from childhood Bhaskarvarman resolved not to pay homage to any god other than the lotus feet of Śiva. Epigraphic records also describe Bhaskarvarman as a follower of the doctrine of Śiva.

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1. Kalikā Purāṇa. Ch. 36, 37, 38, 10. I
2. Sarma, M. M., Inscription of Assam. 1978. Tezpur grant. (v.5)
3. Nagaon grant. (v.8)
4. Doobi plats. (v.1)
5. Nidhanpur grant (v.1)
The worship of Śiva in his various forms is confirmed by the extensive ruins of temples and icons of the deity, found throughout the State.

The evidence shows that as early as the 5th century A.D., if not earlier, he was worshipped by his iconographic representations in temples and the faith was popular among all classes of people.

In the early and mediaeval Brahmanical texts, Śiva is described as the originator and the best exponent of various arts and accomplishment, such as yoga, vyākhyāna (discussion) music, dancing etc. He has been conceived as Lord of all created beings, and is often described as Paśupati, Bhūtapatī and Bhūtanātha. He is the great Lord (Maheśvara), the greatest of the gods (Mahādeva) who is said to have been known by a thousand names ‘Śivasahasranāma,’ according to the Mahābhārata, (XIII, 17).

The icon of Śiva may be classified as follows:

1. Carved icons on the lintel;
2. Loose icons;
3. Rock cut images.

Various forms of Śiva images have been found in Assam. The representation of Śiva is noticed on a panel [Pl.-17], which is now preserved in the Assam State Museum. The panel was found at Urvaśī, Guwahati. Stylistically the sculptures may be placed in the 10th century.

A.D. It is a slab of granite and bears the three figures, i.e. Gaṇeśa, Kārtikeya and Naṭarāja. Here the Gaṇeśa is shown in dancing posture. He has four arms. The āyudhas in his hands are not clear. The trunk of the god is seen raising up to shoulder level and touching the āyudhas held in the left front hand. The figure of the deity is seen in the form of sculpture inside a sikhara-motif of a temple.

Kārtikeya is seen riding his vāhana, a mayūra, sitting in mahārāja lalitāsana, holding a śūla in his right hand. The āyudha of the lower hands seems to be an ākṣamālā. The third image is Naṭarāja. The āyudhas of the ten arms are not clear, except the khadga held in the upper right hand of the god. The deity is made to dance on the back of Nandi in the usual way.

Śiva-liṅga:

The worship of the united Śiva and Śakti, or the male and female procreative principles of the universe in the shape of liṅga on gauripatta, dates from very ancient times. It is the most prevalent form of worship of Śiva. Phallic form of worship prevailed during the Indus valley civilization. References are found only in the epic literature, where Śiva was worshipped in his phallic form. The pedestal or pītha of the liṅgas is described as the arghya or yoni in many later texts. No doubt, the pedestals or pītha served the useful purpose of draining off the waters.

Śiva-śīlaṁgas are described in the texts, viz. the Brhat Sarīhitā, the Kāraṇāgama Suprabhedāgama, the Mayamata, the Mukutāgama, the Kamikāgama and the Rūpamandana.\(^{10}\)

Śiva-śīlaṁgas are found in Assam in large number, and are installed in almost all the Śiva temples.

The Śiva-śīlaṁgas may be classified in the following groups:

1. Plain
2. Caturmukha
3. Pańcamukha

1. The plain śīlaṁgas are also further sub divided into —

(a) Śīlaṁga having a square or rectangular pīthikā. The śīlaṁgas are made up of three parts, known as Brahmabhāga, Viśṇubhāga and Rudrabhāga, whereas this variety of śīlaṁga contains only Viśṇubhāga (octagonal part) and Rudrabhāga (the cylindrical part at the top).\(^{11}\)

(b) The square or rectangular pīṭha with plain round śīlaṁga.

(c) The round pīṭha and the śīlaṁga proper with Viśṇubhāga and Rudrabhāga.

(d) Elaborately carved pīṭha with pālin śīlaṁga. The drain or the water outlets of the yoni-pīṭha is generally long.

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2. The *Caturamukha -linga* is not available in Assam. Only one specimen of this variety is obtained from the Narākāsura finds, Kahilipara. This is made of bronze. The *linga* is placed on a lotus-shaped base and is surrounded by four busts, separated by hooded serpents, on four faces. Each bust is surmounted by matted lock of hair. Other details are not clearly recognisable.

3. *Pañcamūkha-linga* is also very rare in Assam. N. D. Choudhary illustrated only one specimen of this variety. "This specimen is found at Ketekibari, Tezpur. This one is the biggest Śiva-*linga* so far discovered in Assam, and is more than 305 cms in height. The *linga* is divided into three parts: the upper part is *pañcakonika*; *Viṣṇubhāga* or the middle part is octagonal (*aṣṭakonika*), the *Brahmabhāga* or the lower part is square (*catur-konika*). The length of the *pīṭha*, including the water outlets, is 505 cms, and the breadth is 380 cms. This *linga* is highly weathered and is made of inferior quality of granite."

The Assam State Museum has preserved a good number of Śiva-*lingas*. Most of them were collected from different parts of the state.

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Most of them are carved from black basalt. The Yonipitha found mostly are rectangular. Some round shaped Yonipith are also noticed.

**Hari-Hara :**

The combination of two sects between Hari and Hara or Viṣṇu and Śiva is common in mediaeval Assam. This iconic theme presents Śiva ans Viṣṇu unified in one body, the right half bearing the traits of Śiva and the left that of Viṣṇu. Description of this composite form may be found in the *Matsya Purāṇa, Vāmanam Purāṇa, Viṣṇudharmottara, Devatāmūrti-Prakaraṇa, Rūpamaṇḍana*, etc. The form apparently illustrates a syncretisation of the two cults, Śaivism and Viṣṇuvism.

A few images of Hari-Hara have been noticed in Assam. Mention should be made of two almost identical images from Deopāni, now placed in the Assam State Museum [Pl.-7]. One of them is crude low-cut relief showing the god standing in Sampāda. He has four hands the lower right in *varada* with a *ghaṭa* (vase) on palm, the upper right holding a *trisūla*, a characteristic emblem of Śiva, while the cakra and the *śaṅkha*, representative of Viṣṇu, are in the left hands. There is no doubt that here we have a composite form, the right half representing Śiva and the left half Viṣṇu. This is further corroborated by the donative inscription, which describes the images as that of

Hari-Hara. Siva's distinctive trait \textit{urdhva-medhra} occurs also in the right half. The composite god is also furnished with \textit{vanamālā}, a specific cognizance again of Viṣṇu. The specific mounts of the two gods, bull and human faced Garuḍa, appear respectively, to right and left. A flat-topped crown adorns the head. It is difficult to say whether the two sides of the crown were distinctively treated to signify \textit{jatāmukūṭa} of Śiva and the jeweled crown of Viṣṇu. The second image from Deopani, also in Assam State Museum, has been described as that of Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa in the donative inscription. The composition follows that of the previous image, though the plastic direction is of a slightly advanced type. As in the previous image, the god stands in \textit{samapāda} and has four hands: the lower right in \textit{varada} with \textit{āksamālā}, the upper right \textit{triśūla}, the upper left \textit{cakra}, the lower left \textit{ṣaṅkha}. Bull and Garuḍa standing with folded hands appear to right and left, respectively. There is a flat \textit{jatāmukūṭa} on the head; a \textit{vanamālā} adorns the form. In the right half \textit{urdhva-māṇḍhra} and \textit{trinētra} are distinctively marked.

Another image of Hari-Hara [Pl.-II] has been discovered in Uzanbazar, Guwahati. Here the four armed deity is holding the usual \textit{āyudhās}, i.e. \textit{damaru} and \textit{triśūla} in the right hands and \textit{gadā} and \textit{cakra} in the left hands. He is adorned with the usual \textit{alāṅkāras}. Two

female attendants are shown to the right of the deity in a standing position. One of the female figures, whose legs are crossed, is holding a *khadga* in the right hand and wearing a *jaṭāmukūṭa* on the head. On left side, a female figure is shown holding a lotus in the right hand. They may be identified with Umā, the consort of Śiva and Lakṣmī, the consort of Viṣṇu. The *vāhanas* are absent. The peculiarity of the image is that the sculpture maintained the height of the figures of Lakṣmī and Durgā equal to the main figures of Hari and Hara.

**Umā-Maheśvara** : Umā-Maheśvara image is quite familiar in iconographic themes. Here the god is ordinarily represented sitting on a lotus with the pendant right leg resting on a lotus. His wife Umā sits on his left thigh. Her left leg hangs out and is placed similarly on a lotus or on the back of her vehicle, lion. The god and the goddess are represented as embracing each other. These type of sculptures have been reported in large numbers. A fairly preserved image is from Dabokā, now in Assam State Museum, Guwahati [Pl.-26]. The god Śiva sits with the right leg pendent and the left leg raised on the seat. The god has two hands; by his left hands he clasps the goddess and touches her left breast, the right hand raised near his chest, holding something indistinct. By her right hand the goddess holds the god in close embrace around his neck. By the left hand holds an *utpāla*. Besides, the usual ornaments, her hair is dressed up in a neat chignon.
with jeweled clasps. The god and the goddess had their third eye too. On the pedestal appears the figure of a female donor with hands joined in adoration. To her left may be seen the figure of a lion, the mount of the goddess. The bull mount of the god is, however, peeled off on the opposite side of the pedestal. The carving is a very fine one, and the image may belong to the ninth century A.D.

Another image of Umā-Maheśvara is preserved in the Assam State Museum. The image was found at Guwahati. This is a unique piece of collection in this Museum. The lower portion of the figure of Maheśvara is also slightly broken. With the front right hand the god is touching the chin of Umā. From the stylistic point of view the image may be placed in 9th century A.D.

Another interesting image of Umā-Maheśvara was found at Uzanbazar, Guwahati. [Pl.-19]. It is a peculiar piece of sculpture representing Umā-Maheśvara. The whole scene is divided into nine parts. The upper row has three parts, while the middle and the last row have six parts in all; the central scene is represented by two miniature-figures of Umā-Maheśvara. They are flanked by two khattakas, each of them containing four Śiva-liṅgas. In the right corner of the upper row, a small figure of Gaṇeśa is seen, while in the same row a slightly mutilated figure of Kārtikeya is seen. In between the images of Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya in a separate khattaka, four Śiva-liṅga are seen. The lowest row shows the figures of Viśṇu and Śūrya
at the two ends, while the central khaṭṭaka depicts three female figures along with two male figures, one of them being bearded. All the figures are in aṅjali-hasta mudrā, signifying the donors. It is a very peculiar Śiva image and iconographically very important, as the figures of Viśṇu and Śūrya are relegated into the background.

Śiva in Naṭarāja Pose (dancing pose):

Naṭarāja means supreme dancer. Images of Naṭarāja Śiva are interesting production of Indian art. According to Hindu mythology, Śiva is the grandmaster in the art of dancing. The dance personifies his universe in action and destruction. And this type, more than any other, expresses the unity of the human consciousness, for it equally represents religion, science and arts.

The images of the dancing Śiva are very common in South India. A few images of the dancing aspect of Śiva are known in Assam. Three images of Naṭarāja have been found at Guwahati. The first two images, one from the bank of the Brahmaputra and the other from Urvaśī, are now preserved in the State Museum, Guwahati. The third was found at the Ambari excavation. The first two image have ten hands, carved on the block of granite. Śiva is shown in a dancing

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17. Ibid.
attitude on the back of Nandi. The ayudhas in the hands are, clockwise, broken, held in gaja-hasta, triśūla, bāṇa, daṇḍa, khaḍga, khetaka, akṣa, sūtra, sarpa, indistinct, and broken. The right leg lifted up in dancing pose, and the left foot is on the Nandi. He is adorned with jata, kuṇḍala, hāras, keyūras, valayas, upavīta and nūpuras. Both the sides of an uttarīya are seen flying, and he wears a dhoti as paridhāna. Attendants are not depicted in the first image, whereas the image from Urvaśī has the figures of Kārttikeya and Gaṇeṣa. The second image is not distinct (weathered), and the ayudhas in the hands are not clear.

The images of Naṭarāja, [Pt.-56] from Ambari is ten-armed carved in sandstone and depicted as in the former one. The deity stands on the Nandi, and is in dancing attitude. He is adorned with the usual alaṅkāras. Two attendants are depicted on his right, an emaciated male figure and on his left another figure holding a triśūla, both in dancing attitude.

Gaṇeṣa:

Gaṇeṣa, the lord of the Gaṇas, is one of the important members of the paṅca-devatās. Gaṇeṣa, son of Śiva and one among the Śaivite deities, has become almost supreme as all sects agree in paying him honour as ‘the bestower of success’ (siddhidātā) and ‘the remover of obstacles (vighnēśvara).’¹⁸ No worship or religious ceremony would

¹⁸ Choudhary, R. D., 13th century A.D. Archeology of Brahmaputra Valley. p.73
be valid or efficacious in which Gaṇeśa is not first worshipped. The bestowal of success in any undertaking would also depend on the pleasure of Gaṇeśa. The description of the images of Gaṇeśa is found in the Bṛhat Samhitā, the Matsya Purāṇa, the Viṣṇudharmottara, the Agni Purāṇa, the Skanda purāṇa, the Āgama texts, the Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, the Rūpamāṇḍana etc. In Assam the images of Gaṇeśa are very common. His images are found in all corners of Assam. The majority of the images depict the deity in the āsana pose. A few images of Gaṇeśa have been found where the deity is depicted in the dancing pose.

The extant images of Gaṇeśa found in the region occurs in three ways.

1. Those found on the door-jambs, lintels, niches and walls.
2. The stray icons of stones or metals, and
3. Rock cut images.

The granite slab from Urvaśī where Gaṇeśa image is found bears three figures, i.e. Gaṇeśa, Kārtikeya and Naṭarāja. The slab is now preserved in the Assam State Museum. Here Gaṇeśa is shown in dancing posture. He has four arms. The āyudhas in his hands are not clear. The trunk of the god is seen raised up to the shoulder level and touching the āyudhas held in the left front hand.

It appears that the block of stone is broken into two pieces. Originally it must have been a panel bearing the figures of some more divinities. From the stylistic point of view, these sculptures may be placed in 9th-10th century A.D.

A figure of Gaṇeśa is also seen in the sculpture of Umāliṅgana-mūrti found at Uzanbazar (Guwahati,) of 9th century A.D. Another stone block displays the figure of Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeyā in two khattakas, separated by a laghu-stambha. Gaṇeśa is in dancing posture, while Kārtikeya is seated on a mayūra in the usual posture.

Another śirapaṭṭi found at Mangaldoi of 10th-11th century A.D. is now preserved in the State Museum. The śara śirapaṭṭi showing twelve-seated figures of Śūrya holding lotuses with both of their hands. Below on the latātabimba, the seated figure of Gaṇapati is shown on both the ends of the dvāra-śirapaṭṭi on the lower tier in the latātabimba level.

Another huge image of Gaṇeśa in dancing posture is now preserved in the State. The figure was found at Ambari (Textile Institute campus) Guwahati. Here Gaṇeśa is depicted in dancing posture. Unfortunately the trunk and the front arms are broken. The upper back hands held possibly an ankuśa and an āksamālā. He is flanked by two chowri bearers who are defaced. Above the figure of the deity figures of Vidyādhārās and kirtimukha are seen in usual style. The sculpture may be placed in the 13th century A.D.
Kārtikeya:

Kārtikeya is another son of Śiva and Pārvatī. Iconographical description of this god may be found in the Mahābhārata, the Brihat-Samhitā, the Viṣṇudhamottara and other South Indian texts. The images of Kārtikeya is popular in Assam, too. The images are not many in number. The Museum has preserved independent images of Kārtikeya and two more images found with other gods.

The image of Kārtikeya [Pt.-65], found at D. C.’s compound, is depicted as sitting on his vāhāna. The image has two arms. The deity is holding a bow and an arrow. It may be stylistically dated in the 17th century A.D.

The statue is caved on blackstone. One can see here the marked difference between a sculpture of the Ahom period and that of the pre-Ahom Pāla style.

Another Kārtikeya image is found in a stone block Gaṇeśa. This was found at Uzanbazar, Guwahati and measured 20 x 52 cm. The block carried the figure of Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya in two khattakas, separated by a laghu-stambha. Gaṇeśa is in dancing posture, while Kārtikeya is seated on mayūra in the usual posture.

Another image is found on a slab of granite from Urvaśī, the island of the Brahmaputra in Guwahati, which bears three figures, i.e.

Gaṇeśa, Kārtikeya and Naṭarāja. The slab measures about 120 x 48 cm. Here, too, Kārtikeya is seen riding his vāhana, mayūra, sitting in the mahāraja-lilāsana holding a śīla in his right hand; the āyuḍha of the lower hand seems to be an ākṣamālā. Originally it must have been a panel bearing figures of some more divinities. From the stylistic point of view, these sculptures may be placed in the 9th century A.D.

2. Viṣṇu Image:

Viṣṇu is regarded as one of the most influential God of Brahmanical religion. Among the three divisions of the Brahmanical gods, Viṣṇu stands in the second place. The trinity of the Hindu gods are Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvāra, the creator, preserver and the destroyer, respectively. The Varāha- and the Agni Purāṇas contain the standard list of ten incarnations of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu was worshipped in twenty-four forms (caturvīṁśati-mūrti). Rao observes, ‘All the twenty four images are very alike; they are all standing figures, with no bands in the body, possessing four arms, and adorned with the kirīṭamukūṭa and other usual ornaments. Each of them stands upon a padmapīṭha. The difference between any two of these images has to be made out by the way in which Śaṅkha, Shakra, the Gada and Padma are found distributed among their four hands.’

Viṣṇu is accompanied by Sarasvatī and the Goddess Lakṣmī. Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning stands on the left side of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth, stands on his right side.

The vāhana or vehicle of Viṣṇu is the half-bird Garuḍa, who is depicted as kneeling beneath his lotus seat. Viṣṇu has ten forms of incarnation (avatāra). These are Fish, Tortoise, Boar, Man-Lion (Narasimha), Dwarf, Rāma (the ideal ruler), Parāśurāma (the ideal warrior), Balarāma (the ideal ploughmen), Buddha and Kalkī. Bhattsali points out that the incarnations are arranged in order of the modern theories of evolution.

The Kalikā Purāṇa mentions a list of four sacred places in Assam associated with the worship of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu and his incarnations were prevalent in this land from early times. The association of Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa with Prāgjyotiśapura is well known. The Kalikā Purāṇa gives details about the worship of Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva with rituals (ch.78-88) and mentions as many as five incarnations of the deity as being worshipped in different places of Assam. The Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa (V.144-55) states that Naraka, ‘the Lord of Prāgjyotiśa’, was born in the Kāmakhyā Tīrtha. In fact the story of the birth of Naraka through the boar incarnation of Viṣṇu is given in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa and other Purāṇas. All the literary sources of ancient history claim that the rulers of ancient Assam were descendents of the Boar incarnation of
Visṇu or Naraka family. Yuan Chwang states, 'Bhāskara was descended from Nārāyaṇadeva (Viṣṇu).

The epics and the purāṇas also show that Bhagadatta had a particular devotion to Kṛṣṇa. This is confirmed by the Tezpur grant of Vanamāla (v. 5). Of the inscriptions of the period, the earliest reference to Viṣṇu worship is found in the Badaganga epigraph of Bhutivarman (A.D. 553-54) and the king is here mentioned as paramabhatṭāraka Mahārajādhiraja sri.

Bhāskara is said to have been created by (Brahma), born of the holy lotus (issuing from the navel of Viṣṇu), (Nidhanpar grant, L.34). Ratnapāla is compared to Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Puruṣottama and Janārdana, (Guwahati grant, v. 9; Bargaon grant, l. 46). The assumption of the epithet ‘Vārāha’ by that king, (Guwahati grant), as also by Harṣapāla (Khonamukh Grant, l-10) and Dharmapāla (Puṣpabhadrā grant), point to the fact that they were devoted to Viṣṇu. Records also mention different consorts of Viṣṇu, such as Lakṣmī whose perpetual abode is in the bosom of Nārāyaṇa (Nidhanpar grant vv.17, 19). She is also the goddess of wealth and splendour. She is Śrī, Kamalanivāsinī. (Hayungthal grant), Kamalā, Bhāratī (Subhaṅkara-pāṭaka grant, v. 9), Śyāmā (Nagaon grant, v. 20), Sarasvatī, (Subhaṅkara-pāṭaka grant

23. Waters, II. On Yuan Chwang’s Travels in India, pp. 185 f.
v.9) and many others. She is said to have been favourably disposed towards the rulers.

Both literary and mythological sources, therefore, point out that the worship of Viṣṇu and his incarnations were established in this land from very early times.

Among the three varieties of Viṣṇu images, i.e. (1) Standing (sthānaka), (2) Sitting (āsana), (3) Recumbent (śayana), the former two are preserved in the Assam State Museum. The sthānaka variety of Viṣṇu images is much larger in number than the āsana variety.

Sthānaka Variety: The earliest images of this variety was discovered from the ruins of Deopānī, [Pt.- 9] and is now preserved in the Assam State Museum. This four armed image is holding a śāṅkha in the front left hand and a gāḍā, which is placed upright on the adhisthāna (pedestal), in the back left hand. The other two right hands are broken. He is bedecked with kiritamukuta, kuḍālas, karikapasa, upavita and vaijayanti, and wears a dhoti. A four-line inscription is incised on the back of the image. The inscription records that the priest in-charge of the temple (to which the image belongs) is named as Pi. The epigraph also states that the stone images of Lord Nārāyaṇa is for the devotees.25

The Viṣṇu images from Mikir-āṭi, Nagaon district, is also shown in sampada-sthānaka attitude and a plain pedestal, and has four hands.

The two hands are in *varada* pose, the right hand with a lotus bud on palm and the left with a *śankha*. The other two hands hang down, the right placed on the effigy of a *cakra* and the left on that of *gadā* marked with a female figure in front. The God wears ornaments and has a flat crown on head. The absence of Vanamālā is to be noted.

Garuḍa is also conspicuous by its absence. The image belongs to late Gupta style in a degenerate state, and may be dated about the end of the 7th century A.D. An almost similar image in metal, recovered among the Narākasur hill hoard is also of this pattern. This image has been illustrated by H. K. Barpujari. But the *gadā* shown to the left is not marked by a female effigy. Here the god has a halo around the head and the garland appears to hang from his shoulders down to his waist. The disposition of the *āyudhas* may also be seen in a tenth century metal image of the god from among the Narākasur hill finds. Here the god stands in *sampāda* on a lotus over a plain pedestal, which shows in the center the effigy of Garuḍa. The throne back supporting the flame-edged oval halo is seen to be intact. A detached fragmentary image of Viṣṇu in metal from Narākasur hill hoard of about the ninth century A.D. seems also to follow the same iconographic mode. At present these finds from Narākasur hill are in the Assam State Museum, Guwahati.

The sculptures of Viṣṇu from Burhāburi [Pt.-42], North Guwahati, [Pt.-36], Bijulibari (Mangoldoi) [Pt.-43] and Bhobanipur (Barpeta) [Pt.-42] may be placed in the 10th to 12th century A. D. from the stylistic point of view.

In the image of Viṣṇu from Burhaburhi, Nagaon, the deity is shown in sampāda-sthānaka attitude on a lotus. The four-armed god holds, gadā, cakra, śaṅkha and padma in the hands. He is flanked by the consort. The ornaments and drapery worn by the god and his consorts are clearly shown. The vanamālā is very prominently depicted. Above the head of the deity, two figures of Vidyādharas are seen. The figure of the God is in the round. It is an excellent piece of art work.

The image, which was obtained from North Guwahati, is cut on a sandstone. The four armed deity holds the usual ṣyudhas and is flanked by his consorts. The śilapatta is pointed and bears the figure of kīrtimukha and Vidyādharā. The artist could not give the finishing touch to this sculpture. The stone quality is also not good.

But the sculpture of Viṣṇu from Bhabanipur (Barpeta) is much finer than the sculpture of North Guwahati. Here, the image is in samapāda-sthānaka attitude. In his four hands the deity is made to hold cakra, śaṅkha, varada-mudrā and gadā. The deity is flanked by his consorts. The śilapatta is not very much decorated, but it is pointed. From the stylistic point of view, the sculpture may be placed in the 9th or early 11th century A. D.[Pt.-42].
The sculpture of Viṣṇu found at Barpeta may be placed in the late 11th century A.D. and is later than the sculpture of Bijulibari and Mangaldoi. Both of these sculptures are cut in black basalt. Here also he is depicted in samapāda-sthānaka attitude. The four armed deity hold gada, cakra, śaṅkha and padma in the usual way. He is flanked by Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, and they are depicted with female attendants. The vanamālā and other ornaments and drapery are clearly visible. The śilapattā with the figure of the kirtimukha is broken and missing.

In the site of Ambaī, Guwahati, were found a number of Viṣṇu images. Some of the important sculptures are now displayed in the Museum gallery. From the stylistic point of view, these may be placed in the 13th century A.D., if not later. It is, however, clear that they are sculptured in the pre-Ahom style.

1. Viṣṇu / A.S.M. 7528 : Sandstone : Ambari, Guwahati : [Pt.—51], :
   
The deity is in sampāda-sthānaka attitude, holding gada, and padma in the upper right and left hands. The objects of the lower hands are not clear. The god is flanked by his consorts. The details are not clear.

   
The figure is in Sampāda-sthānaka attitude holding cakra, gada, śaṅkha and padma. He is flanked by his consorts. Below the figure, Garuḍa is seen.
3. Viṣṇu /A.S.M. -7515 : [Pl.-63] :

The figure is in sampāda-sthānaka attitude, holding padma, cakra, śaṅkha and gadā, clock-wise. He is flanked by his consorts. Below the figure Garuḍa is also seen. Another Viṣṇu image of Ahom style has been preserved in this Museum. The sculptures may be placed in the 18th century from the stylistic point of view. This is in sthānaka attitude, keeping his legs apart. In his four arms Viṣṇu is holding śaṅkha, cakra, gadā and padma. The face bears the Mongoloid traits. The breadth of the silapatta is less near the knee portion of the figure. The pedestal of the deity is slightly mutilated. The sculpture represents typical Ahom style.

The Āsana Variety (Sitting Posture) :

The āsana variety of sculpture is not found in large number in Assam. Only one piece of āsana variety is preserved in the Museum. This goes to prove that standing images of Viṣṇu were more popular than that of āsana variety of Viṣṇu image in Assam. An interesting image of Viṣṇu of the āsana variety is carved on a blackstone. The image is found at Uzanbazar, Guwahati. [Pl.-38] Here the deity is seated on a double-petalled padmapīṭha in yogāsana pose. The hands of the image are broken. The front hands are seemed to be in yoga-mudrā placed on the lap. The upper left hand holds gadā. A round halo behind the deity is depicted, which covers the image
completely. From the halo, rays are coming out. Outside the halo or prabhāmaṇḍala, on the four corners, the miniature figure of Gaṇeṣa and Mahiṣamardinī are depicted on the lower and upper corners to the right. There are two images representing Brahmā and Śiva, respectively. The idea was to depict Viṣṇu in the centre of the five gods (paṇca-devatā). These images imbibe the traits of the Pāla-style. This may be assigned to the 11th-12th century A.D.

Viṣṇu and His Incarnation:

The conception of vibhavas (evolved forms) or avatāras (descended forms) of the Supreme God is a characteristic of Vaiṣṇava theology. In the Bhagavadgītā, God himself explains the theology behind it (IV-78). In the formative phase of the concept, the number of avatāras varied, as may be known from different lists in different texts. Gradually, the number came to be standardized to ten.

They are:

1. Matsya
2. Kurma
3. Varāha
4. Narasimha
5. Vāmana
6. Rāma (Parasurāma)
7. Rāma (Rāghava)
8. Rāma (Balarāma)
9. Buddha
10. Kalkī

Sometimes, all the ten avatāras are shown collectively in a group and of this we have a representation in Assam carved on the Urvaṣī rock. All the ten avatāras from Kūrma to Kalkī, appear together, each with its distinctive traits. These carvings may be placed in the 9th century A.D. Collective representations of the ten avatāras may also be seen on architectural slabs, like door jambs, etc. This type of stone architectural slab is preserved in the Museum.

The iconographic description of the ten avatāras may be found in the Viṣṇudharmottara, Vaikhānasāgama, Agni Purāṇa, Matsya Purāṇa, Padma Purāṇa, Rūpamandana, Śilparatna etc. Our study of the iconography of the avatāras will be based on extant independent images and on available collective representations from this Museum.

1. Matsya:

No separate image of this avatāra has been noticed in Assam yet. Saraswati,²⁸ refers to two figurations of this avatāra among the collective representation at Urvaṣī, Guwahti and in Cole Park in Tezpur. Museum does not possess any Matsya avatāra image.

²⁸ vide, Borpujari, Ḥ. K., (Gen. Ed.) Comprehensive History of Assam, pp. 397-98
Sarma, D., Kāmarupa Śāsanāvali. pp.30-35.
2. Kūrma :

No separate representation of this avatāra has been noticed. At least four figurations of this second avatāra may be seen at Urvāśī in Guwahati, the Cole Park in Tezpur and Mornoi in Goalpara. The Museum has also preserved one Viṣṇu (Kūrma-avatāra) found at Ambari, Guwahti. The sculpture is of about 13th-14th century A.D. Here the deity is depicted in half human and half animal form. The lower part of the deity represents a tortoise, while the upper part represents the human form with only two arms. With one hand he is holding the gadā. Nothing is seen in the other hand. [ Pt.-62]

3. Varāha :

The Varāha avatāra has some special significance in Assam. A popular legend, echoed also in the epigraphic records, describes Naraka, the founder of the mythical line of Assam kings, as the son of Viṣṇu in His Varāha form. The independent image of Varāha from Sibsagar [Pt.-8], now in the Assam State Museum, illustrates a dynamic expression of this theme. Here we find Varāha (human body with boar face) standing in a pratyālidhā with the face to the right (usually the face is found to be kept in left.) He has four hands: the upper left carries a gadā, the lower left is supported on waist; the upper right hand bears the earth goddess who is shown with hand joined in ānjali, while the āyudha in the left hand is missing.
4. Narasimha :

In the figuration among the collective representations, this *avatāra* appears with a human body and lion face, and is shown as tearing the entrails of the demon, Hiranyakashipu, who is shown supported on the knees of the god. Several independent images of this *avatāras* have been noticed in Assam. Mention should be made first of an image of *Narasimha* from Guwahati, [Pt.-18]. It shows the god standing in half-crouching position on a lotus pedestal. He has a human body with a round lion face. He has four hands: the upper right and left hands bear, respectively, a *gada* and a *cakra*; the two lower hands are shown as tearing out the entrails of the demon lying prostrate on his bent knees. The upper part of the stela is gone. A second image of *Narasimha*, also from Guwahati, shows the god as standing on a lotus with two hands, both engaged in tearing the abdomen of the demon [Pt.-48].

5. Vāmana :

In Assam this *avatāra* is shown in his dwarf form in the *Daśāvatara* relief as at Urvaśi, as well as independent image as at Deopani. In both, the *avatāra* is shown with two hands bearing a parasol in one of them.

6. Parāśurāma :

Parāśurāma is considered only as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, who temporarily 'possessed' his person for destroying the *kṣatriyas* as many
as twenty one times to cleanse the world of the sin. Paruşurāma, according to the text, is to be shown with two or four hands. His most distinctive āyudha is paruṣu (axe). No separate image of Paruşurāma is available from the medieval period. His figuration occurs in the Paruşurāma relief at Urvāśī and in fragmentary architectural remains in the Cole Park, Tezpur, and at Bamuni hill, near Tezpur. The State Museum has preserved an image of Paruşurāma from Tezpur [Pt.-65]. It is a standing image holding an axe. The axe is disproportionately bigger than the figure of the deity. From the stylistic point of view we can place it in the 17th century, that is, of the Ahom period.

7. Rāma:

Rāma, son of Daśaratha of the Raghu dynasty, is recognised as the seventh āvataṇa of Viṣṇu. The story of Rāma is well known. The iconographic text describes him as having two or four hands. His two most distinctive āyudhas are bow and arrows. In Assam Rāghava Rāma figures among the representations of the ten āvatāras at Urvāśī and in the Cole Park, Tezpur. In each he is shown with two hands with bow and arrow. The Museum has no independent image of Rāma.

8. Balarāma: Balarāma is the eighth āvataṇa of Viṣṇu, and is the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa. No independent image of the deity is found in Assam. Choudhury 29 refers to only two miniature images of Balarāma.

The images of Balarāma are noticed in Viṣṇu avatāra pillars at Cole Park and Bamuni hill. The two-armed deity is holding a plough (his special symbol) in the right hand, and stands in tribhāṅga attitude. The left hand is in katyābalambita pose in case of one, while in the other the left hand is kept straight vertically. The image in the State Museum is decked with the usual altīkāra.

Two female attendants are seen one on either side. They stand in tribhāṅga attitude in two different niches.

The image in the State Museum is depicted on a slab of basalt [Pt.-24], which contains other avatāras of Viṣṇu. The miniature image is depicted, too, like the former one from the Cole Park. The deity here is shown in dvibhāṅga attitude.

9. Buddha: Buddha, the propagator of the heterodox creed, Buddhism, has been incorporated as the ninth in the traditional list of the ten avatāras.

The Brhat-Samhitā, the Vaikhāṅsa-gama, the Viṣṇu- and the Agni-purāṇas, and the Hayāśīrṣa-pañcarātra describe the image of the Buddha. 30

Very few images of Buddha are noticed in this region. Choudhury had noticed two-miniature images of Buddha on two door Jambs, —one from Diphu and the other from Nagaon Park. The deity is seated in padmāśāna posture. Two female attendants are seen,—

30. Banerjea, J. N., op. cit. pp. 244-25
one on his right side and the other on his left. Both are seen in \textit{sthānaka} attitude.

Similar type of Buddha image is noticed in the Viṣṇu \textit{avatāra} panel in the State Museum, Guwahati [Pt.-24], The image, too, depicts the Buddha in the same style.

10. Kalkī:

Kalkī \textit{avatāra} of Viṣṇu has not yet manifested himself on earth. In this incarnation Viṣṇu will be born as the son of Brahman, and will exterminate the wicked. Among the collective representations, he is seen at Urvaśī and in the \textit{dasa\textsuperscript{\textit{avatāra}} slab} in the Assam State Museum [Pt.-24]. Here the two-armed deity is seated on horseback. He hold a \textit{khadga} in the right hand, and the reins of the horse in the left hand.

He is decked with \textit{kir\textsuperscript{\textit{tamukuta}, kundalas, hāras}, and wears a \textit{dho\textit{ti} as \textit{kṣivastra}. Two female attendants are shown, one on each side.

Among the goddesses associated with the cult of Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are most conspicuous. They are usually depicted as the chief attendants of Viṣṇu. ‘Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are the two goddesses who came to be respected by the Indians of all religious creeds. They are still held in high esteem by large sections of the people of the country, and special homage is paid to them on different occasions.  

32. \textit{ibid}, p. 37.}
11. Lakṣmī:

An image of goddess Lakṣmī, carved on a black granite, is seen in the State Museum, Guwahati. This two armed goddess stands on *padma-pīṭha* in *dvibhaṅga* attitude, holding a lotus in the right hand, while the left hand is in *kaṭīshasta* pose. The goddess wears a *karaṇḍamukuta, kuṇḍala, valayas, kaṅkānas, hāras* etc. The image is partly mutilated. A female attendant is seen standing on *padmapīṭha* with the hands in *aṇjli-hasta*.

12. Gaja-Lakṣmī:

Among the eight forms of Lakṣmī, Gajalakṣmī is a popular motif in Assam. Mention should be made of a sculpture in the Assam State Museum in which the goddess is shown seated in *lalitāsana* with two hands. Both the hands are partly damaged; the right hand is in *varada* pose with perhaps a fruit on the palm, and the left evidently holds a lotus by stalk. On this lotus stands an elephant with a pitcher in its upraised trunk. On the right side of the goddess, there was apparently another elephant in a similar position. The goddess has a beautiful appearance and bears a few of the jeweled ornaments, so elaborately described in the *Matsya Purāṇa*.

Another terracotta image of Gaja-Lakṣmī of the pre-Ahom times, may also be found in the Assam State Museum. The execution, however, is crude in a certain measure. Here th Goddess is shown seated with both legs on seat and with two hands. They are seen to bear
Images of Gajalakṣmī are also noticed at Maudanī, Mahāmāyā-Thān, Tezpur etc.

13. Sarasvatī: N.P. Choudhary referred to an independent image of Sarasvati, recovered from the Don Bosco School campus in north-central Assam, Tezpur.33 The Goddess is seated in lalitāsana pose, holding a vīṇā in both the hands. She is adorned with the usual ornaments and wears kaṭīvastra as paridhāna. It is dated about 9th to 10th century A.D. from the stylistic point of view.

Another Sarasvati image is preserved in Assam State Museum. It was recovered from Sibsagar district, and belongs to 12th century A.D. [Pt.-33]. Here the image of the deity is in tribhāṅga-sthānaka attitude, holding a vīṇā with the two hands. The lower drapery and ornaments worn by the deity are clearly seen. The image is carved on a block of stone which must have been a part of temple architecture.

14. Images Brahmā:

Among the trinity of Hindu philosophy, the position of Brahmā comes first. He is believed to be the creator, Lord Viṣṇu as protector and Lord Mahesvara as preserver of the world. From the Gupta period, his position in the pantheon becomes inferior to that of the

pañca-devatās and he does not appear as a cult god. The iconography of Brahmā has been described in the texts, like the Brhat-Saṁhitā, the Viṣṇudharmottara, the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, the Matsya Purāṇa, the Agni Purāṇa, the Rūpaṁdaṇa, the Śilparatna and a number of south Indian texts. According to all the texts, he is to have four heads. Majority of the texts describe Brahmā as having four hands, carrying among the following emblems: a rosary, sruk and sruva (sacrificial ladles), pustaka, kamapāda, kurca, ājyasthāli, varada and abhaya. He is to be shown as standing or seated, and harīsa is mentioned as his vāhana, though he may have sometime a padma as his seat. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa mentions the chariot of seven swans (sapta-harīsa-ratha), which the God is to ride. In sculpture he is usually shown as having a fat and flabby body and bearded faces. The heads are to be adorned by jatā (matted locks) and some texts describe him wearing jewelled earrings. According to the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, his eyes are to be shown as closed in meditation. The attendants of Brahmā are generally Sarasvatī and Sāvitrī. The images of Brahmā are found in many Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite temples, sometimes along with Śiva and Viṣṇu in the same panels or lintels.

A beautiful image of Brahmā, [Pt.-39], from Guwahati, is now preserved in the State Museum. The upper portion of the statue

34. Banerjea, J. N., op-cit., p. 444.
35. ibid.
36. Choudhury, N. P., p. 239.
is broken. The images is characterised by a neat and elegant execution, and may be assigned to the tenth century. The god stands on a high pedestal with a slight bend in the upper part of the body. Of the four hands, the two lower are missing. These heads are visible, each showing whiskers and beards. There is jatāmukuta crowning the heads. The god is decked in jewelled ornaments. On two sides of the god stand Sarasvatī and Sāvitri. Of them, one has her hands joined in añjali and the other has her left hand held near the breasts and the right hanging down. On the pedestal is seen the figure of hāṁsa (swan) in the center flanked by three decorated Padmas on one side and three emblems on the other of which one may be āyathāli (pot of butter).

Again, a miniature figure Brahman found at D. C’s Compound, Tezpur is now preserved in the same Museum. Here in the image, Brahman is shown seated on the back of his vāhana, the swan (hāṁsa). The four-armed deity has lost one of the hands. The four faces of the deity are clearly shown. The sculpture is executed in typical Ahom style. From the stylistic point of view, the image may be placed in 17th century A.D.

15. Sūrya images:

Sūrya, the visible celestial luminary, was worshipped in India from very early times. Sūrya is another principal god of securian

Hinduism. Some literary references indicate the prevalence of the worship of the Sun-god in Assam from fairly early times. Sūrya is worshipped not only for the attainment of desire and welfare, but also for the healing of many ailments. His popularity has been due to his position as the healer of the diseases, and as the illuminator of the universe. According to Bhattasali, the image of Sun-god is the most popular in Bengal next to Lord Viṣṇu. A number of images have have been found in eastern Bengal region. A donated inscription of a beautiful seated image of Sūrya from Bengal bears out this aspect of the Sun-god. Here he has been invoked as ‘samastā-rogānāṁ-harta’ and ‘viśva-prakāśaka’. The people of Assam looked upon this god in this aspect.

The prevalence of the Sūrya cult is Assam is proved by a good number of images of the deity reported throughout the state. The tribal people of this region also invoked him. Surya is a very important god in the context of Hindu rituals, and he was a popular deity for all time. P.C. Choudhary refers to a statement in the Märkandeya purāṇa (Ch.109) which refers to Udayācalā (the land of sunrise) where stands a temple of the Sun-god, and observes that Udayācalā was another name of Prājyotisa-Kāmarūpa.

The *Kalika Purāṇa* refers Śrī Sūrya mountain as the perpetual abode of the Sun-god. In another chapter, the Sūrya mountain is mentioned, which has been identified with the Sūryapāhār in Goalpara district of Assam. From this material, we cannot deny that the territory was held sacred to the Sun-god who had gained a high esteem in popular imagination. The iconography of Surya has been described in the *Bṛhat- Samhitā*, the *Matsya Purāṇa*, the *Agni Purāṇa* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* etc.

The characteristic iconographic traits of the god are as follows: He is to be shown on a chariot with one wheel drawn by seven horses. In his two hands, he is to bear two lotuses; his feet are said to be covered by effulgence; at another place, the *Matsya Purāṇa* (17. 13-33) says that the feet of the god should not be shown. The god is to have various kinds of ornaments, and sometimes his body is said to be covered by a jacket. He is to have *Dandī* and *Ptiṅgala* on his two sides and in front of his charioteer, *Aruṇa*.

In Assam, quite a large number of *Sūrya* images have been noticed, of which two main varieties deserve mention, i.e. (i) *sthānaka* and (ii) Āsana.

(i) The *sthānaka* Variety:

The number of *sthānaka* variety of images, so far discovered from various parts of Assam, is much larger than the āsana variety. The images of Sūrya in *sthānaka* attitude are first noticed in the
lintels from Cole Park and Bāmuni hill with some of the navagraha figures. The deity stands in sampāda-sthānaka posture on a full-blown lotus. He holds two lotuses in both of his hands. He is decked with the usual alarīnkāras and vastra. He wears a pair of boots (upānaha) on his feet. Here the chariot is not depicted.  

The second image of Sūrya was discovered at Mangaldoi and is now preserved in the Assam State Museum, Guwahati. The attendants are depicted here. The chariot of one wheel, drawn by seven horses, is depicted in this image. The image may be assigned to the 10th century A.D.

Another beautiful image of Sūrya from Daboka, carved on black-basalt, is preserved in the same Museum [Pt.-48]. Here the deity is shown in samapāda-sthānaka attitude on a full-blown lotus, which is placed on the chariot. The deity holds two full-blown lotuses in his hands in the conventional way.

He is decked with long kiriśtimukuta, hāra, kūṇḍala, valayas, upavīta, and wears kāṭivastra. The avyaṅga, khaḍga-bandhana are distinctly shown. He is wearing a coat of north Indian style (kañcūka) and has a pair of boots on his feet.

Two attendants are depicted in the sthānaka attitude, holding cāmara. To his right is Nikṣubhā and to his left is Rājñī. Again, to the

extreme right, the figure of Pingala, sporting a beard and holding pen 
and inkpot, is shown in the sthānaka attitude. To the extreme left the 
figure of Daṇḍa is seen in the same posture holding a khadga or staff. 
Below the figures between Nikṣubhā and Pingala, and between Rajñī 
and Daṇḍa, are shown the figures of Uṣā and Pratyuṣā, respectively, 
who are chasing away the darkness with bow and arrow. Below the 
feet of the deity, a seated female figure is seen with her right hand in 
the abhaya-mudrā and the left hanging down. She may be identified 
with Prthvī, the goddess earth. In front of Prthvī, Aruṇa is driving the 
chariot, represented by only one wheel and drawn by seven horses. 
The pointed śilapattā having the traditional figure of kirtimukha on 
the top, flanked by two Vidyādharas is seen. Behind the head of the 
deity, a halo is shown which framed by flames rising up from the 
adisthāna.

A metal image of the Sun-god from Narakasur hill hoard is now 
preserved in the Assam State Museum. On stylistic considerations, the 
piece may be assigned to about the 9th century A.D. The god is seen 
to stand erect on a plain pedestal. Of the two hands, the right is 
broken and the left is seen to hold a lotus by the stalk. A rectangular 
frame, apparently intended to be part of the unrepresentative chariot, 
is shown behind the god. He wears the usual ornaments, including a 
high crown. An oval halo, broken at the top, surrounds his head. The 
feet of the god appear to be covered by a close fitting sock.
The chariot, wheel and horse are absent. The second Sūrya image in *samapāda-sthānaka* attitude is found at Davoka, Nagaon. The statue is carved on a black basaltstone (59 x 26 cm) [Pt.-68].

Here the deity is shown in *samapāda-sthānaka* attitude on a full-blown lotus, which is placed on a chariot. The deity holds two full-blown lotuses in his hands in the conventional way. He is decked with high *kiritamukuta, hāras, kuṇḍalas, valayas, kaṅkānas, upavīta*, and wears a *kaṭivastra*. The *avyāṅga-khadga-bandhana* are distinctly shown. He is wearing a coat of north Indian style and has a pair of boots on his feet.

Three other images are preserved in the new gallery of the Assam State Museum. All these images were found at Ambari during excavations.

*Sūrya : A.S.M., 6738, Granite : [Pt.-574]* :

Here the Sūrya image is found in standing on the chariot in *samapāda-sthānaka*, holding two *padmas* in the usual way. He is flanked by his consorts, Chāyā and Rājī. Below the chariot, the driver Aruṇa and the miniature figure of Pṛthvī, seven horses and one wheel are depicted in the usual way.

*Sūrya : A.S.M., 7529 [Pt.-58]* :

The deity is in *samapāda-sthānaka* attitude, holding two lotuses in the usual way. The deity is flanked by his consorts. The details are not clear.
Sūrya : 6738, [Pt.-59] :

The four-handed Sūrya is standing on a chariot is samapāda-sthānaka attitude, holding two padmas in the usual way. He is flanked by his consorts Chāyā and Rājī, who are flanked by the figures of Danda and Pingala. The front hands of the deity hold two padmas in the usual way. The back left hand holds a śūla, while the right hand is shown in varada-mudrā. Here the trade-mark decorations the pre-Ahom Pāla style can be seen very clearly.

(a). The Āsana Variety :

Āsana variety is noticed on the lintel of Da-Parvatīyā. The deity is seated here in utkatikāsana attitude and holds lotuses in both hands and is flanked by Danda and Pingala. The image is weathered.41 The next images of this variety is found at Mahāmāyāthān, carved on a alab of granite.

G.N. Bhuyan had mentioned only one early image of this variety obtained from Saditya region of Assam. Only the upper part of the body is shown with Aruṇa in front and the seven rampant horses below. The sculpture is dated in about 7th - 8th century A.D. from stylistic point of view.43

5. Śakti image :

42. ibid, p. 237.
The cult of the universal mother gradually transformed itself into the cult of Śakti, identified with the energy of Śiva. The worship of the female principle was prevalent during the Indus Valley Civilization, as suggested by several scholars. In the early Vedic period, the male deities were given more importance by several scholars. In the early Vedic period, the male deities were given more importance, but in the epics and the purāṇas, the Śakti cult got predominance. The Mahiṣamardini: Mahiṣamardini is the ugra form of Durgā. This form of Durgā is beautifully delineated in the Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa and the Devī-Māhātmya of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa. In addition to these authorities, there are some texts, such as Matsya Purāṇa, the Agni Purāṇa, the Kālikā Purāṇa, and some other later works that make mention of the image.

This form of Durgā is most popular in India, particularly in Bengal and Assam, even today. The image of Mahiṣamardinī, rock cut as well as carved on slabs, are noticed in Assam. The Assam State Museum has preserved a number of Mahiṣamardhini images. Some of the images are not in good condition. Most of the images of the collection are from different parts of the State. Stylistically these images are dated from 9th to 14th century A.D. In some cases, either

44. Bhattasali, N. K., op. cit., p. 191.
   Bhattasali, N. K., op. cit. p. 194-95.
the arms or the *āyudhas* held in hands are broken off, or have become indistinct. As such, they fail to furnish us with full information. However, a few images of the deity have survived in good condition and on them we base our details of Mahiṣamardini. The *Matsya Purāṇa* describes the goddess as standing with her right foot stretched on the back of the lion and the left by slightly bent, on that of the buffalo. She is to have ten hands, the right hands bearing bow, *pāṣa*, cakra, arrow and *sakti*, while in the left hands she holds *khetaka*, drawn bow, *pāṣa*, *ānkuśa* and *ghanta* or Parāśu. The buffalo (*mahīṣa*) is to be shown as an angry demon with blood-shot round eyes. The goddess holds the demon by his hair with her left hand bearing a *pāṣa* which encircles his bosy, while with the *trīśūla* in her right hand she pierces his heart. She is to have matted crest marked by a crescent and to have three eyes. The majority of the images of Mahiṣamardini in Assam belong to this category.

Images of Durga-Mahiṣamardini of this type are fairly common in Assam. Mention should be made of a few images from Ambari, now in the Assam State Museum [Pt.-56] & [Pt.-60]. The images are all identical. The heavy abrasion suffered by them prevent clear identification of all details. Here we find the Goddess standing with her right foot stretched on the back of the lion and the left, slightly bent, on that of the buffalo, from the decapitated body of which emerges the demon with a sword in his right hand. The goddess grasps his
hair by one of her left hands, while with a *trisūla* in one of her right hands she pierces him through the heart. Of the weapons in the other hands of the goddess, sword and arrow in two right hands and shield and bow in two left hands may be clearly recognised. It is possible that the remaining four hands bear weapons as described in the above text. In respect of style, the image may be placed in the 13th-14th century A.D.

The miniature Mahīṣamardini image [Pt.-56] found at Guwahati has ten arms and is depicted in the usual fighting posture with the *asura*. The details are not clear. From the stylistic point of view it may be placed in the 10th century A.D.

A miniature bronze from Kukurmūtā, now preserved in the Assam State Museum, shows ten arms. In this image the lion is not depicted.

Durgā:

Mahīṣamardini is a terrific form of Durgā, an important Śākta goddess. Sometimes she is represented in *śānta* (pacific) form also. In the *Devimāhātmya* of the *Mārkandeya Purāṇa* various aspects of the Devī are described along with their icons.

The *Vaikhānasāgama* and some other Śākta *Upa-purāṇas* also describe the icon of Devī. R. D. Choudhary refers to two big images

of Durgā in the śaṅkha form. The first image is *in situ* at Deopani near Golaghat. The next image is seen at Dimāpur, now in Nagaland. Another peculiar form of the image of Durgā is found at Mangaldoi. The Assam State Museum has now preserved that image. [Pt.-68] The image is of the late-mediaeval period and measures 31 x 21 cm. The deity is in standing attitude with ten arms. All the arms are stretched outwards. The objects held in her hand are not clear. Below there are three crude human mūniture figures. The deity is flanked by two animal figures. They may be identified possibly as tiger and fox. On the chest of the image, there are some iron nails. The eyes of the deity is golden. The śilapattu is tapering without the usual figures of Vidyādharas and kirtimukha. It is an uncommon figure of tribal affiliation.

**Simhavāhinī Durgā:**

In addition to the two former aspects, already mentioned, Durgā is sometimes found riding on her vāhana. The Assam State Museum has also preserved an interesting image of *Simhavāhinī* Durgā. The image was found at Uzanbazar, Guwahati. This is carved on a block of granite, measuring 38 x 30 cm. Here the four armed deity holds a khadga in the front right hand and a shield in the front left hand. The upper right hand does not carry any āyudha, while the upper left hand carries a śūla. She wears a jatāmukuta on her head, but the

alamkaras are not distinct. No attendant figure is depicted in the image. On the strength of its style, it can be placed in 9th century A.D. The image is badly weathered.

Manasā: The snake goddess, Manasā is identified with Jāratkāru, sister of the Nāga king, Vasūki, as known from the Mahābhārata. Manasā is also called the daughter of Kaśyapa, in one place, while in another place, she is distinctly stated as the daughter of Śiva.

The worship of the snake goddess Manasā was and is still prevalent in Assam and Bengal. It appears to have little connection with the Nāga worship. A female divinity Manasā, a sort of queen over the snake occupied somewhat indefinite position in the Brahmanical pantheon. Serpent worship is widely distributed among the various tribal people of Assam. The Assam State Museum has preserved a number of Manasā images. One important Manasā image was collected from Kaliabor tea estate, Nagaon. Here the deity is seen in samapāda attitude on a lotus. Below the lotus, an elephant is depicted as her vāhana. There is a five-hooded snake-canopy on the head of the deity. The two-armed deity holds the tail of a snake. The other hand

48. Ch. 13 to 16, 38-40 and 46-48,
displays in varada-murdrā. She is flanked by two female attendants. The positions of Vidyāhara are occupied by the Nāgas on the śilapattā. The usual kirtimukha is shown at the top. This is a rare icon of Manasā. The image may be placed in the 12th century A.D.

Mahākāli: Mahākāli is one of the Sākta goddesses, Manasā, assumed the form of Mahākāli at the time of the dissolution of the world; in the tamo guṇa predominaates. She carries in her hands khaḍga, khetaka, pātra and kapāla, and wears a garland of skulls.  

The Assam State Museum has preserved one beautiful image of Kāli found at Bijulibari, Mangaldoi [Pt.-28]. Here the deity is shown as standing almost in állīḍha attitude on a prostrate human figure. In her four hands, the goddess holds, clockwise, unidentified objects, kapāla, kartrī and khaḍga. The hair tuft of the goddess seems to be rising like the hoods of a serpent. The mundaīlā worn by the goddess is clearly seen. The deity is pot-belled. The image may be placed in the 9th century A.D.

Tripūra Bhairavī: The Assam State Museum has preserved one Tripūra Bhairavī image [Pt.-27]. The image was discovered at Jogijan in the Nagaon district by the Directorate of Archeology, Assam, in 1973.  

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51. Bhuyan, G. N. A stone image from Rajbari ruins, Jogijan-Souvenir of all India seminar on the necessity of preservation of nature and cultural heritage of Assam held in April 1984, at Nagaon, organized by the Directorate of Museums, Assam, Guwahati. pp. 9-10.
Tripūrā Bhairāvī is one of the myriad manifestations of the primeval mother of Śākta faith and a noted Tantrik deity. Here the deity is seated in padmāsana on a double petalled padmapīthā, wearing a dubious ratna-mukuta decorated with diapers and vertical ribs, profusely bejewelled, with a third eye on the forehead and a crescent on her hair, and a munḍamālā around the neck flowing down her knees.

The devī is four armed, and holds in her upper right aksa, upper left hand pustaka and the lower right left hands are in varada and abhaya mudrās, respectively. The lower right hand is holding an indistinct object, probably a pātra on her palm.

The śilapattā is pointed on the top, and is slightly tapering towards the bottom, and bordered with a decorative band. The figure of kūrtimūkha is depicted on the top of the stela. Around the principal deity (Tripūrā Bhairāvī) is a plain and flat stellate design. The pedestal is pañcaratha in plain. A portion of the upper left of the śilapattā is broken and lost. Thirteen minor deities are seen around the main deity. Four devotees, two on bhadraratha of the pedestal, one on left pratiratha are the lost on left Karanaratha are depicted in anyali-hasta posture.

The four-armed minor deities on the right side of the śilapattā, seated in lalitāsana from bottom upwards are as follows:

1. Vaiṣṇavī
2. Bhairava
3. Kaṇṭīkeyānī
4. Bhairava
5. Yamī
6. Bhairava
7. Brāhmī

And on the left side are:
1. Bhairava
2. Unidentified female deity
3. Bhairava
4. Cāmunḍā
5. Bhairava

All the minor deities are seated on *pretāsana*. The image of *Triśūrā Bhairavi* is well modeled, with rounded body, prominent breast, and slim waist and a slight bulge around the lower abdomen. This is akin to the Pāla style, and may be placed in the late 11th century A.D.

This type of images of Śākta goddess is very rare. From the iconographical point of view, this unique image is of great importance.

*Cāmunḍā*:

*Cāmunḍā* is one of the terrific aspects of the Devī. The *Matsya Purāṇa*, the *Agni Purāṇa*, the *Viṣṇudharmottara*,

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53. *ibid*, p. 209
The Assam State Museum has preserved an image of Cāmunḍā [Pt.-10],. It was discovered at the Barpathar region of Assam. It is a small figure of Cāmunḍā, seated in utkatikāsana. The exposed ribs and sunken belly is portrayed nicely. The sunken eyes can also be seen clearly. The āyuḍhas of the two armed deity are not very clear. However, the left hand appears to hold a kapāla. The vāhana is not shown. From the stylistic point of view, the image may be placed in the 7th century A.D.

6. Miscellaneous Images:

The miscellaneous deities include dikpālas. According to Hindu mythology, the eight quarters of the universe are governed by eight deities, and they are known by the name of 'dikpāla'.

1. Indra, the lord of the east.
2. Agni, the lord of south-east.
3. Niṛṛti, the lord of the south-west.
4. Varuṇa, the lord of the west.
5. Yama, the lord of the south.

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55. ibid, p. 209.
56. Choudhury, R. D., op. cit., p. 22
6. Vāyu, the lord of the North-west.

7. Kubera, the lord of the North, and

8. Isāna, the lord of the north-east.

Among the dikpāḷas, the figures Indra, Agni and Kubera are usually seen adorning the walls and niches of temples.58

Kubera:

Kubera is the guardian of the northern quarter (uttaradikpati).59 He is the lord of the yakṣas and god of riches.60

The Assam State Museum has preserved one beautiful image of Kubera from Mikir Hills, carved on a block of granite. He is seated on a simple mahārajalisam posture and holds a pot (pātra) in the right hand and a dhanakoṣā (bag of riches) in the left hand. He is decked with jata-mukuta with the prominent knot, kuṇḍalas, hāras, mālā, upāvīta and valaya. The pot-belly of the deity is shown prominently. A halo (prabhāvalī) is shown behind the head of the deity. It may be placed in the 10th century.

Indra:

Indra is considered one of the aṣṭadikpāḷas. The Māhābhārata, the Brihat Sārīhītā, the Matsya Purāṇa, the Vaikhānasāgama, the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, the Aṁśumadhīdāgama etc. contain description of the

60. Ibid. p. 387
images of this deity. Only three images of Indra have been discovered in this region. The first image (44cm x 23cm) is placed in the Assam State Museum. It was found in Gawahati along with an image of Brahmā. Here the deity stands on a 10 cm high pitha. The right hand of the god is in the varada-mudra, while the left hand displays the abhaya-mudra. The person of the deity is decked with kiritamukutas, puspakunala, hārās, keyūras, valayas, yajnopavita and nūpuras. He wears a dhoti. His belly is slightly protruding. The male attendant to the left of the god may be a rṣi holding a kamanḍalu and a bunch of kuśa-grass in his hands. The female figure to the right of the deity may be Śacī or Indrāṇī, the consort of Indra. She holds a chowrī (2) and some fruit. Above the head of the deity in the middle of the silapatti, there is a kirttimukha, flanked by two vidyādharas on the silapasattā, there is a miniature female figures. Below the pitha of the deity, stands airāvata, the elephant vāhana of the god.

The peculiarity of the image lies in that just above the head of the deity there is a five-headed sarpa in the form of a canopy. Generally, the hooded canopy of a sarpa is seen in the image of Balarama. R. D. Choudhury holds that the sculptor here made an attempt to identify Indra with Brahmā. The image, stylistically, may belong to c. 10th century A.D.. This is definitely a rare icon of Indra.

The next images of India (32cm x 16cm) belongs to the hoard from Narakesur hill, near Guwahati and is now preserved in Assam State Museum. This is a beautiful bronze image. Here the deity is made to sit astride the *airāvata*. As in the former case, here also, the deity has *varada* and *abhaya mudrās* in the right and left hand, respectively. The deity is decked with *kirītamukūṭa, kuṇḍalas, hāra, keyūras, valayas, upavītā* and *nūpura*. *Kātiavāstra* is seen draping the lower part of the deity. The deity is flanked by two female attendants bearing each a *chowri* and an unidentified *āyudha*. They are in the *sthānka* attitude each on a *padma*. The *airāvata*, who faces the front, stands on a *padma*, too. An *āniūśā*, not touched by the deity, is simply placed on the head of the *airāvata*. Below the *piṭha* a male devotee or donor is seen in a reverential pose in *anjalihasta mudrā*.

Behind the deity, a decorative *adhara* (frame) stands. Above it and behind the head of the deity, a decorative *prabhā* is arranged. Again, above the *prabhā*, a *chātra* (umbrella) is placed. All these decorative motifs are the characteristic features of the Pāla period bronze sculptures. From the stylistic point of view, this piece of art may be placed in 10th-11th century A.D.

The last icon of the deity is a rock-cut image found on a huge boulder on the bank of the Brahmaputra near Pāṇḍu-ṛghat, Guwahati.

**Agni:**

Agni is the lord of the southeast quarter. His iconography has been described in the *Viṣṇudharmottara*, the *Matsya Purāṇa*, the
From a study of the texts, the iconographic traits of Agni is seen to be that of a god, sometimes fat and pot bellied with beards and two or four hands and head with a jata or with hair rising up like flames. Among his emblems have been mentioned rosary, kamanḍalu, sakti, triśūla, sruk varada, abhaya etc. The two handed form is, however, the more common. He has the goat as his vāhana. Sometimes he is said to be accompanied by his wife Svāha. The Museum has preserved an image of Agni, which was discovered at Sibasagar district of Assam. Here the deity is represented with long beards and in sthānaka attitude, holding a kamanḍalu and tridanda in his two hands. He wears upavita and kaupīṇa. His vāhana, goat, is not depicted.

Another stone image of Agni, is found at Ambari, Gawahati. Here the deity is shown in a tribhaṅga posture. Near his right foot, the profile of a ram, which is his mount, is seen seated. The matted locks of Agni have been arranged nicely, which are supported finely by ornamental kesabandha as his ornaments. He wears a short lion cloth as his garment.

Yama:

Yama, the lord of the southern quarter, seems to have one sole representation in the pre-Ahom art of Assam. One metal disc from

Narakasur hill hoard shows the god as standing erect on what looks like a buffalo walking to right. In his right hand he bears a long staff (danda) and perhaps a chain in left.

**Kāmadeva**:

Kāmadeva, the god of love in Hindu mythology, has a particular association with Kāmarūpa, since, according to the purānic legends (vide, the *Kalika Purāṇa*), the god, after he was burnt to ashes by the angry glance of Śiva, got back his form (rūpa) in this territory. A solitary sculpture from Sibasagar, now in the Assam State Museum [Pt.-31] represents the god Kāmadeva. The god stands in *dvibhaṅga* attitude on a lotus against the background of a pillar. He has two hands; of his two hands, he holds a vāṇa with the right around the tip as if to examine its sharpness. A long bow is slung from his left shoulder. From these emblems there is a likelihood of the god represented in the sculpture being Kāmadeva. It is to be noted that the bow and the arrow held by the hands are of the ordinary kind and not composed by texts. The absence in the composition of Rāti and Pṛītī, who are to accompany the god, according to the texts, is also significant.

**Gangā and Yamunā**:

Gangā and Yamunā are the two river goddesses. The description of the image of these goddesses is available in the works like the

64. *Kalika pūrāṇa* ch. 60.
Vaikhānasāgama, and the Viṣṇudharmottara. Kālidāsa also has mentioned these two Goddesses in his Kumārasambha.

The Mahābhārata includes the description of Gaṅgā only. According to Indian tradition, images of Gaṅgā and Yamunā were made to flank the dvāras (doorways) of temples.

In Assam, two dvāras of ruined temples, depicting the images of these two rivers goddesses have been noticed. The first dvāra is noticed in a ruined temple at Da-Parvatīyā near Tezpur. Both the images of the deities in high relief have been placed on the lower part of two sākhās of the dvāra. On the right of its dvāra-sākhā, occurs the figure of Gaṅgā at the bottom. Here the deity stands certainly on a makara (crocodile), which has been broken off. The left leg of the deity carries the weight of the body, while the right leg simply rests on the pītha. Both the hands hold a mālā in a graceful pose. The keśabandha of the goddess is beautifully arranged. The alamkāras of the deity are kūndalas, hāras, valayas and nūpuras. She wears amekhalā around the waist. Behind the head of the goddess a round prabhāvalī is seen. To the right of the deity’s head two flying harīsas (geese), symbolic of the river goddess, and close by, at the same lend, a mayura are seen in the ānjalīhasta pose. On either side of the

66. Ibid. p. 491.
67. Ibid. 534.
deity, there stand two female figures, which hold a *chowrī* each and attend upon the goddess.

The left *dvāra-śākhā* contains the figure of *Yamunā* at the bottom. Here the deity is made to stand on a *kūrma* (tortoise), which is partly broken. The weight of the body of the deity is carried by the right leg while the left leg simply rests on the *piṭha*. Both the hands of the deity carry a *mālā* in an elegant posture. Like Gaṅgā, this goddess has a beautiful *kesabandha* on the head. The person of the deity is decked with the usual *alarikāras*. She wears a *mekhalā* around the waist. As in the case of Gaṅgā, here also near the head of the deity, two flying *harīsa* are well depicted. Here they are depicted to the left of the head of the deity. At the same level, a *nāgi* is depicted in the *ānjalihasta* pose. Behind the head of the goddess, a plain and round *prabha* is shown. The deity is flanked by two female attendants, standing on the same *piṭha* and holding a *chowrī* each. Another female figure is seen in *ālīḍha* posture in front of the deity. According to R. D. Banerjea,— "This *dvāra* belongs to the great school of art which existed at Pātaliputra and Benaras in A.D. 5th and 6th centuries" ⁶⁸ He is also supported by other scholars.⁶⁹ These two figures of the river goddesses can be taken as the product of the Sarnath School, because they attain full and soft roundness, and breathe an atmos-

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phere of complete ease and serenity. All this is achieved with the help of a soft and delicate modelling, an almost imperceptible gliding and smoothly flowing and melting line. These figures of Gaṅga and Yamunā have enhanced the reputation of the Sarnath School. The second Gaṅgā, brought from a ruined temple of Majgaon, is now preserved at the residence of the late Prabodh Chandra Baruah of Majgaon, Tezpur.70

Two other images of the river goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā have been found at Ambari, Guwahati. Here the goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā from Ambari are standing on their vāhanas, makara and kūrma, respectively. The goddess Gaṅgā [Pt.-55] here is standing on her vehicle mākāra. She is two armed. In her right hand she holds a pot against a lotus stalk. A cobra with spread hood is coiled round her left arm. Her coiffure consists of neatly combed long tresses gathered over her left shoulder in the shape of a large sized bun. She wears a tiara over which a tall snake canopy with three hoods is seen. For ornaments she is decked with large circular earrings, a number of necklaces of different designs. The snake canopy on the top of the goddess is quite peculiar. This may go back to 13th century A.D. It measures 121 x 64 cm.

The goddess Yamunā is [Pt.-54] is also found at Ambari, now preserved in the Assam State Museum. She is standing on her vehi-

cle, the tortoise (*kurma*). She has two hands, the right hand holding a pot and the left hand a lotus stalk. Her well-combed hair is gathered in a long thick bun, held in position by circular clasps. She is wearing a *mukuta* and has a snake canopy with a single hood over her head. Her earrings are large and lotus shaped. She is wearing a number of necklaces of many designs. She is wearing a fine sari, the folds of which can be noticed distinctly. It covers her entire body and extends up to the knees. Again these images may be placed in the 13th century A.D.

After a brief study of the various development of sculptures in this Museum, we came to know that the Museum has preserved most of the pre Ahom sculpture belonging to the 7th century A.D. to 13th century A.D. The late medieval sculpture are very few in number. Beautiful and graceful images are the product of both local and traditional craftsmenship by the artists of this region.