A BRIEF NOTE ON MINIATURES AND SCRIPTS*

There are references of Shankardeb's first play, the Chinavatra through which he himself painted scenes of vaikunthas or the seven heavens. These were drawn in cotton leaf folios called Tulapat. The Katha Guru Charita mentions this. The difficulty about understanding other paintings are twofold. Firstly, it is not easy to pinpoint them chronologically and secondly, most of the miniature paintings are incomplete with no mention of dates of inception or the name of the scribe and artist. There are however a variation in styles and with some good research work there is a possibility of placing these paintings in a rough chronological order.

Miniatures date from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries along with the inception of religious literature written by genealogists and biographers. Some of the miniatures dealing mainly with Vaishnava themes do have a few which have traits of Shaktism and Shakti

Goddesses. Some existing manuscripts comprise such themes as *Lanka Skand* 1637; *Lava Kusa Yuddha* 1676; *Kaliya Daman* 1734; *Hastividyarnava* and *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* 1781.

Most of the manuscripts that one sees in *Satras* and *Namghars* are saci pat or bark of the *Agaru* tree. It must have been easy to write uniform and angular lines which was the common script of Vaishnava writings on these tree barks. The ink used was permanent and colours used were indigo, yellow ochre (*gerumati*) *Hengul* (red) *Harital* (yellow) and lamp-black.

In the context of calligraphy a fine brush called *Rekhoni* and a flat brush called *Lekhoni* were used. The Assamese script was developed much before Shankardeb's time - sometime in the sixth century. The three major types were called Gargaya; Bamunia and Kaithali

(1) **KAITHALI SCRIPT:**
It is the common script used by scribes for official
documents and book accounts.

(2) GARGAYA SCRIPT:

Gargaya script was used by the scribes in the Ahom
capital of Gargaon and it became a popular script
even in Sattras.

(3) BAMUNIA SCRIPT:
This script was used only by Sanskrit pandits for copying the Sanskrit lore.

A congregation of men and women in the Namghar.