CHAPTER-III

ICONOGRAPHY OF THE SCULPTURES OF KAMRUP DISTRICT

The term Icon is derived from the Greek word eikon means figure of a deity in painting, sculpture or mosaic in various art forms meant for worship. Though these icons represent anthropomorphic or theriomorphic character but sometimes also represent symbolic form. The study and interpretation of different forms of icons of different religions is known as Iconography. “Thus in broader sense, Iconography signifies the interpretative aspect of the religious art of a country, which becomes manifest in diverse ways.”¹ In India the canons of Silpåśastras, the basic rules of image making developed in the post-Gupta period i.e. from 6th C.E. The Silpåśastras preserved the tradition of Indian art and sculpture. The texts dealing with the art of image-making are – The Brihatsamhitā (ch.58) deals with Pratimālaksana, the Sukraniti (ch.IV) deals measurement and other related matters, the Vishnudharmottārā (Part-III) narrates the description of some images, the Matsya Purāṇa (ch.259) gives measurement and description of few particular Gods and the Agni Purāṇa (ch.49) gives the pratimālaksanam.² In early times, wood was the most common and easily available material for image-making as referred in Brihatsamhita, while the Agni Purāṇa mentioned stone as more elaborately used materials in image-making. The Vishnudharmottārā referred to details of procurement materials and rules of image-making activities in Derālayārthā dāraparikshanam (book-III, Ch.89). The Vastūvidyamukirtanam (ch.258-263) of Matsya Purāṇa deals with the details of iconometry and iconography including different kinds of materials used in image-making such as wood, earth, stone and mixed materials.³ These texts referred to different mudrās, āyudhas, āsanas and vāhanas of gods and Goddesses.⁴ The art of Image-making is mentioned in Vanasanpravesadhya in ancient India, which referred

to selection of materials for making images. There are various factors which contributed to the development of Icono-plastic art in various phases in India. One of the important causes is the prevalence of sectarianism in India of the Christian era i.e. multiple sects- among Buddhist, Jain in different sects influenced in making of sculptures. Further contact with the foreigners i.e. Greeks also contributed to the icono-plast art of India. The growth of Tantrism is one of the important factors in evolution of Icono-plastic art in India. Lastly, the royal patronage to the development of Indian religious art in early and medieval India is one of the essential factors in growth of icono-plast in art of India.5

The radical changes in Brahmânical religion from Vedic sacrificial worship to the ceremonial idol worship of Bramanical God in the form of – Siva, Vishnu and other Gods found in the form of two Brahmânical sects-Vaisnavism and Saivism.6 The details of this Brahmânical God were narrated in the Purânas which was compiled in the Gupta age. The study of these features deals in the iconography of the different Indian Gods and Goddesses. Different postures and äyudhas in hands and vâhâna s distinguished each particular God from other Gods and Goddesses. The various poses of the hands is technically called mudrā or hasta.

In Indian iconography, the carvings of images or icons are based on the tala system of measurement. The iconometry, which denotes the measurement of image-making is referred in Varahmihira’s Brihatsamhitā on Pratimalaksanam (v.1-28,ch.57).7 The face from the top of the fore-head to the bottom of the chin is unit of measurement known as tala. Each tala is divided into twelve angulas and which is further subdivided into smaller units. Major Gods are ten times or even twelve or fourteen tālas, and minor deities are nine times or navatālas, while ordinary human beings are ashta-tāla, tālas i.e. eight times of the face. According to the Agni Purāna (Ch.XLIV,v.6), the following should be a measure of one tāla each: mukuta (crown), mukha (face), kantha (neck), hridaya (chest) while the nāvi (navel) and medha (central portion of torso) should together constitute one tāla. The two uru (thigh) and jhangā

(lower portion of torso) should measure two tāla each. In Indian iconometry a tāla is the standard unit of measurement and consists of the length of the face from the top of the forehead to the bottom of the chin. Each tāla is further divided into twelve āṅgula or the breadth of a finger and the āṅgula is further divided into smaller units.\(^8\)

Further within each tāla, the image may be Uttama (highest), Madhyama (middle), and Adhama (lowest). The Uttama in 124 angulas, Madhyama in 120 aṅgulas and Adhama is 116 aṅgulas.\(^9\) The term aṅgula means; first, the height of the block of wood or stone out of which the image is to be made, leaving aside that portion of which pedestal is to be made, should be divided into 12 equal parts; each division is called āṅgula.\(^10\) Images are divided into three classes – as chala (movable), achala (immoveable) and chalachala (movable-immoveable). The movable images are those which are made of metal and are easily portable. The immoveable images are those which are regarded as the mula-vigrahas or dhruva-beras, and are generally made of stone to fix permanently to enshrine a temple. The Dhruva-beras are of three types-Sthanaka (standing), āsana (sitting) and sayana (reclining). Further the Vaishnava images in each of these dhruva-beras are again divided into three varieties–yoga, bhoga, vira and abhicharika.\(^11\) Further the Indian deities carry a number of objects in hands symbolic to each of them. They are the Conch (sankha), lotus(pada), mace(gada), wheel(chakra), goad (ankuśa), noose (pāṣa), bow (dhanus), arrow (bana), shield (khētaka), thunder-bolt (vajra), trident (iṭiśula), sword (khadga), spear (śakti), plough (halā), pestle (musala), chisel (tanka), club (khatvāgga), battle-axe (paraśu), javelin or trident (śula) and fire (agni) etc.\(^12\) These apart, each deity has its own Vāhana or mount as specific to each Gods and Goddesses as per iconographic norms.

Worship of fertility cults, hunting and sacrifice, Mother Goddess, saktism, the animistic belief formed the basis of Hinduism. Fetishism part of phallic worship,  

\(^8\) Purānas; an important source of Indian history 'The Purānas and Iconography', Seminar presentation by Paromita das.
associated with stone and trees, i.e. nature and animism. It may be mention that the non-anthropomorphic or phallic worship is the origin of the evolution of various cults in Assam as in other parts of India. The worship of Linga and Yoni is mentioned in the Kalikā Purāṇa. The Yogoni Tantra also mentions existence of millions of Linga in Kamarup. Fetishism also laid the foundation of tantricism in Assam. Kāmākhya and other places of worship in Nilachal hill was also a place of non-anthropomorphic or animism or Yoni of Austric people was a seat of Tantricism and which later Hinduised came to be known as daśamahavidya.

In the art activity of Assam, religion was supreme basic force as in rest of India. In Kamrup District of Assam, we find influence of different religious sects and beliefs notably Buddhism and Hinduism which brought about radical changes to non-anthropomorphic and ancestral worship of the indigenous people as well as vedic rituals of earlier period. It led to the carving and ceremonial worship of various deities, which enshrines various temple in the region. The Umāchal Rock Inscription at Nilachal hill, is the first epigraphic record, which referred to the construction of a cave-temple by Maharājadhirāja Sūrendravarmān for Bhagavat Balabhadravāmin, a Brahmanical Cult in North India and South India of 2nd C.E. It indicates prevalence of Brahmanism in 5th C.E. in Kamrup District of Assam. The transformation of image worship of Brahmanical religion can be placed at 5th-6th C.E. with the introduction of Aryan culture in the region. It is also referred in the Brahmanical Literature – Sathapatha Brahmanas, Aitareya Brahmana, the Grhyasutras -Sankhyayana Grhya Samgraha, (II,38) and the great two Epics – the Rāmāyana, (Adikanda,35 ; Kiskindhya-kānda, 42).and Asva-medha-parvan of the Mahābhārata. The Buddhist literature refers to two Lauhitya Brahmanas. The Kālikā Purāṇa also refers to Iconographic representation of Hindu and Buddhist deities that enshrines various temples in the region. Further Hiuen-Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim’s reference of hundreds of Deva temples in Kamrupa indicates Aryan or Brahmanical worship in the region. However

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like the rest of India, anionic and iconic worship was flourished side by side i.e linga-yoni, Stupa; and foot-prints of Vishnu (Vishnu-pada) and Buddha were worshiped along with iconic form of different Gods and Goddesses. As regards places of non-anthropomorphic, mention may be made of the ten pithas at Nilachal Hill, Ugratārā Devalaya and Basistha Devalaya, which represent worship of nature i.e. stone and water.

The Hindu trinity God-Brahmā, the creator; the Vishnu, the protector and Siva, the destroyer is the prime Group of deities of the Universe. Brahmā represents Rajoguna, Siva represents Tamo-guna, and Vishnu represents Sattva-guna. Around these Hindu triad, the other Hindu Gods and Goddesses were evolved, some of which got important position in religion as well as in iconographic form.17

In development of the iconography of the sculptures of Kamrup District similar features are found in rest of India in different phases of historical period. Here discussion will be made on the iconography of the sculpture as found in this region.

**BRAHMĀ**

Of the trinity of Hindu pantheon, Brahmā is the sole creator of the Universe an important icon of Brahmnical religion. It represents Rajoguna, the quality of passion or desire, the cause of creator.18

Brahmā is called self-born- Svayambhu and also Pitamaha, the great father. The iconography of Brahmā is described in detail in Puranic texts like Brihat Samhitā, the Vishnu Purāṇa, and the Vishnudharmottārā etc. It is stated that Brahmā was born of golden egg and therefore known as Hiranyagarbha; again he came out of the water and took the form of a Boar and lift the Earth from the ocean; and he took the avatāra of fish; he was born from the lotus that issued from the naval of Vishnu. Though there are very few figures of Brahmā, it should be noted that every Vishnu and Siva temple should have a niche in Northern wall for Brahmā and must received daily puja

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offerings. He is the first prakara of the parivara-devatas of Vishnu or Siva temple.\textsuperscript{19}

The Rupmandana describes four peaceful faces of Brahmā symbolic to four Vēdas (Ṛg Vēda, the Eastern face; Yajur Vēda, the Southern face; Sama Vēda, the Western face; Atharva Vēda, the Northern face of Brahmā), four Yugas and the four varunas. The four heads faces four quarters. Brahmā should have four arms, may be seated in Padmāsana on lotus or Hamsa (Swan) or sthānaka posture on padmapitha. The Silpāsastra mentioned seats of lambakurchāsana means long grass. The deity must be shown in Yogāsana posture. He must have jatāmukuta and covered his upper body with deer's skin in Yajnopavitā style. A katisutra is around his loins. The Vishnu Purāna narrates Brahmā in meditation i.e. closed eyes and seated in a chariot driven by seven swans. The deity is flanked by his consorts—Saraswati on the right and Savitri on the left. The God holds aksamala, kurcha, kusa, kamandalu, Śrūk, Śruva, Ajya-sthali and pustaka in different poses.\textsuperscript{20}

Rupmandana states that a temple dedicated to Brahmā should enshrine Visvākarma, one of his aspects. In this form Brahmā has four heads and four arms—carries the Aksamala, a pustaka, bundle of Kusa grass and a kamandalu; and seated on his vāhana, Hamsa (swan). There are eight parivara-devata in eight quarters beginning from east clock-wise, namely Adisesha, Ganeśa, the Matrikās, Indra, Jalasayi, Parvati and Rudra, the Navagrahas and Lakshmi respectively. These apart there are eight dvarapalikas with beards and mukuta on their heads. Namely Satya, Sadharana, Priyobhava, Yajna, Vijaya, Yajna bhava, Sarvakamika, Vibhava holds different āyuudhas in hands like Padma, Pustaka, Śrūk, Danda, Akshamālā, Ankuśa, Pāśa, Agama, Gadā, Khētaka and Kavarcha. In Vishnudharmottara part-III, Ch.46, verse 1-19, narrates that Brahmā should have four faces and black antelope skin, seated on padmāsana with four arms and having matted hair and or seated on a chariot driven by seven swans. In his right hand he holds rosary and kamandalu in his left hand. Kala (time) is indicated in the hands of Brahmā by the rosary. Again all the sacrifices (pious and impious) is indicated by the garment of the lord, the skin of the black antelope. The repositories of knowledge or learning is indicated by pustaka in the hand of Brahmā. The seven swans of the chariot of Brahmā represents seven regions.


i.e. bhuh, bhuvah, svar, mahah, lara, tapas and satya. The matted hair of Brahmā represents medicinal plants which sustains the earth.\textsuperscript{21} Brahmā is known by various names like Visvakarman, Brahmānaspati, Hiranyagarbha, Prajapati Brahmā in various Vedic texts.\textsuperscript{22} The Epic literature represents Brahmā by such names as Prajapati, Dhata, Vidhata, Pitamahā etc.\textsuperscript{23}

In Kamrup District like the rest of India, Brahmā did not get much importance as a worshiping deity in early and late medieval period. There are very few sculptures of Brahmā in this region. As regard isolated figure of Brahmā, mention may be made of a sculpture in samapada-sthanaka posture on padmapitha at the maṭapā of the Basistha temple. It appears to be placed in the maṭapā in later period hence its original position is lost. The figure measures 65x17cm. and made of sand stone. (Plate-9) The figure is catturmukha facing four directions and having four arms. The figure holds pustaka in each of his four hands. While upper two hands holds pustaka with his thumb in abhaya-mudrā, lower two hands holds pustaka with his thumb in varada mudrā. Holding of pustaka in his four hands and four faces in four directions identified the figure as Brahmā. The deity wears jatāmukuta with lotus motif on his head and rudrakshara or Japamala as bala and hara. He wears a yajnopavītā and katisutra and ‘dhoti’ covering the lower part of his body which is shown as a finely folded drapery. The figure is rounded and without stella. The deity is depicted as open eyed and beardless with flat facial type. It appears that holding of pustaka in all the four hands and flat facial type represents indigenous character. On the basis of simple ornamentation, devoid of stella, proportionate size and folded drapery appear to place the figure to the 8th C.E\textsuperscript{24} Another figure of Brahmā is found at the foot hill of the Chatrakar hill at Uzan Bazar in Guwahati city (now at A.S.M.). The upper portion of the image is now in broken state, but at the time of excavation, it was found intact. It measures 61x31cm. and made of granite stone(Plate-22). The stella has kirttimukha on the pointed top with vidyadharā on either side with simple vertical band on the border.

of it. The deity is in tribhāga posture on a pedestal having six padma or lotus stalks carved on it with vāhana, hamsa depicted in the middle. The God has three bearded face and fourth one is supposed to be hidden on the back. The deity wears yajnopavītā and vastra in upavīta style. The figure wears jatāmukuta. The deity is decked with hara, kundala, keyura, girdle and bala etc. The figure has four hands, carries śruk in upper right hand and śrava in upper left hand while his other two hands are broken just below the elbow. The figure is well shaped with a big belly. The deity is flanked by two female figures on either side. Of them the figure on the right is in anjali mudrā, while the left one is in abhayamudrā in one hand. Earlier scholars like Sarbeswar kataki related them as consorts of Brahmā, but as one of the figure is in anjali mudrā it appears to be devotee in his right; and the left figure is in katihasta posture in right hand and left hand is appears to be in abhayamudrā, though not distinct. Thus it may be relates the figure to his consort, Savitri. The figure appears to be datable to 10th C.E. on the basis of art style and iconographic features. Thus in Kamrup district, these two figures of Brahmā represents as a subsidiary or avaranadevata in shrines of major cult image.

Brahma, as an associated deity in relief composition has been found to be depicted in Aswakranta temple at North Guwahati. Here the Goddess is shown in the relief along with Anantasaityi Vishnu. The relief is made of granite stone and datable to 18th C.E. The figure is seated on padmāsana, the stalk of which is coming out of navel of the Anantasaityi Vishnu. The figure is catturmukha and has four hands. Two of his hands are in anjali mudrā while his other two hands are indistinct. The deity wears jatāmukuta and is flanked by five headed and dasabhuja Durga may be Mahamaya in right and Madhu and kaitatabha in extreme right. There is story that Mahamaya was invoked by Brahmā to awaken Vishnu to kill Madhu and Kaitabha as referred in Devimahatmya of the Markandeya Purāṇa,(ch,81, v.51-68). Another composite relief of Brahmā is found at the foot hill of the Manikarneswar in North Guwahati, which submerged in water in summer and can be seen in winter only. The figure is in padmāsana the stalk of which coming out of the navel of seated figure of Vishnu. The


figure is in mutilated condition to identify the *āyudhas* in hands (Plate-39). The relief is made of sand stone and datable to 11th C.E.

This apart the figure of Brahmā is found as a guardian deity along with *Astadikapāla* on the niches of the temple wall. Of these, mention may be made of the figure of the deity at Aswakranta temple in North Guwahati. Here the figure is seated on his vāhana, *hamsa* with leg pendent within a niche on the outer surface of the *garbhagriha* (Plate-72). The figure has three faces and two handed. The deity carries rosary in his right hand and *kamaśalu* in his left hand. Here the God is depicted beardless and wears *yajnopavītā, jatāmukuta* and *akshamālā* as *bala*. The figure is depicted in profile and frontal projection and may be datable to 18th C.E. Such iconographic representation are found at Janardhan temple in Sukreswar Debalaya. The figure has three faces and seated in *padmāsana* on a stalk of lotus. The deity carries *kamandalu* and rosary in his upper two hands, while his lower two hands folded together in *anjali mūdrā* which is rare depiction and datable to 18th C.E. (Plate-73). Thus, from the findings of sculptures of Brahmā, it can be concluded that Brahmā was not a popular and presiding deity in early and medieval period in Kamrup District.

**VISHNU**

Vishnu is one of the most popular Hindu pantheons of the Hindu trinity Gods. He is the protector of the universe. Vishnu has been mentioned in all the four Vēdas- the *Rg Vēda*, the *Yajur Vēda*, the *Sama Vēda* and the *Atharva Vēda*.27 The *Rg Vēda* defines Vishnu as the sun-rising, zenith and setting. It indicates solar origin of Vishnu. The *Rg Vēda* and other Vēdas state that Vishnu traversed the whole Universe in three strides.28 In Puranic period Vishnu assumed the position of supreme protective God of the Hindu trinity which has been exhibited in different incarnations of Vishnu. In the later Vedic period, the deity gradually rose into prominence due to his association with sacrifice. The *Satapatha Brahmāna* (XIV,1,1) refers Vishnu’s association with sacrifice. The cult of Vishnu around whom Brahmānical cults grew up was based on

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syncretism of three Hindu God-concepts- the man God Vasudeva-Krisna, the Vedic Sun-God Vishnu and the cosmic God, Narayana of the Brahmānas. Of these the Vasudeva Kṛṣṇa the satvata God was the root of the Bhakti cult of Vaisnavism. The iconographic description of Vishnu has been found in a number of earlier Texts like the Mahabharata, the Brihat Samhitā, the Vishnudharmottārā, the Matsya Purāṇa, the Agni Purāṇa, the Kālikā Purāṇa, the Padma Purāṇa, the Vaikhanasagama and the Rup Mandana etc. According to the Kālikā Purāṇa, from the eyes of Vishnu emerge Sūrya; from the heart, moon; from the ears, Vāyu and from the face and surrounding, fire was born. In a Vishnu temple, the figure of Vishnu is generally in Śhānaka, āsana and sayana or anantasayi postures. These three attitudes of Vishnu further classified as Yoga, Bhoga, Vira and Abhicharika, on the basis of purpose and objects of the devotees who installed the images of Vishnu, i.e. the Yoga should be worshiped in the Yoga form, the devotee who desire enjoyment should worship the Bhoga form, those who desire power, the Vira form and those who desire to conquer the abhicharika form. Further each of these divisions are sub-divided in uttama, madhyama, and adhama depending on number of attendants and accessories associated with the main deity, Vishnu. But these classifications of iconography of Vishnu are not strictly followed in the Vishnu images of this region as reflected in the broader classification of the attitudes. The images of Vishnu should be carved in uttama-dasa-tala measure.

The iconographic representation of Vishnu should be shown as seated on his Vāhana Garuda and has one face. He has four or more arms, though more than eight hands are rare. The chakra represents the air or rotation of the world or wheel of dharma, the wheel of time or wheel of planets. If the deity is eight handed it represents

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four quarters and the intermediate directions. Śankha represents the sky, chakra the air, gada the light and padma the waters. The deity wears kaustabha jewels on his chest and vanamālā reaching down to his knees. The God also adorned with jewelled crown and ornaments on his body.\textsuperscript{36} These iconographic features are very common in the images of North-East region of India.

The Matsya Purāṇa (ch.258) states that the God is flanked by Sri (lakshmi) and Pushti (Saraswati) on either side which is very common. But another feature of Vishnu mentioned in Matsya Purāṇa i.e Prithvi (Goddess of earth) is shown in between his legs is very rare. Another representation of Vishnu is Āyudha Purusha i.e. the anthropomorphic representation of āyudhas – Chakrapurusha and Gadadevi to the left and right of the main deity.\textsuperscript{37}

In general, Vishnu has ten incarnations known as Dasavatāra, but according to some other earlier texts like Padma Purāṇa, Agni Purāṇa, Rup Mandana and Brihat Samhitā etc. Vishnu has twenty-four incarnations or Caturvimsati murtayah. All these texts differ from each other in representation of āyudhas in hands. All these twenty-four incarnations are in samapada sthānaka posture. They carry the same āyudhas i.e. śankha, cakra, gada, padma in four hands, though they differ in holding of objects or āyudhas in four hands of different incarnations of Vishnu. The twenty-four incarnation of Vishnu are Kesava, Narayana, Madhava, Govinda, Vishnu, Madhusudana, Trivikrama, Vāmana, Sridhara, Hrishikesa, Padmanabha, Damodara, Samkarsana, Vasudeva, Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Purushottama, Adhokshaja, Narasimha, Achyuta, Janardhana, Upedra, Hari and Sri-Krishna.\textsuperscript{38} These apart, the Bhagavata Purāṇa refered twenty-two incarnations of Vishnu – Purusha, Varaha, Narada, Nara and Narayana, Kapila, Dattareya, Yajña, Rsabha, Prthu, Matsya, Kurma, Dhanvantari, Mohini, Narasimha, Vāmana, Bhagarva Rama, Vēdavyasa, Dasarathi Rama, Balarāma, Krisna, Buddha and Kalki. While the Varaha and Agni Purāṇa referred the ten


incarnations of Vishnu.\textsuperscript{39} Further another iconographic representation of Vishnu are Adimurthi, Dattatreya, Dhanvantarin, Hayagriva, Lakshmi-Narayan, Manmatha, Mohini, Vaikuntha, a Varada raja and Vankatesa.\textsuperscript{40} But most commonly accepted ten incarnations of Vishnu are Matsya(Fish), Kurma(Tortoise), Varaha (Boar), Narasimha (man-Lion), Vāmana (Dwarf), Parāśurama, Dasaratharama, Krisna, Buddha and Kalki. Of these, Varaha, Narasimha, Rama, Krisna and Vāmana as separate figures are more than the others and depicted as independent or subsidiary shrines in Vaisnavite religious establishments.\textsuperscript{41} The other five incarnations of Vishnu i.e. Matsya, Kurma, Parāśurama, Buddha and Kalki are not generally worshiped but found to be carved or painted on the walls, pillars and ceilings of the temple.\textsuperscript{42} There is another reference of four handed images of Vishnu—Ananta, Trailokyamohana, Vishvarupa and Vaikuntha.

In this region generally the sthānaka variety of Vishnu are more than seated and reclining figures of Vishnu. Of these mention may be made of samapada Sthānaka figure of Vishnu found at Ambari, Basistha, Madan Kamdev, Hajo, Siddheswar, Nilachal hill, Kahilipara.

Of these sthānaka images of Vishnu, all are four handed except a figure at Madan Kamdev archaeological site in North Guwahati which is six handed.

The following incarnations of Vishnu are found in this region as per iconographic norms. The Agni Purāṇa Chapter-XLIX, contains iconographic details of the Dasavatāra or the ten incarnations of the Great God Vishnu.\textsuperscript{43} As regard Dasavatāra incarnations, mention may be made of rock-cut panels, at Urvasi Island in the middle of the river Brahmaputra. The dasavatāra panel measures 147x 35 cm. with carvings of Matsya, Kurma, Narasimha, Vāmana, Parāśurama, Haliram, Varaha, Sri Ram, Buddha and Kalki from left to right respectively(Plate-26). There were some old Assamese scripts inscribed below the figures which were deciphered as Alakeswarya.

\textsuperscript{40} Gupte, R.S \textit{Iconography of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains} D.B. Taraporevala Sons & Co. Private Ltd.2\textsuperscript{nd} Edition, 1980, pp.34-35.
\textsuperscript{42} Krishnasastri, H. K. \textit{South Indian images of God and Goddesses}, 1916. p.22.
\textsuperscript{43} Purāṇas, an important source of Indian history '‘The Purāṇas and Iconography’ Seminar Presentation by Paromita Das.
jaya and another as Maha Kamdev. The rock-cut panels may be datable to 10th C.E. There are two daśavatara stone panels found at Pandunath Devalaya in a broken state. They measure 1.65x45 cm and 200x45x 19 cm. and made of sand stone (Plate-32). Of them one has carvings of Matsya, Kurma and Varaha figures and flanked by attendants with scroll motif on left vertically. The panel has depiction of a Saivite figure holding triśula and akṣhāmaśā in hands and flanked by two female attendants on left. One of them carries chauri while another carries ghata in hand. Another panel has carvings of figures of Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha and Vāmana vertically of which lower portion is in mutilated state. Both the panels appear to be a part of a door jamb of a stone temple datable to 10th C.E. Again at Kāmākhyā in Nilachal hill another broken part of a stone door jamb is found which appears to be fixed on the wall of the batchora of the temple. There found to be depiction of the figures of Kurma and Narasimha avatāra of Vishnu vertically and flanked by female attendants on either side(Plate-74). At Hayagriva Madhava temple in Hajo, there found another broken part of a Dasavatāra stone panel, which is appears to be fixed on the batchora in latter period. It measures 96x29 cm. and made of sand stone. Of the figures only the Varaha incarnation of Vishnu along with female attendants can be identified, while rest of the figures are defaced. There found another stone block having three incarnations of Vishnu i.e. Balarāma, Buddha and Kalki in Guwahati. (now preserved at A.S.M.). It measures 66x40 cm.(Plate-75). Each of the figures is carved within a sikhara motif. Here Kalki is shown riding a horse, while Buddha and Balarāma are depicted in Samapada Sthānaka postures. All these figures are flanked by female attendants on either side. The panel appears to be datable to 10th C.E.

These apart, there are isolated or independent icons of Dasavatāra incarnations of Vishnu at various places of the region. They are as follows-

MATSYA - Independent and separate icons of Matsya Avatāra are very rare in the region. At Sukreswar Temple there is a terracotta plaque having depiction of Matsyavatāra within a niche of the outer surface of the wall of Janadharn temple on the southern bank of the river Brahmaputra. The figure is carved in half man and half

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fish, holding *sankha, padma, gada* and *cakra* in hands clockwise directions. It measures 48x38 cm. Another figure of *Matsya* incarnation of the God is found at Aswakranta temple on the North bank of the river Brahmaputra. The figure is carved on the outer side of the wall of the *garbhagriha* of the temple. The deity is depicted in similar manner and carries *padma, gada, cakra* and *sankha* in clockwise direction. The deity is adorned with *rudrakshar* in neck and hands (Plate-76).

**KURMA** - In *Kurma avatāra*, Vishnu is shown as lower half tortoise and upper half man. The deity holds *sankha*, and *chakra* in his two hands and other two hands are in *varada* and *abhaya mudrā*. This incarnations of Vishnu is found at Ambari. The figure is two handed and *samapada sthānaka* posture on a lotus pedestal. The figure wears *kirātamukuta, puspakundala, vanamālā, hara, keyura* and *girdle*. The figure is made of sand stone and measures 63x40 cm. datable to the 13th c. A.D. now at A.S.M. The figure is in *varada mudrā* and the right hand carries a *gada*. His *vāhana* tortoise is shown facing downward in between his legs (Plate-77). Another figure of *Kurma avatāra* is found at Aswakranta temple on the North bank of the river Brahmaputra in North Guwahati. The Figure is carved within a niche on the outer side of the wall of the *garbhagriha* of the temple as one of the members of the Daśavatāra incarnation. The figure is two handed and in *samapada sthānaka* posture. The deity wears *kirata mukuta, rudrakshar, kundala, keyura* and *vanamālā*. The deity appears to holds *padma, gada, Chakra* and *Śankha* in clockwise direction (Plate-78).

**VARAHA** - The *Agni Purāṇa* (Ch. XLIX, v.3) states that the *Bhūmi-Varāha* or Boar incarnation should have a human form and hold the *gada, padma, śankha* and *chakra*. In its right or left hand, *Śankha*, Lakṣmī or the *Padma* should be there. However, there appears to be some confusion about the specific iconographic features of *Varāha* as the verse goes on to state that "on the left, near the elbow is Śrī (another name of Lakṣmī), and at his two feet are Prithivī (another name of Bhūmi), together with Ananta (Seśnāga). If a *Varāha* image is established (as described above) the kingdom is benefited and one can cross the ocean of this world (sansār sāgara). However the Boar incarnation is represented in several ways. In composite or hybrid form the body

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46 Purāṇas ; an important source of Indian history *'The Purāṇas and Iconography'* Seminar presentation by Paromita Das.
of the God is shown as human form and head in boar form and lifted the earth Goddess, Prithvi from the ocean to save the earth from the Demon Hiranyakasipu.47 There are three types of Varaha incarnation - Bhu-Varaha or Adi Varaha, Yajna Varaha and Pralayaaraha. The Bhu–Varaha represents face of the boar with the body of man and lifted the Earth- Goddess, Yajnavaraha as seated on a simhāsana with right leg pendent and flanked by his consort Lakshmi, while Pralayavaraha represents as Varaha in simhāsana with right leg pendent and flanked by Goddess Earth in similar attitude.48 An isolated image of Varaha is found at Hayagriva Madhava Temple at Hajo. The figure is carved on the outer side of the garbhagriha of the temple. The figure is in dvibhanga posture and has four hands. The figure wears kirātamukuta, hara and a dhoti tied in his waist. The deity holds padma, gadā, chakra and śankha as āyudhas in clockwise direction. The deity is shown as lifting the earth or Prithvi with his tusk (Plate-79). Another figure is found at Aswakranta temple on the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra in North Guwahati. The figure is carved within a niche as a part of the dasavatāra of Vishnu on the outer side of the garbhagriha. The deity is four handed and in samapada-Sthānaka posture. The God carries padma, gadā, chakra and śankha as āyudhas in his hands in clockwise direction. The deity is adorned with usual ornaments and vanamālā. The deity in similar way has lifted the earth with his tusk (Plate-80). Thus only Bhuvaraha incarnation Of Vishnu is found to be depicted here as subsidiary deity in this region. Another broken figure of a Varaha is found at the foot hills of the Nilachal hill within the campus of the modern Viswakrama temple. But detail iconographic study could not be done due to deplorable state of the figure.

NARASIMHA - Vishnu took this incarnation of humān body with lion face to destroy the demon Hiranyakasipu by tearing off his belly. Narasimha images are of three types -Girija Narasimha, Sthāuna Narasimha and Yanaka Narasimha. Of these Girija Narasimha is depicted as seated in padmāsana and his legs are being held by Yogapatta. The figure carries chakra and śankha in upper right and upper left hand, while his lower hands rests on his knees. In Sthāuna variety, Narasimha is depicted as seated on simhāsana with right leg pendent. The deity carries śankha and chakra in

upper two hands, while his lower two hands are in varada and abhaya mudrā. Yanaka Narasimha has eagle or serpent as his vāhana and carries Śankha and Cakra in his two hands. In this region there appears to be found Girija Narasimha incarnation of Vishnu at different places of Kamrup District. It conforms Dhyani of Agni Purāṇa (ch.49.v.4).\textsuperscript{49}

There is a figure of Narasimha avatāra found at Uzan Bazar, which is now in A.S.M. (Plate-54). The deity is four handed and in stanaka posture with bent on right knees on lotus pedestal. He carries Śankha and Chakra in two of his hands, while his lower two hands tear off the belly the demon Hiranyakasipu, who is placed horizontally on his thigh. The deity wears kirātamukuta, hara, puspakundala and vanamālā. The stella has plain band with kirttimukha on the top. The figure is made of granite and measures 105x65 cm. and datable to 13\textsuperscript{th} c. A.D.\textsuperscript{50} Another important figure of the deity is found at D.C.Compound on the southern bank of the river Brahmaputra. (Now at A.S.M.) The deity is in seated posture and his legs are on lotus pedestal and measures 64x28 cm (Plate-12). The deity wears kirātamukuta, hara, puspakundala, keyura and bala in hand. The figure is made of sand stone. The deity is four handed and carries gadā and chakra in his upper two hands, while his lower two hands holds demon Hiranyakasipu placed horizontally on his lap and dragging out the intestine from the belly of the demon. Below on the pedestal, a female figure may be Bhudevi, is seen squatting in between his legs and holds a pot on the top of her head to collect the blood coming out of the belly of the demon. Bhudevi is one of the attendents of this incarnation of Vishnu.\textsuperscript{51} The upper part of the stella is broken. This is one of the rare figures of the deity found in this region and datable to 9\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. There is another figure of Narasimha found carved on the northern side of the wall of the Hayagriva temple at Hajo. The figure is catturbhuja and wears kirāṭa mukuta, hara, puspakundala and bala. His lower two hands tears open the belly of the demon Hiranyakasipu lying horizontally on his lap while his upper two hands trails out the intestine from the stomach of the demon. The figure measures 120x70 cm (Plate-81).

\textsuperscript{49} Bhattacharjee, Arun Icons and Sculptures of Early and Medieval Assam. Inter India Publication, Delhi, 1\textsuperscript{st} Edition, 1978 ,p.10
Another figure of the deity is found at Guwahati which is now at A.S.M. The figure is made of sandstone and measures 60x30 cm. The God is in *dvibhanga* posture on a lotus pedestal. The deity wears *kirātamukuta* and *hara*. The figure wears a dhoti with its tassel hanging down. The deity is two handed and with his two hands he tears open the belly of the demon *Hiranyakasipu* as usual (Plate-82). There is a rock-cut figure of Narasimha near waterworks at Uzan bazar in southern bank of the river Brahmaputra in Guwahati. The figure measures 150x47 cm and is in sand stone. The figure is *catturbhuja* and his lower two hands tears open the belly of the demon Hiranyakasipu and while his other two hands trails out the intestine of the demon over the head of the deity. The deity wears *kirātamukuta*, *hara*, *keyura*, *bala* and may be *vanamālā*. On the basis of crude carvings the figure is datable to 13th -14th C.E. A important feature of the figure is that the figure has face of a man with protruding teeth.52 (But during the field visit could not trace out the sculpture in the site). This apart there is another figure of the deity at Aswakranta temple on the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra in North Guwahati. The figure is carved within a niche as a part of the daśavatāra of Vishnu on the outer side of the *garbhagriha*. The deity is four handed and with two of his lower hands tears open the belly of the demon as usual, while his other two upper hands trails out the intestine of the demon. The deity wears a peculiar headdress appears like Assamese *paguri* tie crossely by a rope with knot in either side (Plate-83).

At Kāmākhya in Nilachal hill, there found a stone relic having the figure of *catturbhuja* Narasimha in usual posture as mentioned earlier with *Varaha* figure carved in a crude manner (Plate-84). Thus all these figures represent Narasimha with the demon *Hiranyakasipu* in this region.

**VĀMANA** - This incarnation of Vishnu represents in Dwarf figure and carries *Śankha*, *Chakra*, *Gadā* and *Padma* in his hands. Apart from the daśavatāra panel, the isolated figure of Vāmana incarnation of Vishnu is also found here. Of these special mention may be made of a figure of the deity found at Ambari archaeological site in Guwahati (now at A.S.M.) The figure is made of sand stone and measures 1.37 x68 cm. The figure is in *samapada sthānaka* posture on a lotus pedestal. The deity carries *śankha*, *chakra*, *gadā* and *padma* as *āyudhas* in his four hands in clockwise direction. The figure is

adorned with *kirātamukuta*, *hara*, *puspakundala*, *yajñopavītā* and *vanamālā*. The stella of the figure has a plain band with *kirttimukha* on the top. The deity is flanked by his two consorts in *dvībhaṅga* posture – *Sri* on the right and *Pushṭi* on the left. Below on the pedestal his *Vāhana* *Garuda* is depicted with three inscribed letters, which read as *Vāmana* (Plate-85). The figure is similar with the separate figure of *Vāmana* at the Asutosh Museum, Calcutta. There is another figure of the deity at Hayagriva Madhava temple in Hajo. The figure is carved on the southern wall of the *garbhaṅga* of the temple (Plate-86). The figure is two handed and holds an umbrella with his two hands. The deity wears *jatamīkuta*, *yajñopavītā*, *bala* and *hara* as ornaments. The figure is datable to 16th C.E. In this incarnation, Vishnu also takes the form of *Trīvikrama* and his right leg placed on earth, while his left leg lifted upwards to the level of shoulders as if to touch the sky. But such iconographic representations are not found to be depicted in Kamrup District.

**PΑΡΑŚUΡΑΜΑ** - This incarnation of Vishnu represents in *samapada-sthānaka* posture with two or four arms. The *Agni Purāṇa* (ch. XLIX, v.5) states that Paraśurāma should be four-armed, and his hands hold the *dhanu*, *Sara*, *Khadga* and *Parāsu*. The deity wears deer skin and *yajnopavītā*. The purpose of this incarnation is to destroy Kshatriyas from the world.

Independent and isolated figure of Paraśurama is found at Aswakranta temple on the North bank of the River Brahmaputra. The deity is carved within a niche on the outer wall of the *garbhaṅga* of the temple. The figure is in *samapada-sthānaka* posture and adorned with *mukuta*, *hara*, *kundala*, *bala* and *yajñopavītā*. The deity has two arms and holds *parāsu* in his right hand and *Śankha* in his left hand (Plate-87). There is another figure of this incarnation at the Sukreswar temple. The deity is carved in terracotta within a niche on the outer side of the wall of the temple. The figure has *parāsu* rests on his shoulder. The figure measures 50x42 cm.

55 Purāṇas ; an important source of Indian history* - The Purāṇas and Iconography - by Paromita Das.
RAMA - Verses six and seven of the *Agni Purāṇa* describe the incarnation of Vishnu as Rāma and Balarāma. Rāma is described as the holder of the dhanurbān (bow and arrow), śankha and chakra in his four hands, or he may be two-armed. Balarāma holds the gadā and langala (plough-share), or if he is four-armed, the upper left hand will hold the langala, lower left the śankha, upper right musala (pestle) and the lower right the chakra this incarnation of Vishnu has four or two hands.57 The figure of Rama if two handed carries dhamus and bana in his two arms. The deity is accompanied by his wife Sita, brother Lakśmana and Hanumāna. He is also sometimes accompanied by his two other brothers Bharata and Satrughna.58

The figure of Rama is found at the Hayagriva Madhava temple in Hajo. The figure is carved on the southern wall of the outer side of the wall of the garbhagriha of the temple. The deity is accompanied by his brother Lakśmana. Both the figures carry bana in their right hands and dhamus in their left hands. Here both the figures are shown with their long hair tucked up like a bun, depicted as if they were on exile as narrated in the Ramayana (Plate-88). As an associate or companion, there is also found a figure of Hanumān depicted on the wall of the temple. Independent and isolated figure of Rama is found at Aswakranta temple on the North bank of the River Brahmāputra. The deity is carved within a niche on the outer wall of the garbhagriha of the temple. The figure is in samapada-sthānaka posture and adorned with mukuta, hara, kundala and bala. The deity has two arms and holds bana in his right hand and dhamus in his left hand. The deity also carries a bounce of dhamus on his back (Plate-89).

BALARĀMA - According to the *Agni Purāṇa*, Balarāma holds the gadā and langala (plough-share), or if he is four-armed, the upper left hand will hold the langala, lower left the śankha, upper right musala (pestle) and the lower right the chakra this incarnation of Vishnu has four or two hands.59 This incarnation of Vishnu as isolated or separate figure is found at known as Haliram is depicted as holding plough share as āyudhas and another figure of the deity is found at Hayagriva Madhava Temple at

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57 Purāṇas; an important source of Indian history - 'The Purāṇas and Iconography' seminar presentation by Paromita Das.
59 Purāṇas ; an important source of Indian history '-The Purāṇas and Iconography' presented by Paromita Das.
Hajo. The figure is carved on the outer side of the garbhagriha of the temple. The figure is in sthanaka posture and has two arms. The figure carries langala in his left hand (Plate-90). There is another figure of the deity at Aswakranta temple on the North bank of the River Brahmaputra. The deity is carved within a niche on the outer wall of the garbhagriha of the temple. The figure is two handed and holds Gadā and langala in his hands (Plate-91). There is epigraphic reference of Balarāma in Umāchala Rock Inscription at Nilachal hill, which mentions Bhagavata Balabhadravamī, a Vaisnavite deity called Balabhadra or Balarām a.60

BUDDHA - The Brihatsamhitā states that Buddha must have the palms of his hands and sole of his feet marked with padma and placid in form. His hair should be short.61 The Agni Purāṇa (ch.XLIX, v.8 ) describes the image of Buddha as possessing a peaceful attitude, long ear-lobes, fair of limbs, clad in garments, seated on a Padma, the two hands in varadā and abhaya mudrā.62 However some times in south Indian daśavatāra reliefs the deity is replaced by Krsna. The Bhagavatas regarded Buddha as Mayamoha, to create confusion among the Daityas by preaching false and anti-Vedic doctrines among them and thereby to destroy them. This incarnation of Vishnu is found carved as a separate deity at Hayagriva Madhava temple in Hajo.(Plate-92) The figure is depicted within an arch on the outer side of the wall of the garbhagriha. The figure is seated in padmāsana. He wears jatāmukuta and japamala in his a neck. One of his hands is in Bhūmisparsa mudrā, while the āyudhas in his other hand appears to be peacock tail, one of the iconographic representation of the deity.63 Another important figure of the deity is found at Pingaleswar Archaeological site in Karara in North Guwahati. The figure is depicted on a panel along with bestiality as found in Orissa and Gujrat. The deity is depicted in Dhyanamudrā and flanked by Bhodhi tree on either side (Plate-44). Another figure of the deity is found at Aswakranta temple on the North bank of the River Brahmaputra. The deity is carved within a arch on the outer wall of the garbhagriha of the temple. The deity is in padmāsana with both the arms placed on

62 Purāṇas ; an important source of Indian history 'The Purāṇas and Iconography' seminar presentation by Paromita Das.
his in *yogamudrā* (Plate-93). This apart, there were found two terracotta plaques at Guwahati, which is now at A.S.M. Of them one is in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* and surrounded by miniature *stupas* on all sides. The figure measures 18x12 cm. The inscribed Buddhist creed on the plaque below indicates that the figure is datable to 11th C.E. The other one is in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* and flanked by two miniature *stupas* on either side. The stucco figure has floral motif on the top and bottom of the of plaque. The figure measures 23x10 cm. (Plate-93-A,93-B) On the western slope of the Nilachal hill, along the ancient stair-ways, there found a rock-cut figure of Buddha in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* and wears *ushnisha*. The figure measures 60x55 cm. and in defaced condition for detailed iconographic study. (Plate-93-C) Thus there are very few images of Buddha in and around this region.

**KALKI** - The *Agni Purāṇa* (ch.XLIX,v.9) describes Kalki as “the destroyer of the *mlechchhas* (outcastes), like a Brahmn, riding on a horse, his hands will wear *dhamu* (bow) *tun* (a quiver), and holds *khaṇḍa*, *śankha*, *chakra* and *sara*64. The *Vishnudharmottara* refers a two handed powerful angry man and riding a horse with a *khaṇḍa* in his raised hand.65 Kalki, the tenth incarnation of Vishnu is yet to accomplish in this World, represents face of a horse and body of a man. The figure holds *Śankha, Chakra, Khaṇḍa* and *Khētaka* as *āyudhas* in his hands.66 This incarnation of Vishnu is found carved as a separate deity at Hayagriva Madhava temple in Hajo. The figure is depicted within a arch on the outer side of the wall of the *Garbhagriha*. The figure is depicted as riding a horse and has two arms. The *vāhana* horse is adorned with ornaments. The deity also wears *hara, kundala* and holds *khaṇḍa* in his right hand (Plate94). Another figure of the deity is found at Aswakranta temple on the north bank of the River Brahmaputra. The deity is carved within arch on the outer wall of the *garbhagriha* of the temple. The figure wears *mukuta, hara, bala* and *kundala*. The figure is riding a horse and carries a *khaṇḍa* in his raised right hand (Plate-95). Another figure of the deity is found with similar iconographic representation

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64 Purānas ; an important source of Indian history ‘*The Purānas and Iconography*’ seminar presentation by Paromita Das.
also found at Janardhan temple of Sukreswar Debala on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra.

It appears that all the separate or isolated figures of Daśavatāra are found to be depicted in late medieval period along with Asthadikapālas as guardian of the Vaisnavite temples in Kamrup District.

Of the sthānaka images of Vishnu following incarnations as classified on the basis of holding of āyudhas in his hands, are found in this region. It may be noted that the Agni Purāṇa in ch.XLVII describes the attributes of the Chaturvingsati icons, i.e. the twenty-four forms of the great god Vishnu.  

KESAVA - The Agni Purāṇa in ch XLVIII, the first verse states that Kesava or Vishnu is said to be Omkār, i.e. the origin of Creation itself. Kesava holds the padma, śankha, chakra, gadā, in his four hands, from the lower right hand moving in an anti-clockwise direction. The Kesava incarnation of Vishnu is found at Ambari archaeological site. The figure is flanked by Sri and Pushti on right and left respectively in tribhanga posture. The figure wears kirātāmukuta, hara, kundala, yajnopavītā, girdle and vanamālā. The Stella has a plain band with kirttimukha and vidyadhārā on the top. The deity is in samapada Sthānaka posture on a lotus pedestal. His Vāhana garuda is depicted below on the pedestal (Plate-96). Another Kesava incarnation is found carved on the rock at Urvasi Island in the middle of the river Brahmaputra. The figure is adorned with kirātāmukuta and vanamālā. The figure represents similar iconographic feature as mentioned earlier. The figure measures 80x52 cm. (Plate-97).

TRIVIKRAMA - The Agni Purāṇa in fourth verse describe the attributes of Trivikrama. According to the Agni Purāṇa and Padma Purāṇa, Trivikrama incarnation of Vishnu carries padma, gadā, chakra and śankha as āyudhas in hands in anti-clockwise direction. This incarnation of Vishnu is found at Ambari Archaeological Site. The catturbhujā figure is in samapada sthānaka posture on a lotus pedestal. The deity is adorned with kirātāmukuta, hara, kundala and vanamālā. The Stella has a plain

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67 Das., Paromita, Purāṇas : An important source of Indian history - 'The Purāṇas and Iconography' seminar presentation.
68 Das, Paromita Purāṇas; An important source of Indian history - 'The Purāṇas and Iconography' seminar presentation.
69 Das. Paromita Purāṇas; An important source of Indian history - 'The Purāṇas and Iconography' seminar presentation.
band with kirttimukha and vidyādhara on the top. The deity is flanked by Sri and Pushthi on either side as per iconographic norms. His vāhana, Garuda is depicted on the pedestal in anjali mudrā. The figure measures 122x64 cm. and is made of granite. (Plate-98). Another figure of Trivikrama form of Vishnu is found the Aswakranta temple in North Guwahati on the bank of the river Brahmāputra. The deity is carved within a niche which perhaps fixed on the wall of the western entrance of the temple in similar iconographic representation. Another figure in similar iconographic feature is found at Siddheswar temple in Sualkuchi in Kamrup District. The figure is depicted in the inner side of the wall of the garbhagriha. The figure measures 190x110cm. The deity wears conical headdress and dress in Vaisnavite style (Plate-99). Another figure of this incarnation is found carved on the rock of the Kakrasagar ghat at Hajo in Kamrup District. The figure is flanked by his consorts Sri on the right and Pushthi on the left. The figure measures 94x65 cm. (Plate-100). There is another figure at Hayagriva Madhava temple in Hajo representing similar iconographic feature. The deity is carved on the outer side of the garbhagriha of the temple. The deity is in samapadasthānaka posture and his vāhana Garuda is carved below him (Plate-101). There is another broken figure of Trivikrama form found at Chandmari, which is now at A.S.M. The āyudhas in lower hands of the deity are slightly damaged. The deity is flanked by his consorts -Sri and Pushthi on either side though lower portion of the stella is missing. It measures 22x29 cm (Pate-47). Another metal figure of the deity is found at Hahara in Kamrup with such iconographic representations. The figure measures 8x6 cm. (Plate-102)

ACHYUTA - The Agni Purāṇa in ch.48 (V.10) narrates the iconography of Narasimha and Achyuta. The Achyuta incarnation of Vishnu represents that the deity carries gadā, padma, chakra and śankha as āyudhas in his hands in clockwise direction. Such iconographic representations are found at Ambari Archaeological Site. The figure is made of granite and measures 126x65cm. The figure is flanked by Sri and Pushthi on either side. The figure wears kirāta mukuta, Hara, kundala, girdle and vanamālā. The stella of the figure has kirttimukha and vidyādhara on the top (Plate-103).

71 Das., Paromita, Purānas : An important source of Indian history -'The Purānas and Iconography' seminar presentation.
Sridhara - The Agni Purāṇa in the fifth verse refers the iconography of Sridhara and Hriśikeśa. The figure of Sridhara incarnation of Vishnu is depicted as holding padma, chakra, gadā and śankha as āyudhas in hands. This form of catturbhuja Vishnu is found at Ambari Archaeological site in Guwahati. The figure is adorned with usual ornaments like kirātāmukuta, hara, kundala, girdle etc. The figure is flanked by Sri on the right and Pushti on the left. The stella has kirttimukha and vidyādharās on the top with vāhana Garuda carved below on the pedestal. The figure is made of granite and measures 130x65 cm. (Plate-104).

ADHOKSHOJA - The Agni Purāṇa in (ch.XLVIII, v.9) narrates iconography of Purushottama and Adhokshaja incarnation of Vishnu. The Ashokshoja form of catturbhuja Vishnu carries padma, gadā, śankha and chakra as āyudhas in his four hands. This form of the God Vishnu is found at Ambari site. The figure also exhibits similar feature of the God with his consorts Sri and Pushti on either side. Below on the pedestal his vāhana Garuda is depicted. The figure measures 127x69 cm. and made of granite (Plate-105). The Stella has kirttimukha and vidyādharās on the top of the stella.

PURUSHOTTAMA - The Agni Purāṇa described the iconographic feature of this incarnation of Vishnu. This incarnation of Vishnu carries chakra, padma, śankha and gadā in clockwise direction from lower right hand as āyudhas. Other iconographic representations remained the same as in earlier form. There are two metal images of this form of Vishnu found at Narakasur hill in Kahilipara Guwahati of Kamrup District, which are now at A.S.M. One of them is in samapada sthānaka posture on a lotus pedestal. The upper right hand of the figure rests on holds padma and the upper left hand holds śankha while his lower right hand placed on chakra and his lower left hand placed on gadā. The vāhana Garuda of the deity is carved on the pedestal. The figure measures 26x10cm. (Plate-20). Another one is a miniature figure of Purushottama with similar iconographic representations (Plate-106). The figure wears

72 Purāṇas ; An important source of Indian history -'The Purāṇas and Iconography' seminar presentation by Paromita Das.
73 Sri Sri Jiva Nyayatirtha, (translated & edited) Agni Purāṇa, Published by Navabharat Publishers, Kolkata in 1381 of Bangabda, cited in Purāṇas; an important source of Indian history '-'The Purāṇas and Iconography' seminar presentation by Paromita Das.
uttariya instead of vanamāḷa on his body. The stella of the figures has a floral motif on the outer rim and both the figures may be datable to 9th c. A.D.74

**KRISHNA** - This incarnation of Vishnu is narrated in the *Agni Purāṇa* that *Krisna* carries śankha, gadā. *Padma* and *chakra* as *āyudhas* in hands.75 The *Hari vamsa*, the *Srimad-Bhagavata* and the *Vishnu Purāṇa* refer to Krishna. The deity is the great symbol of many virtues. The deity holds a curved stick in right hand, while his left hand is lifted and bent on elbow. He also carries śankha in his hand.76 In Kamrup District, there are three rock-cut beautiful figures of Venu-Gopala (Krishna playing flute) Krishna at Nilachal hill. Of them one is rock-cut figure of the deity carved within a arch alongwith figure of a rock-cut Ganeśa on the Nilachal hill. The figure is in *tribhaṅga* posture holding flute in his hands under a tree. The figure is accompanied by his consorts, Rukmini and Satyabhama (Plate-29). Other two rock-cut Venu-Gopala are found carved at Bogola temple in Nilachal hill. Of them one is carved outside the temple in *tribhaṅga* posture and flanked by his consorts, Rukmini and Satyabhama (Plate-107). While the other one is depicted in *tribhaṅga* without his consorts inside the *garbhagriha*. Both the figures are badly eroded. Another stone image of Venu-gopala is found at Navagraha temple in Chitrachal hill. The deity is in *dvibhaṅga* posture on *padmapitha* and is playing flute, though right hand is broken. The deity had his hair tied up in a knot. Stylistically, the sculpture may be datable to 18th C.E. Another one is found at Chattakar temple. The deity is found to be depicted on a relief in similar posture along with his consort Radha and the cowherdesses (Gopis) under a tree and animals on the pedestal. The stella has a plain band on the border (Plate-68). These Krishnayana of late medieval temple sculpture exhibit the theme of divine acts of love.77

This apart, there are some sthānaka images of *catturbhuja* Vishnu, many of which are difficult for iconographic identification either due to damage or broken or indistinct depiction of *āyudhas* for poor quality of stone. Of these mention may be

made of miniature images of catturbhuja Vishnu found at Ambari Archaeological site. All the figures are in *samapada sthānaka* posture and almost in similar size and condition. They measure between 014 X 024 X 03cm. to 027 X125X 06cm. These apart there is another mutilated figure of Vishnu found at Ulubari in Guwahati, which is now at A.S.M. The figure is adorned with heavy ornamentation and measures 40X32 cm. In A.S.M. there is another figure of the deity found at North Guwahati. The figure is in *samapada sthānaka* on a lotus pedestal with usual *āyudhas*. The stella of the figure is pointed on the top with *kiritimukha* and flanked by *vidyādharā* on the either side. The deity is flanked by his consorts *Śri* and *Pushti* on either side. (Plate-48) There are two figures of *catturbhuja* Vishnu found carved within niches on the either side at the *batchora* of the Aswakranta temple in North Guwahati. At Madan Kamdev Archaeological Site in North Guwahati, there is a figure of six-handed Vishnu in *samapada sthānaka* posture on a plain pedestal and measures 105x62x32cm and made of granite stone. The figure is in mutilated state and now preserved at the site museum in Madan Kamdev site. The deity is adorned with *kirātamukuta, hara, kundala, keyura, girdle* and *vanamālā*. The deity holds *gadā* in upper right hand, *dhanus* in middle right hand and lower right hand holds may be lotus, though not distinct. While his upper left hand carries *chakra*, the middle one is missing and the lower left hand is in mutilated state. (Plate-108) It may be noted that this is the only six handed figure of Vishnu found in this region.78 Another image of Vishnu enshrines the Janardhan temple at Sukreswar on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra. The figure is in *samapada-sthānaka*. There also found three metal images of Vishnu at Narakasur hill in Kahilipara, but detail iconographic study could not be done due to mutilated condition. Of them, one of the figure of the deity wears *kirātamukuta* and *vanamālā*. There is a *Prabhāwali* with pointed at the top. The figure is flanked by his consorts *Śri* and *Pushti* on either side while his *vāhana* Garuda is depicted below on the pedestal (Plate-109).

**SEATED IMAGES OF VISHNU** - There also found seated or *āsana* images of Vishnu in this region. The seated images of Vishnu can be divided into as seated on the coils of the *Adidesa* in *lalitāsana* pose or on the shoulders of *Garuda* in different ways.

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78 Bhattacharjee , A. Fig 108. *Icons and Sculptures of early and medieval Assam*, p.5.
or in yogāsana on viswapadma.79 On the southern bank of the river Brahmaputra at Sukrewsar ghat a rock-cut seated figure of Vishnu is found. The deity is seated in padmāsana and adorned with kirātamukuta, hara, kundala keyura, bala and yajñopavītā. The deity holds śankha, padma, gadā and may be chakra in clockwise direction. Below on the pedestal his vāhana, Garuda is depicted. The figure measures 204 x 202cm.80 The figure is referred as Vishnu Janardhana by the scholars, but according to the Vishnudharmottārā, ‘Janardhana, the god of gods should be shown as a horned fish. (He) may again be made as a female ornamented by all ornaments. In his hand should be the nectar – pot’. The deity placed his feet on the hands of the Bhudevi.81 Hence the figure appears to represent dyānamudrā as the deity holds the śankha in karana mudrā and both the lower two hands in karana and bhūmisparśa mudrā(Plate-110). There is found two rock-cut seated figures of Vishnu at the slope of the Nilachal hill. The figures are found carved by the side of the ancient stair-ways on the western slope of the Nilachal hill alongwith the rock-cut figure of Buddha and in bad state of preservation. Both figures are in padmāsana and appears to wears jatāmukuta. Both the figures carry padma in right upper hands, and gada in left upper hands, while lower two hands are rest on knees in karana mudrā. Both the figures represent Dhyānamudrā and measure 65x53cm. and 69x55cm. respectively. (Plate-110-A) There is another rock-cut figure of āsanamurthi of Vishnu at the foothill of the Manikarneswar temple in North Guwahati (Plate-39). The figure is found on the bank of the river Brahmaputra. The figure is in lalītāsana posture and carries gadā in right upper hand, chakra in left upper hand and śankha in left lower hand while lower right hand is in mutilated condition. The deity is seated on the figure of Lakṣmi lying horizontally on āsana and Bhu Devi is depicted below in his right. The deity has a five hooded snake canopy behind his head though its upper part is mutilated. The deity wears kirātamukuta, hara and kundala. The deity is flanked by Brahmā in the top of the right, who is seated on lotus pedestal, the stalk of which is coming out from the navel of Vishnu. There is another figure below the figure of Brahmā but cannot be identified

due to defaced condition. However as per iconographic norms the figure may be identified as Siva as found companion of the God in Yogāsana posture. There is another figure of āsanamurti of the deity found on the outer side of the wall of the garbhagriha of the Janardhan temple at Sukreswar temple on the South bank of the River Brahmaputra. The figure is carved within a niche on the wall of the temple. The figure measures 144X 75 cm. datable to 17th century A.D. The figure is in padmāsana on the coils of the Adidesa and adorned with kirāta mukuta, hara, kundala, keyura and girdle. The deity has a ten hooded snake canopy behind his head. The deity holds chakra, aiyastham, padma and sankha as āyudhas in hands in clockwise direction (Plate-111). There is another seated figure of the deity within a niche on the outer wall of the garbhagriha of the Aswakranta temple. The figure is in padmāsana on padmapitha and had a twenty-hooded snake canopy behind his head. The deity carries vajra in right hand while the āyudhas in other hand is indistinct. The deity wears kirātamukuta, hara and yaṭhopavītā. The deity wears lower garments covering his navel. The figure maybe identified as Pradyumna as per iconographic norms (Plate-112). According to the Agni Purāna the Pradyumna holds vajra, śankha, dhanus and gadā as āyudhas. Another important feature of the deity is that the deity wears his lower garment covering his navimandal.

Another rock-cut Janardhana murti of Vishnu is found near Bogola temple at Nilachal hill. The figure is depicted in padmāsana and found in deplorable condition. It appears that the deity holds padma in right upper hand, mace in upper left hand and lower left hand in karana and bhūmisparśa mudrā. This apart there is another seated figure of two handed Vishnu on the on the outer side of the wall of the garbhagriha of the Hayagriva-Madhava temple. The deity is seated on the shoulders of his vāhana Garuda and flanked by his consorts Sri and Pushti. The deity was adorned by kirātamukuta, hara, kundalas and vanamālā and his consorts also wear usual ornaments. His vāhana, Garuda holds the legs of the deity by his two hands. The deity carries gadā in his right hand and aiyastham in his left hand. The figure is datable to 16th century A.D. (Plate-113).

The recumbent or sayanamurtis of Vishnu are very rare and there is only one sayana image of Vishnu in this region. The figure enshrines at Aswakranta temple in North Guwahati on the bank of the river Brahmaputra. The deity is carved on a black granite stone. It measures 151x161cm. (Plate-63). The deity is in reclining attitude on the coils of serpent Ananta, with its ten-hooded canopy over him. The deity is four handed and carries padma, chakra, gadā and sanka. The figure is flanked by Brahmā above, who is seated on padmāsana on a lotus pedestal the stalk of which issues from the navel of Vishnu. There is a figure of Daśabhuja Durga ‘Mahamaya’ on padmapitha on the top. Further right there are two figures in standing posture- the demons- Madhu and Kaitabha. The stella has a pointed arch with figure of Garuda on the top. The deity is lying on the coils of the snake with his head rests on pillow. The pedestal has a figure of toad on it and upon it a figure of kurma (tortoise) was placed, upon which the pedestal was placed. The coils of the serpent is found to be placed on two lotus stalk appears as if emerged from the sea. His consort Lakshmi is as massaging his legs, four female figures in kneeling posture behind her, may be Bhudevi and devotees. Below in between coils there are five female figures in kneeling posture, they may be regarded as Nagapatnistuti of the Bhagavata Purana (Bk.X,Ch.16, V.45), the wives of Naga Kaliya depicting in kneeling posture before Krisna (Vasudeva). The presence of Mahamaya referred that she was invoked by Brahmā to awaken Vishnu to kill the demons Madhu and Kaitabha. The relief has a rare iconographic representation with depiction of Toad and Kurma, which perhaps has not been found anywhere in India. Here the deity is in Virasayana-murti. The relief is datable to 18th C.E. The relief represents syncretism of Vaisnavism and Saktism.

HAYAGRIVA – There is found another incarnation of Vishnu found at Hayagriva Madhava temple in Hajo. The Kālikā Purāṇa also refers to Manikuta Parvata and Nilaparvata and the rivers Sita and Lauhitya. It mentions of Hayagriva Vishnu on Manikuta hill and Kāmākhya-Pitha on Nilachal hill. The Matsya Purāṇa (ch. 49) mentions the Hayagriva avatāra has the face of a horse and carries śankha, chakra,

gadā and Vēda in his hands. His left foot is on Sesa-naga and the right foot is on the back of tortoise. This indicates influence of Vedic religion even before the first century A.D. The Gadura Purāna refers to Hayagriva worship as a synthesis of Pauranic and Tantric worship. It has some connection with Buddhist Mantrayana. It is also therefore worshiped by the Buddhist as their cult. The Padma Purāna, Patalakhanda (ch.47,v.36, Bangabad ed.) has refers the Hayagriva Salagrama. The Hayagriva Madhava temple in Hajo enshrines four incarnations of Vishnu. According to the priest and local belief they are Vasudeva, Gobinda (also called calanta Madhava), Hayagriva and Jagannath. His vāhana, Garuda is shown in left. Every year the Buddhist monks visit the temple to worship the Hayagriva cult. The Jagannath ratha festival is celebrated every year in similar way of Orrissan Rath festival. The Gobinda (Calanta Madhava) is also worshiped in falgu-utsav every year by moving the vigraha of the deity in the city. The figures of the deity are covered with cloths, hence iconographic of the deities could not be verified.

LAKSHMI-NARAYANA – In this aspect, a composite figure of Vishnu and Lakshmi is depicted. The Vishnu is seated in lalitāsana and his consort Lakshmi is seated on his lap in left side. The Goddess Lakshmi holds a paśma in her left hand and embraces Vishnu with her right hand. Vishnu holds śankha and chakra in two of his hands, while his lower right hand is in varada mudrā and left hand embraces the Goddess, Lakshmi. Such iconographic representation is found carved on the batchora of the entrance of Basistha Temple. Here the Vishnu is seated in rajalilāsana posture with Lakshmi seated on his lap under a tree. It measures 25x38 cm. and datable to 18t The Goddess Vishnu with one of his right hand touches the chin of Umā while his other right hand holds an object appears to be Gadā. Both of them wears jatāmukuta and may be identified as Lakshmi-Narayana (Plate-114). Recently a terracotta plate found at Jambari in Mirza. There is found depiction of composite figure of Lakshmi-Narayan in dancing posture. The terracotta figure may be datable to 18th C.E. and had stylistically similarity with Bengal art style (Plate-115).

AYUDHA-PURUSHA - GARUDA - The Garuda is the vahana of Vishnu. The deity must have four or two hands. According to the Silparatna, the deity must have two or eight hands. If two handed, one of his hand is in abhaya mudra. If eight handed holds gadā, śankha, chakra, khaṅga and a sarpa. Sri-tatva-nidhi narrates that the deity should be in kneeling posture on his left knee. The deity has pointed and raised nose. The deity has two hands in anjali mudra and placed in front of Vishnu. There is found a bronze figure of Garuda at Hahara in Kamrup District. The deity is in kneeling posture with his right knee resting on ground. The celestial bird is in anjali mudra with wings behind the arms. The nose of deity is aquiline (Plate-116). Such iconographic features are found in a recently discovered metal image of Garuda at Jambari in Mirza in Kamrup District. The figure is in samapada sthānaka on a figure of Kurma. The deity is in anjali mudra and adorned with kirātamukuta, hra, kundala and keyura. The deity had pointed mouth and nose. The figure had two holes on the back and a single hole in front. It appears that the hole on the back may be used for wings of the deity. Such feature of Garuda and Kurma is found carved in wood in the Siva temple at Palur in Travancore.89 Thus the metal figure may be identified as Garuda (Plate-116-A).

SIVA

Of the Hindu concept of trinity God, Siva is the most influential and popular member of the Brahmānical God of India. Siva is represented in two forms- aniconic or Phallic and iconic. As per archaeological evidence Linga or Phallic form is the earliest form of Saivite worship.90 According to Mayamata(ch.33) there are three forms of Sivalinga-(i) niskala linga is a plain linga also known sthanu-linga, (ii)sakala with images of Siva or other Gods i.e pratima linga (iii)Misra is having one or more faces also known as mukhalinga. The AmarksHa refer to thirty-eight names of Siva.91 The VshnudharmotTārā (Part-111, ch.44, Verses1-21and ch.48, Verses1-20) referred to

Siva as God of Gods, the bow carrier. The God should be seated on a bull and must have five faces - Sadyojata, Vanadeva, Aghora, Tatpurusha are the four faces of Siva and the fifth face known as Ishana. The earth is - Sadyojata, the water-Vanadeva, the heat-Aghora, the wind- Tatpurusha. The southern one is fierce with garland of skulls, destructive of universe, known as Bhairava-the heat while the eastern face with three eyes known as Mahadeva-the earth His three eyes represent the sun, the moon and the fire. The northern one with three eyes as the Umāvaktra-the water also called Rudra and the western face known as Nandivaktra—the wind, while the fifth face represents Śadasiva also known as the sky. The God should have matted locks of hair of the northern face and crescent moon should be on it. The fifth face should be top of it. The deity must have Vasuki as a sacred thread (the serpent king). The Mahadeva should have ten hands and holds a rosary, a trident, bana, a daṇḍa and a padma in his right hands while his left hands holds a citron, a dhanus, a darpana, a kamakūṭa and a khētaka and wears a tiger skin. The whole image should resemble the rays of moon; Mahadeva holds akshāmāla and kama-kūṭa, Śadasiva has dhanus and bana, Bhairava holds the citron and the daṇḍa and gem of seed of the universe. While Nandi has the khētaka and the trident. Rudra or Umāvaktra holds mirror and lotus in his hands. His vāhana bull is the divine dharma having four feet.92

In this region Siva is worshiped both in phallic and iconic representation. According to literary and epigraphic sources saivism was the most dominant faith in Assam from the earliest times. As per archaeological evidence of the above mention phallic forms we only find niskala or sthanu linga form in this region. According to linga-rupa-nirmanam, plain linga is round at the top, octagonal in the middle and inserted in the pindika or bhadrāpītha. Kālikā Purāṇa refers sixteen different names of Siva-Mahadeva, Siva, Sthanu, Ugra, Rudra, Brihadhas, Sāsanavasi, Varga, Sarbasanaharkari Paratpar, Sankar Neellohit, Girish, Borod, Bhutbhavan. Siva was worshiped both by Brahmā and other Gods and Goddesses. As mentioned earlier, worship of Linga and Yoni of pre-aryan concept is a non anthropomorphic pre-Brahmānical culture which was latter hinduised into phallic form. Siva Purāṇa also

refers that Linga is Devi and Mahadevi form, and Linga is Maheswar. It also refers to the meditation of Sivalinga by the Kamarupa king. The Kālikā Purāṇa mentions fifteen numbers of sacred places which was associated with worship of Siva. The Kālikā Purāṇa also referred Siva as a guardian deity before the coming of Naraka who became worshiper of Mother Goddess-Kāmākhya. It also records that Siva was worshiped privately even during the reign of Naraka in the Kingdom of Kamarupa. Tezpur plates of Vanamālāvarmadeva (v.5) refers to worship of Lord Mahadeva by Bhagadatta after becoming the Lord of Prāɡjyotīṣha. Dubi plates of Bhaskar varmana(v.1) and Nidhanpur Copper plates Inscription(v.1) of Bhaskar Varman referred to Mahadeva as God to be meditated whose body is besmeared with ashes. The Harṣhacharita relates “never to do homage to any being other than the lotus feet of Siva”(here referred to as Sthanu). The Darrang Rajvamsavali refers to Koch King of Koch Bihar – Kāmarupa as a devotee of Siva and performed both Brahmānical and tribal rituals. Before his battle against the Ahoms the Koch King Nara Narayan offered puja to Siva according to Sastric rituals, but the king one of his Kachari soldier insisted for offering of puja according to tribal rituals with rice, wine and meat and dancing of women before the God(Deo-dhai). So the King issued an order informing that in all the temples that is lying to the north of the river Brahmaputra ,the rituals will be performed by the aboriginal practices of worship. In Siva Caturdasi we still found the practice of animal sacrifice in some of the Siva temples of Assam.

Lingam or Aniconic worship of Siva is mostly found in this region. The Yogini Tantra referred to millions above Lingas in Kamarupa. Of the Phallic or Linga form we found cylindrical linga either isolate or with yonipitha below it. According to the

SivaPurāṇa there are some important lingas which throw rays of light from it and known as Jyotir-Linga. According to this Purāṇa (ch.38, v.10-22), there were twelve Jyotir-Lingas in India. They are Somnath in Saurashtra, Sri Saila Mallikarjun in Andhra Pradesh, Mahakaleswar and Omkareswa Linga at Madhya Pradesh, Kedarnath at foothills of Himalaya, Bhimsankar at Dakinipur, Biswanath at Baranasi, Trimbak Linga at Godabari, Baidyanath Linga at Sitabhumi, Nageswar Linga at Darukaban, Rameswar at Setubandha, Ghusmesh at Sibala. Of these, Dakinipur is located at Kamarupa where the Kamarupa King worshiped Sivalinga. But it appears that Jyotirlinga is a myth and no specific evidence of it is found here. But it may be mentioned that there found a Sivalinga on a hill known as Dakini hill in south of Garchuk in Kamrup District and foot hills of Meghalaya. People co-relate this place with Dakinipur of the SivaPurāṇa. Mention may be made of findings of as many as thirteen numbers of linga and yonipitha at bapuji housing colony at Kanvachal in various sizes, ranging from 140cm in diameter and 133cm in height of biggest one to 82cm in dia and 48cm in height of smallest one. (Plate-117) The Kālikā Purāṇa (ch.79, v.143-144) mentioned that to the East of Chitrākut there was a Uttam Parvat named Kajjval, where lived Devayonis like Vidyadhar, who were worshiped by the people. The Kajjval may be related Kanvachal hill near Chitrāchal hill. This apart nine planets at Navagraha Temple also represents in linga and yoni form in Chitrāchal hill. At Ambari Archaeological Site we find large numbers of linga and yoni of different sizes numbering about 56. There found a huge phallus shape kaolin object having hair or rays on it in one side of the lower part of the relief. There is a small hole at the top and a line vertically in the middle. The object has been identified as mukhalingas, a combination of phallic and iconic forms of Saivite worship. It measure 40.50x65cm. (Plate-118). This apart Umānanda Temple and Chandrasekhar Temple in the midst of river Brahmaputra, Manikarneshwar Temple on the north bank,

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Sukreshwar Temple and Baneshwar Devalaya on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra enshrines Linga and Yonipitha. The biggest one of the region is found at Sukreshwar Temple measuring 350x110 cm. Siddheshwar Temple at Sualkuchi enshrines Linga in the Garbhagriha measuring 50x145cm. (Plate-119) In either side of the entrance of the temple there exists two Siva-Lingas and Yonipithas, appears to be fixed up latter there. Further Kameswar Temple, Kedar Temple and Kamaleswar Temple at Hajo enshrines Linga and Yonipitha. The Kedar Temple enshrines Sivalinga. The temple at Chaygaon enshrines Siva-Linga and Yonipitha with floral carvings and octagonal Linga measuring 50x97cm. Pingaleshwar Temple at Karara, enshrines linga-yonipitha in the Garbha-griha, which also known as Ardhanarishwar by the local people. The Linga and Yoni are symbolic of male and female, thus may be called Ardhanarishvara- half male and half female, another aspect of Siva.108 But the Linga-Yonipitha at Pingaleswar didnot represent iconography of Ardhanarishwar form. At Udalbakra in Narakasur hill we find a miniature caturmukha -linga in metal, a rare specimen of this type in this region and measures 5x4.5cm. It is placed on a lotus shaped base, and surrounded by four bust with four faces separated by hooded serpents. Each bust has matted locks of hair (Plate-120).109 This apart, there are panels depicting worship of Linga by the devotees at Madan Kamdev temple and pingaleswar temple. Further, rock-cut Linga-Yonipitha within a niche and panel of Sivalinghas numbering five alongwith three miniature sikharas carved in western slope of the Nilachal hill. (Plate-121 and Plate -122) Further there found a unique stone panel at Uzan bazar, which is now at A.S.M. The panel is divided into nine khattakas (parts) and in three rows, of which centre part of middle row is carved with Umā-Mahēśwara and flanked by two khatakas having four Siva-Lingas in each. While upper row depicts Ganesha in left corner and Kārtikeya in right corner while middle khataka is carved with four Siva-lingas. In lower row depicts Vishnu and Sūrya on either end with three female and two male devotees in anjalimudrā in the centre. (Plate-11) Thus exhibits popularity of Linga-worship alongwith image worship in this region placing Vishnu and Sūrya on the lower position.

In *Mahabharata*, the iconic forms of *Siva* has two aspects—ghora or ugra i.e. fierce and the other *Saumya* i.e. benign. These two aspect covers various iconographic manifestations of *Siva*. Of the *Saumā* form of *Siva* in this region, we find – Śādaśiva, Yoga-dakshinamurti, Jñāna-dakshinamurti, Natarāja, composite figure of *Harihara* and *Umāmahesvara*, while *Ugra* form includes Bhairava and Tripurantaka murtis.\(^\text{110}\) Here we will discuss only iconography of these aspects of *Siva* as found in Assam.

**SADĀŚIVA** - This aspect of *Siva* has two forms—the Śādaśivamurti and the Maha-Śadaśivamurti. (Hindu iconography, T.A.G.Rao. vol-11, part-1 l.p.361-372). According to the *UtTārā Kamikagama* (ch.xliii), *Mahanirvana Tantra* (ch.xiv.,32-5) and *Garuda Purāṇa* (Purva kanda,22,52-5)\(^\text{111}\) the Śādaśivamurti is white, having five faces and standing or seated on a *Padmāsana*. His head is adorned with *jatāmukuta*. The Deity has ten arms holding *śakti*, *śula*, *khatvānga*, *abhaya* and *varada mudrā* in right hand; *Sarpa* (serpent), *aksamala*, *damaru*, *padma* (lotus), citron in left hand. Śādaśiva has one face with three eyes representing *ichchāsakti*, the *Jñanaśakti* and the *kriyasakti* with crescent moon in his *jatāmukuta* as a symbol of *Jñana* and wears *yajnopavita*. The deity is flanked by the supreme goddess Manonmani. While according to *Manasāra*, MahaŚadaśivamurti should have twenty-five faces with seventy-five eyes and fifty arms. His head is adorned with *jatāmukutas* and wears *kundalas* and *sarpalankaras*.\(^\text{112}\) Here the figure of ten handed Śadaśivamurti was found at Guwahati, which is now at A.S.M. The deity is seated in *padmāsana* on a lotus pedestal and wears *jatāmukuta*. The figure measures 85x2.28cm. The *āyudhas* in most of the hands are indistinct except *śakti* in one of his right hand and lotus in one of his left hand can be hardly identified. Two of his hands rests on his knees. The deity is carved within a circular band. The figure has four faces of which three are on a line and fourth one is above the middle one. All the faces are adorned with *jatāmukuta*. (Plate-123) There found another figure of Śadaśivamurti at Guwahati which is now preserved at A.S.M. The figure is seated within a ten petalled lotus medallion carved whitin a circle. Two hands are in


vyakhanamudrā or dharmachakrapravartana mudrā of Buddhists.113 Of the rest of the hands śula and trisula in right and padma in one of his left while rest of the hands are indistinct. The vāhana bull is depicted in bowed posture below the feet of Śiva. It measures 79cm.in dia. (Plate-124). There is found a rock-cut figure of tenhanded ŚaḍaŚiva at Nilachal hill. The deity is in padmāsana and appears to be with similar iconographic features though not distinct. (Plate-125)

YOGA-DAKSHINAMURTI - According to the Kurma Purāṇa, Śiva is Yogesvara and Yoginamparamesvaras e.g. Mahayogi (uparibhaga, ch.4,v.29)114 Śiva as Yoga-Dakshinamurti seated in padmāsana having four hands. He holds rosary in back right hand and the other right hand is in yoga mudrā while his back left hand holds lotus and other left hand rests on knees in yogic posture or front left hand stretched to rest on elbow on the knee of bent left leg. Left leg of the deity is bent in utkutikāsana and right leg pendent. His left leg and left side of the body is held together by a yogapatta or both the legs slightly raised on seat and held by a yogapatta. The yoga-dakshinamurti of Śiva is found at Urvasi Island at Guwahati. The figure is carved on the rock in padmāsana with a lotus carved below in pedestal. The figure has four hands – his lower right hand rests on knees and upper right hand holds rosary. His upper left hand holds padma and lower left hand is in Jñana-mudrā near his chest. The head of the god is adorned with jatāmukuta and wears kundala. The figure measures 51x35cm. (Plate-126)

JÑANA-DAKSHINAMURTI - Śiva is the great master of yoga, music, dance and other science i.e. teacher of universe known as Jñana- Dakshinamurti. Śiva as Jñana-Dakshinamurti should be seated in savya lalitāsana posture. The god has four hands of which one right hand holds rosary, other one is in jñānamudrā while one of his left hands holds either fire or sarpa and other one is in varada mudrā. This aspects of Śiva can be found at Sukresvara on the bank of the river Brahmāputra. There exists a rock-cut figure of Śiva in Jñana-dakshinamurti facing the river as a part of figures of pancedevata-Ganesa, Vishnu, Sūrya and Śakti. The figure measures 87x57cm. The god is seated in padmāsana posture having four hands. Two of his arms are in

vyakhanamurti and wears jatamukuta. The figure is heavily damaged and further iconographic details cannot be done.  

NATARĀJA - Siva in dancing posture is known as Natarāja. The Saivagama describes 108 modes of dances of Siva, though narrates only nine. Natarāja is part of these mode of dances. Siva as Natarāja, the cosmic dancer embodies five activities-creation, maintenance, destruction, concealment and favour. Natarāja dances on the prostrate body of the dwarf Apasmara Purusha which symbolizes ignorance or darkness. In this posture one of the God is bent on knees, while another one raised and rests on earlier bent leg. According to the Matsya Purāṇa, Natarāja has ten hands and carries khadga(sword), sakti, danda(staff) and triśula in four of his right hand and khētaka(shield), kapāla, naga(snake) and khatavānga in four of his left hands. The fifth right hand is in varada mudrā and fifth left hand carries rosary or aksamala. Siva as Natarāja is found at uzanbazar now preserved in A.S.M. (Plate-128). It measures 94x 94cms. and datable to 11th century A.D. The figure is carved within a diamond shaped rosettes circular stone slab may be parts of a ceiling slab. The stone slab is broken on the top. The god is dancing on his vāhana bull having ten arms of which two arms on either side is broken. Rest of the hands carry all the āyudhas of Natarāja as described earlier. This apart an uttariya (scarf) flows on either side of his body. Another figure of Natarāja is found at Ambari archaeological site. This ten handed Natarāja is in dancing posture on his vāhana nandi or bull. The God is flanked by Bhringi in right and dwarf Apasmārā Purusha in left is in dancing posture. The figure is beautifully carved and found intact. It represents all the iconographic details of Natarāja as mentioned in the Purāṇas. The God has third eye vertically on his forehead. The deity wears karanda-mukuta, keyura, hara and puspakundala and girdle. The God wears vaḻnopavitā and ghunghuru in his both legs. There is a kirttimukha at the top of the stella. His ten hands carry khadga, sakti, danda, triśula in right and khētaka, kapāla, naga, khatavānga in left while lower two hands is in abhaya and varada mudrā holding rosary. Nandi wears a bell in his neck. Here both the attendants are in dancing posture like the main deity. Apasmārā carries triśula in left and danda in

right hand carrying *kamandalu* on his right shoulder while *bhringi* carries *danda* and *kamandalu* in right and left hand rests on his waist. It measures 2.11x129 cms. (Plate-129) There are two dancing Nataraja figures found at Madan Kamdev Archaeological Site near Baihata chariali. Both the figures are four handed. Of them, one is in dancing posture and carries *damaru* in right upper hand while rest of the hands are indistinct. The deity has *chatravali* on his head. It measures 76x50x38 cms. (Plate-130). Other one is in dancing posture with nandi carved below on pedestal in right side. The deity holds *triśula* in right upper hand and *damaru* in right lower hand while left upper hand carries *khatavanga* but lower left hand is indistinct. The figure measures 1.10x60x40 cms. (Plate-131) Both the figures wear *vanamāla*, *jatāmukuta* and *girdle* made of skull in waist. There is a broken stone panel found at Urvasi island of Brahmaputra river at Guwahati, bearing figures of Nataraja, Kartikeya and Ganeśa in between pilasters. It is now at A.S.M. and measures 120x48 cms. Here ten handed Nataraja is in dancing posture on the back of his *Vāhana* nandi bull. All *āyudhas* in ten hands of Nataraja cannot be identified except one of the right upper hand found to be holding *khadga.* (Plate-11) Another figure of four handed Nataraja is found on the western wall of the Kāmākhyā temple at Nilachala hill. The God is in dancing posture on prostrate body of *apasmarampurusha* lying vertically on lotus pedestal. The God wears *girdle* and *vanamālā* made of skull. The face of the figure is defaced. Two of his lower hands carries *śula* and right upper hand appears to hold *khatavāṅga* while upper left hand is in broken state. (Plate-132) It measures 120x59 cms.¹¹⁸

**HARI-HARA** - In this aspect, the God is syncretic—combination of Siva and Vishnu syncrenizing both saivism and vaisnavism. The God may be in seated or standing posture. In this image the right half is Siva and left half is Vishnu. The iconographic reference is mentioned in *Matsya Purāṇa*, *Vāmana Purāṇa*, *Vishnudharmottara*, *Devatamurti-prakarana*, *Rupmandana* etc.¹¹⁹ There is a rock-cut image of Hari-Hara at Urvasi island of river Brahmaputra. The figure is in *padmāsana* and it measures 56x32 cms. The deity carries *triśula* in right upper hand and *rosary* in right lower hand while left upper hand carries *chakra* but other left hand is found broken. The God wears


*kirāṭamukuta* and *yajnopavitā*. Below the figure, *vāhana nandi* of Siva is carved in right and winged *Garuda, Vāhana* of Vishnu is carved in left, on the pedestal. Thus represents both Siva and Vishnu.(Plate-133) There is another figure of Hari –Hara found at North Guwahati which is now in A.S.M. The figure is flanked by Gauri and Lakshmi, consort of Siva and Vishnu respectively. The deity is in *tribhanga* posture while both the consorts are standing cross-legged on either side. The God wears *yajnopavitā, vanamālā* and *kirāṭamukuta*. The God holds *trisula* and *damaru* in right hand while his left hands carry *gada* and *chakra*. The Goddess gauri wears *jatāmukuta* and *lakshmi* wears *karandamukuta* and adorned with heavy ornamentation. Uniqueness of the sculpture was that all the figures were of equal height. The stone relic appears to datable to 9th century A.D. It measures 61 x 73 cms. (Plate-8). There is found another *catturbhuja* stone figure of male deity found at Uzan Bazar which is now preserved at A.S.M. The deity was in *padmāsana* on a *visva-padmāsana* pedestal. The figure measures 83 x 55 cms. The God has been identified as Vishnu by earlier scholars but in closer examination it has been found that iconographic features represents that the deity appears to be a figure of Hari-Hara.(Plate-36) There is a *Prabhāwali* behind the head of the deity on the Stella. The God wears *kirāṭamukuta, kundala, hara* and *Yajnopavitā*. The upper part of the Stella is broken. In one of the left hands, the figure carries *gada* while other three hands were found to be broken. But on the right side of the figure there appears to be impression of a *śula* on the Stella though mutilated. There are four figures – two on the middle of the Stella and two on the pedestal on either side of the central figure. Of the two figures on the middle of the Stella, one on the right represents Mahishamardini Durga and the other one stands with a *khadga* may be Kalki, while of the two figures below on pedestal, one in right represents Ganesā and the other on left represents Buddha in *dharmachakrapravartana mudrā*. Below on the pedestal there found a figure of Garuda in the centre and a figure of devotee with Siva- Linga on the right. Thus the above observation indicates that the existence of Ganeśa and Mahishamardini on the right represents Siva, while presence of Kalki and Buddha on the left represents Vishnu. Thus, the figure may be identified as Hari-Hara.

**UMĀ- MAHEŚWARA** - This aspect represents Siva with his consort Umā or Parvati on his left either seated or standing. In seated posture Umā seated on the lap of Siva in left and one leg of each pendent. In this aspect Siva embraces his consort Umā with
one of his left hand. The hand rests just below her breast or rest on the left arm of Umā and Umā carries red lotus in her right hand. Or Umā embraces Siva with her right hand and holds lotus in her left hand. Or Siva and Umā embraces each other, Siva with left hand while Umā with her right hand. The Umālinganamurti is found at several places in this region. Mention may be made of mutilated Umālinganamurti figure found at Guwahati now at A.S.M. (Plate-134). The lower part of the figure is found to be missing. With the right hand Siva touches the chin of Umā while his touces the left breast of Umā, while Umā with her right hand embraces Siva. It measures 33x21 cms. Another Umā-Maheswara figure is carved on a stone relic found at Uzan Bazar and now preserved at A.S.M. The stone panel has already been described earlier Here Umā is found in seated posture at the lap of Siva on his left. It measures 49x47 cms. (Plate-10) Mention may be made of Umā-Maheswara figure at Manikarneswar Temple. The image is badly damaged. Both the deities are seated in lalitāsana posture on a double lotus pedestal with Umā seated on the lap of Siva. The stella had kirttimukha on the top with vidyadhara on either side. (Plate-135) Another one is found at Madan Kamdev as enshrining deity. Both the figures were seated in lalitāsana posture on a projected pedestal though found to be badly corroded. It measures 1.75 x1.05x 35 cms. (Plate-136) Here Umā is seated on the right lap of Mahēśwara on a pedestal. Though the temple known as Madan Kamdev, the temple enshrines Umā-Maheswar. Perhaps due to the erotic sculptures of the temple, the temple was called Madan Kamdev temple. At Dirgheswari, we found rock-cut Umā-Mahēśwara on the slope of the hill, though the figure is badly eroded for identification. (Plate-137) Another image of Hara-Gauri is found at Chandika temple in Chaygaon of Kamrup District. The image appears to be in seated posture, since no further details can not be made as the image was covered with cloth by the local people.

UGRAMURTIS – As Ugra form of Siva in this region, we find Bhairava, Aghora, Kamantakamurti and Tripurantaka aspects in this region. The Ugra forms represent...
Samhara-Murtis of Siva. Thus represents a terrific destructive aspects of the God in following iconographic forms-

**BHAIRAVA** - Bhairava form born of the blood of Siva has eight forms according to the Tantrasastra. The God has matted hair having three eyes, red coloured body and trident, sword, noose, kettle-drum as aṣṭudhas in hand. The God is naked, surrounded by all kinds of demons and spirit and his Vāhana is dog. In the Vishnudharmottārā, Markandeya narrates the image of Bhairava. “The figure must have tawny eyes with a big belly, with a face terrible on account of tusks, with wide nostrils, with a garland of kopālas (skulls), awe-inspiring, frightfully adorned on all sides with snake ornaments, frightening the goddess Parvati by the snake and with elephant’s skin as the upper garment, resembling in colour the water charged cloud and surrounded by many arms decorated with all sorts of weapons, bearing a likeness to big trees – auspicious having sharp nails”. This figure with right hip swaying is called Bhairava and frontally called Mahakala. The god seated on the left and should held sarpa in his hand. The Sritatvanidhi, Rupmandana, Rudrayamala etc. narrates Bhairava form of Saivite deity. The Kālikā Purāṇa mentions Bhairava as Sivaputra and describes Bhairava in ch.63,v.133-134. This aspect of God has fat belly with hair rising in flaming curls having three round eyes and terrible face with long pointed protruding teeth and wide nostrils. The deity wears snakes and skulls as ornaments, tiger skin as garment, and holds elephant skin. The Deity may also appear as nude. He carries destructive weapons like khatavanga and kopala in his hand. The Silpaśastra mentions three forms of Bhairava—Pancavaktra-Bhairava, Govinda-Bhairava and Samahara-Bhairava. There is a rock-cut four handed image of Bhairava at Kāmākhya near the tank in Nilachala hill. (Plate-138.) It measures 97x69cm. The figure is in pratyalidha posture with a fat belly on a prostrate corpse. It wears a long garland of skull, kundala and jata with terrible face. The God holds Khatavanga in his right lower hand.

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hand, *trisula* in right upper hand, *ankuśa* in upper left hand and *vajra* in left lower hand. There is a figure standing on the pedestal on the right side in *anjali mudrā*. There is another eight-handed figure of Bhairava on the wall of the Kāmākhyā Temple. It measures 152x60 cm. The figure is in *samapada-sthānaka* posture on a prostrate body. The deity holds *trisula*, *skull*, *vajra* and *citron*, while rest of the *āyudhas* are indistinct. The hair of the deity is raised up. The God wears *kundala*, *keyura*, *konkana* and a garland of skull. The deity has a fat belly. The figure represents all the features of Ugra form except, the figure has calm appearance instead of terrible face. (Plate-58).

Another figure of Bhairava is found at the foothill of Manikarneswar on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra. The figure is naked and has protruding teeth. The deity is four handed and carries *śula* in right lower hand, *damaru* in right upper hand, *trisula* in upper left hand and *naramunda* in lower left hand. The deity is adorned with *kirātamukuta*, *vara*, *girdle*, *keyura* and *kundala*. There exists a *Prabhāwali* behind the head of the deity. The figure wears garland of skull and *sarpa* as *yajnopavītā*. The figure is in dancing posture and flanked by two female attendants in dancing posture. The figure may be stylistically datable to 11th C.E. (Plate-139). There found a bronze figure at Udalbakra in Narakasur hill which is now at A.SM. It measures 65cm in dia (Plate-140).126 The deity is two handed and in *samapada Sthānaka* posture on an animal appears to be dog. The figure carries *śula* in his right hand upside down and *pāsa* (noose) in his left hand with which the animal is fully secured around his face. The deity wears *kirāta mukuta*, necklace *yajnopoviṇa*, Kundala and girdle with tight fitting garment. The *urdha vedhras* signifies that the figure is saivite deity. There is an inscription on either side of the figure vertically, which is yet to be deciphered. Iconographically the āyudhas in hand and his *vāhana* represent that the figure as Batuka-Bhairava aspect of Siva.127

**AGHORA** - The *Linga Purāṇa*, *Karanagama*, *Sivatatvaratnakara* narrates the Aghora form, another ugra aspect of Siva.128 The *Aghora* form of Siva has four faces and eight hands. The figure carries axe, Vēdas, noose, goad, kettle-drum, rosary, trident and

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skull, having protruding teeth. Such iconographic representations are found in an image on the wall of the mandapa of the Kāmākhya Temple in Nilachal hill datable to 10th C.E. which was later fixed on the wall. The figure is in pratyalidha posture, having many hands and faces. The āyudhas in hands are not distinct and carries khadga in right upper hand above his head and dhanus in left upper hand, while one of his left lower hand is in karana mudrā, but rest of the āyudhas are indistinct. Four faces of the God are visible while another face appears to be in back represents that the deity is five headed. Each face has three eyes with protruding teeth. The figure wears jatāmukuta and garland of snakes. Another four handed figure of Ugra aspect is found at Kamkhya temple. The figure having skeleton body and standing in alidha posture. Though āyudhas in hands are indistinct, it appears that in his right lower hand the deity carries rosary and lower left hand holds triśula, while the rest of the āyudhas are in distinct. (Plate-141) The figure may be identified as Aghora aspect of Siva and datable to 11th C.E.

KANKALAMURTI - The Agamas narrate this Ugra form of Siva. In this less terrific Kankalamurti, the deity carries on the prongs of his triśula, the skeleton of Visvaksena, the gate-keeper of Vishnu, who was killed by Siva for his refusal to admit him in the presence of Vishnu. At Dol-Gobinda in North Guwahati another figure of Ugra aspect of Siva is found at the entrance of the temple. The figure is found to be fixed on the plinth of the gate lately. The figure is adorned with kirāta-mukuta, hara, kundala, nupura, and garland of skull. The deity holds khatavānga in right upper hand and vajra in lower left hand, while his other two hands carry a trident upholding the body of Vishvaksena. The figure is in pratyalidha posture and datable to 10th C.E. (Plate-142). The deity has been identified as Kankalamurti aspect of Siva as per iconographic representation.

KAMANTAKAMURTI - T.A.G. RAO describes Kamantakamurti form of Siva. In this aspect the God must have two or four hands and should carry rosary and snake in

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his two hand, if four handed in rest of his hand must in pataka hasta and another in suchi. Mention may be a figure of Siva found at the entrance of the Hayagriva Madhava Temple at Hajo. The figure is seated in padmāsana on a magara and has two hands holding snake or serpent in left hand while his right hand holds rosary near his chest. The deity is adorned with ornamentation—karanda mukuta, puspakundala and armlets etc. An uttariya (scarf) flows on either side from his shoulder. According to local myth, the figure is Umānanda seated on jal-kuber. It measures 129x76 cms. (Plate-143.) The Kālikā Purāṇa refers to Yogi Siva at Bhadrakam Parvat on the bank of Apūrnabhāba kunda where Hayagriva incarnation of Vishnu is mentioned. Hence this iconographic description can be correlated with the figure found at Hayagriva temple at Hajo. Hence it appears that the figure is none other than the figure of Kamantakamurti.

At Pingalesvar archaeological site we found a Saivite figure on a stone pillar of a stone temple 10th C.E. (Plate-144) The deity is in dvibhauga posture on a lotus pedestal and flanked by a deer. The two hands of the figure are in mutilated state. The figure is adorned with mukuta, hara, kundala and girdle and having three eyes. The figure appeared to be Tripurantaka or Rudra aspect of Siva. The UtTarakamikagama narrates the iconography of the Tripurantaka aspect of Saivite form. The figure of Tripurantaka is shown with the right leg firmly placed on the pedestal and the left leg bent. The right upper hand in simha-karna posture holds the bana, the upper left hand holds dhanus, while the rest of the two hands carry tanka or the parasu and the mriga respectively. The god wears jatāmukuta and his consort, Gauri stands by his side. Sometimes the god seated in a chariot with right leg touching the sudha, the left leg bent at knee placed in front of the right leg. While a four faced Brahmā is seated in front of the chariot and below him white bull draws the chariot. Further the figure of Rudra also carries mriga and Parasu in hands.

Some other Saivite figures as found in this region are as follows -

Mention may be made of four catturbhuja saivite figures on the outer side of the wall of the garbhagriha of the Kāmākhyā Temple in Nilachal hill measuring 131x57 cm. The figures are in dvibhūga posture in between pilasters. While one of them holds trīṣula in right upper hand, kopala in right lower hand, khatavāga in left upper hand while left lower hand is in katihasta or katyavalambita posture, (Plate-145) the other one carries khatavāga in right upper hand, right lower hand in katyavalambita or katihasta ,vajra in left upper hand and left lower hand holds karana-mudrā.(Plate-146) The third one carries damaru in both right and left upper hands. His left lower hand is in katihasta or katyavalambita posture while the āyudhas in right lower hand is indistinct appears to be staff. (Plate-147) Another figure carries trīṣula in upper right hand,khatavanga in left upper hand, lower right hand in katihasta posture and lower left hand in Jhana-mudrā.(Plate-148) All the figures wear kirātmukuta , girdle, keyura and kundala. Both the images have three eyes with calm facial expression , though āyudhas in hand exhibits like trident khatavānga kopāa exhibits ugra form while drum or damaru, karanamudrā represents bhoga form .  

Urdha medhra and jatāmukuta of saivite feature are absent in these images. Further there is a two handed Siva image on the gate of the wall of the compound of the Kāmākhyā temple. It measures 52x27 cm. The figure is dwarfish and in samabhāga posture and wears jatāmukuta and decked up with heavy ornamentation. The deity holds trīṣula in left hand and lotus in right hand near his chest.136 Mention may be made of another two handed figure of Siva on the wall of the Siddhesvara temple of Nilachala hill. The figure measures 101x47 cm. The figure wears conical headdress and carries damaru in right hand and trīṣula in left hand.137 Another Saivite figure is found at Durga temple adjacent to Kamaleswar temple in Hajo. The figure of the deity is in dancing posture and appears to carry trīṣula in his lower hand and kopāla in upper left hand , while rest of the āyudhas are indistinct. Lower part of the body is missing and latter fixed on a temple relic.(Plate-149) At Merghar Archaeological site in Chaygaon, Kamrup District, there is a doorjamb having a Saivite figure in samapada sthānaka posture. The figure is four handed and carries trisul in left lower hand and sword in

right upper hand while rest of the ayudhas in other two hands are indistinct. It measures 58x27x17cm and datable to 14th century A.D. (Plate-150). At Madam Kamdev Archaeological site, we found a figure of the deity datable to 11th C.E. The figure of the deity is six handed and is a significant one found in this region. The figure is now in A.S.M. The figure is measure 99x90cm. and made of granite stone. The figure is badly eroded due to exposed to nature. The deity wears kirātamukuta, kuṭāla and vanamāla. The figure is in samapada sthānaka posture on a plain pedestal. The deity holds triśula in right upper hand and khatava ga in upper left hand, paraśu in both middle right hands on either side and lower right hand holds may be rosary, though not distinct and the lower left hand is broken. The urdhalinga identified the figure as Siva. It may be noted that this is the only six handed figure of Siva found in this region (Plate-151).138 A bronze image found at Udalbakra in Narasasur hill may be identified as Saivite image. The figure is four handed and standing on a stylized tiger with long tail. The deity holds kha ga in right upper hand, rosary in right lower hand, while left upper hand is in kataka'hastā mudrā and left lower hand carries śankha. The God wears yajnopavita and jatāmukuta. The figure wears folded lower garment with decorated girdle, keyura, kanthara and kundala. The vāhana tiger also wears bell around the neck. The urdhalinga identified the figure as Siva. While the inscription on either side of the figure is deciphered as ‘vanahari’ or Hari of the forest by B.N. Mukherji. It measures 60cm.in dia (Plate-152).139

OTHER SAIVITE DEITIES

KARTIKEYA - According to Hindu mythology, Kārtikeya also known as Skanda or Kumāra in South India is the son of Siva. The Balakanda of the Rāmāyana and in the Vana-parvan of the Mahābhārata narrate different accounts of the birth of Kārtikeya 140. The puranic legends associate him with Sun-God. He has been

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described as the son of Agni and his wife Svaha. The *Brihat Samhitā*, the *Vishnudharmottarā* and many puranic texts describe iconographic narration of Kartikeya. The figure of Kartikeya may have two, four, six, eight or twelve hands. If twelve-handed, he must carry sakti, arrow, sword, discuss, noose and abhaya mudrā in right and a *kukkuta* (cock), bow, shield, *sankha*, plough and *varada mudrā* in left. The deity seated on his vāhana, peacock and flanked by his attendants Jaya and Vijaya. According to the *Vishnudharmottarā*, Kumāra has four forms—i.e. Kumāra, Skanda, Visakha and Guha. Of these Kumāra must have six faces, *Mayura* (peacock) as vāhana and wears red cloth. The deity holds a cock and a bell in right hand and flag Vaijayanti and a spear in left hand. In South India, Kartikeya is a very popular God and known as *Subrahmānaya*. But in this region it appears that the deity was not a popular worshiping God. We found very few images of Kartikeya as associate God. Mention may be made of a stone panel found at Urvasi Island, now preserved at A.S.M. having figures of Kartikeya and Ganeśa in between pilasters. It depicts Kartikeya seated on his vāhana, *mayura*. The deity is two handed and wears *kirātamukuta*. The *āyudhas* in both the hands are indistinct. It measures 20×52 cm. (Plate-11). Another figure of Kartikeya is found carved on a stone plaque at Pingaleswar Devalaya. The deity is four handed and seated in *maharājalilaāśana* on his *mayura* (peacock). The figure holds sakti in right upper hand and rosary in right lower hand while in his left lower hand carries a *kukkata* (cock) and his left upper hand is in *abhaya mudrā*. The God wears *kirātamukuta*, *kundala*, *keyura*, *bala* and *kanthaharā*. (Plate-42). Again mention may be made of a stone panel found at Uzan bazaar, now at A.S.M., having depiction of figure of Kartikeya along with Ganeśa on the upper row, and Vishnu and Sūrya in lower row thus showing them in relegated position. It measures 49×47 cm. Another figure of the deity is found at the entrance of the Dol Gobinda temple. The figure is seated on his vāhana, *mayura* on a lotus pedestal. The deity wears *kirātamukuta*, *kanthahara*, *keyura*, *girdle* and *Yajnopavītā*. The deity carries sakti in his right upper hand, lower right hand in *varada mudrā*, while his upper left hand is broken and lower left hand is in *abhaya mudrā*. (Plate-34). At Cotton College campus, a terracotta

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plaque with depiction of a Kārttikeya had been found during excavation. The figure is two handed and seated on his vāhana, mayura. The deity wears kirāta mukuta, hara and kundala. The deity is flanked by a female attendant in dancing posture. The terracotta plaque has carvings of lotus bud motif on the top and bottom of the relief and datable to 9th C.E. The figure measures 48 x 31cm. (Plate-153) Another terracotta plaque with depiction of a figure of Kārttikeya is found at the foot hill of Nilachal. The terracotta plaque appears to be fixed on the lintel of the Dharamsala near modern Viswakarma temple. The figure is seated on his vāhana, mayura placed on a lotus pedestal. The deity holds dhanus and bana in his arms. (Plate-153-A) Thus it appears that the figure of Kārttikeya is not found anywhere in this region as a presiding deity, but only in panel on the walls of the Saivite temple.

GANEŚA- Ganeša is one of the important Gods of Hindu pantheons. The God is regarded as lord of remover of all obstacles or Vighnesvara and bestower of success.143 The Ganeśa or Ganapati or Vinayaka is the eldest son of Siva and Parvati. The big belly God is the chief of the Saiva Ganas.144 Ganeśa, also known as Vighneśvara is regarded as solely born to Siva and Parvati and is also held to be Krishna in another form.145 The earliest reference to Ganeśa is found in the Aitareya-Brahmāna (1.21), in which Ganapati is identified with Brahmā, Brahmānaspati or Brihaspati. According to Brahmāvaivarta-Purāna, Ganeśa is Krishna in human form. It explains the meaning of Ganapati – Ga stands for wisdom, na for moksha or the salvation of soul, pati or lord is Ganeśa, the ParaBrahmā. Ekadanta means all powerful supreme being. Heramba means protector of weaks.146 The Rig Vēda refers to Ganapati twice, but does not mean Ganeśa but Brihaspati. The 10th Mandala refers Ganapati to Indra. The Baudhayana-Dharma-Sutra referred Ganapati as Vighna, Vinayaka, Sthula, Hastimukha, Vakratunda, Ekadanta and Lambodara.147 The iconography of Ganeśa has been described in the Brihat Samhitā, the Vishnudhārottārā, the Matsya Purāṇa, the Agni


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Purāṇa, the Skanda Purāṇa, the Agama texts, the Devamurtiprakarana, the Rupmandana etc. The Vishnudharmottāra narrates that Vinayaka should have the face of an elephant and must have four hands. The deity must hold a trident and rosary in his right hand while his left hand carries an paraśu (axe) and a vessel full of laduca (sweet). The deity must have right tusk only and his left tusk should not be represented. He must have a footstool and one foot should be on the seat. The vessel of sweets should be held near the tip of his trunk.148 The Manasā-Grihya-Sutra referred to four types of Vinayaka or Ganeśa. He must have short statured corpulent body with distended belly. The deity must have three eyes and wears jatāmukuta. The figure wears a snake as a sacred thread or yajnopovita. There may be another snake as a girdle around his belly. His image may be four, six, eight, ten or sixteen handed. But generally the deity has four arms. The God is also found holding of mulaka (radish) in his hand. The deity holds a hook and a noose in his back hands and in front arms carries either an elephant’s tusk and the wood apple or varada mudrā and the kamaḍalu (water-pot). According to Kasyapa-Silpa the deity may carry the rosary or a serpent.149 He has a mouse as his vāhana or in rare instances may be lion. The Ganeśa has Buddhi and Siddhi as consorts, i.e. the lord of wisdom and the attainment of desired ends.150

In this region Ganesha occupies an important position and one of the principal Gods of the concept of Pancadevata, others being Vishnu, Siva, Śakti and Surya.151 Ganeśa either as an isolate deity or as associate deity in almost all the Hindu temples are found in the Kamrup district like in rest of India. Assam as a land of elephant, it appears that the images of Ganeśa was worshiped either as a lord of elephant or to protect the country from all obstacles. Hence there are found large number of images of Ganeśa either seated, dancing and in standing postures in this region. Of these seating figures of Ganeśa are more commonly found. As Vighnesvara, auspicious God for starting every ceremony like in rest of India, he has been placed in the lintel of


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the door jamb at the entrance or on niche of the temple. Of the seated postures mention may be made of the rock-cut figures of *catturbhuya* Ganeśa in *rajaliläsana* at Kāmākhyā in Nilachal hill, Pandunath, Urvasi Island, Basistha, Bunda, Lal Ganesh, Sukresvara, Manikarnesvara, Dirghesvari, Boragaon, Baghesvari peeth at Chaygaon, Kamalesvara temple and Ganeśa temple at Hajo, Ganeshguri and Latashil. Of these, on the western slope of the Nilachal Hill, we find five rock-cut *catturbhuya* Ganeśa in *Maharājaliläsana* of different sizes at different places on the side of the ancient stone stair-ways. Out of these five, four *catturbhuya* figures have their tusk rest on right knees except one has its trunk rests on left knees. All of them are in mutilated condition, hence only *ayudhas* in upper hands can be visible which exhibits holding of *parasu* and *śakti*. (Plate154) At Nilachal hill, in the complex of the Siddheswari temple another rock-cut *catturbhuya* Ganeśa is found. It measure 98x69cm. The figure had a circular projection on the as *kirātamukuta*, *Yajnopavitā* and carved in high relief. His trunk is placed on right hand carrying *laduka* (sweet), which rests on right knees. The deity carries trident in right upper hand and *parasu* in left upper hand while left lower hand holds rosary. Further on the left side of the ancient staircase, in eastern slope of the Nilachal hill, there found five rock-cut Ganeśa in *rajaliläsana* of different sizes and are in defaced condition, difficult for detailed iconographic study. (Plate-154-A) Another rock-cut *catturbhuya* Ganeśa seated in *rajalaliläsana* posture on Nilachal hill. The deity wears *kirātamukuta* and *yajnopavitā*. The figure holds *daśa* in right upper hand, *padma* in upper left hand, while lower right hand holds a *laduka* upon which the trunk of the deity is placed and lower left hand carries a snake. 152 Another rock-cut figure of *catturbhuya* Ganeśa is found at Urvashi Island in the midst of river Brahmaputra. The figure is in *rajaliläsana* and wears *kirātamukuta*, *hara*, *yajnopavitā*, *girdle*, *keyura* and *nupura*. The deity carries *padma* in his right upper hand, *parasu* in his left upper hand, and *rosary* in his lower right hand, while his lower left hand holds *laduka* on which his trunk is placed. The figure measures 104x70cm. and datable to 10th C.E. (Plate-155). There found three rock-cut Ganeśa at Umānanda Island in the midst of the river Brahmaputra. The figures of the deity were carved on the slope of the hill near a cave. All the figures are seated in *rajaliläsana* posture with similar

iconographic features and almost of similar size measuring 62x54 cm. (155-A). At Pandunath Devalaya, there are six catturbhuja rock-cut Ganeṣa in similar postures, though badly eroded. It appears that only one of them measuring 90x 1.45cm. has its tusk on left side, placed on the sweets on the left hand while his right hand holds rosary. All the figures of the deity wear serpent as a Yajñopavita which is not clearly visible in all the figures. The vāhana, mouse is shown touching the feet of the deity with his mouth. Rest of the figures measuring 1.10x1.45 cm, 60x85 cm., 65x100 cm., 70x90cm., 100x1.10cm. and has tusk on right side placed in right hand while rest of the āyudhas appears to be same though badly eroded. The figures has ears like lotus petals beautifully carved. All the figures are carved on the rock facing the river Brahmaputra. (Plate-156). This indicates tantric aspect of Ganeṣa form.153 At Basistha the rock-cut catturbhuja Ganesha is carved in rajalilāsana posture with vāhana mouse carved below on the pedestal. The figure is holding parāsu in right upper hand, lotus or trident in left upper hand, while his trunk is placed on left hand and his right lower hand rest on right knees. But āyudhas in hands are indistinct. It measures 80x85 cm. At Agiathuri hill or Agni parvat154 in North Guwahati beside national highway, we found massive rock-cut Ganeṣa with trunk on left side and āyudhas in hands cannot be identified due to eroded condition. In Dirghesvari debala on Seeta parvat we found four rock-cut catturbhuja Ganeṣa on the slope of the hill.155 Of them one is bigger in size than rest of them. The deity holds rosary in right lower hand, padma in right upper hand and parāsu in left upper hand, while his left lower hand holds laduka on which the trunk of the deity is placed. The hands of another figure though broken appears to carry padma in right upper hand and parāsu in left upper hand while his trunk is placed on left lower hand. Both the figures wear serpent as yajñopavita and wears kirātmukuta. Third one is in very bad shape to identify the iconographic feature. All the three figures as mentioned earlier were in rajalilāsana posture. The fourth one is in standing posture which will be discussed latter. (Plate-157). Mention may be made of a beautiful figure of similar rock-cut catturbhuja Ganeṣa on the of hill below the Manikarnesvar temple facing the river Brahmaputra. The deity is in rajalilāsana posture.

posture and is carrying *parasu* in right upper hand and trident in left upper hand, rest of the hands are found broken. The figure is flanked by devotees on either side and *Vāhana* mouse is carved below him. The deity wears *kirātamukuta* and a *kirtimukha* is carved on the top of the stele. The figure measures 85x90cm. (Plate-158) There also found rock-cut *catturbhuja* Ganesa at Kanai Borosi Bowa rock inscription. And measures 150x130 c.m. (Plate-159) Similar rock-cut *catturbhuja* Ganesa is found on the hillock at Kamalesvar temple, the Ganesh temple and the Kameswar temple in Hajo. Of these, the figure at Kamalesvar is in good condition for identification. The figure is in *rajalilāsana* and measures 90x 65 cm. The deity wears *kirātamukuta keyura, kanthahara* and serpent as *yajnopavītā*. The deity carries *parasu* in left upper hand, trident in right upper hand and holds *rosary* in right lower hand while his left lower hand holds a *laduka* upon which the trunk of the deity is placed. (Plate-25). All these features represents Śakti-Ganapati form of Ganesa.\(^{156}\) The another one, as presiding deity at Ganesa temple in the foot hills is massive though corroded there are linemarks above the head appears to depict rays coming out from the deity. The third one is in *rajalilāsana* and in mutilated condition. The deity holds *padma* in upper right hand and *parasu* in upper left hand, while rest of the *ayudhas* are is distinct. The figure measures 67x 59cm. (Plate-160) Other *catturbhuja* rock-cut Ganesa in *rajalilāsana* with similar iconographic representation are found at Baghesvari peeth measuring 75x70 cm. (Plate-161) at Boragaon measuring 74x86 cm., three figures in Amsang Reserved forest at Bunda measuring 55 x50 cm.,70x55 cm.,70x55cm.(Plate-24), at Ganeshguri and at Namile, three figures in the middle of the road at Lal Ganesh, another one as presiding deity on the left side of the road in Kalapahar area. This apart another rock-cut *catturbhuja* Ganesa is found near Sukresvar temple facing the river Brahmāputra. The figure is in mutilated state only *rosary* in right lower hand and lotus stem in left upper hand with pot belly exhibits iconography of Ganesa. The deity wears *kanthahara, keyura* and *sarpa* as *yajnopavītā*. The figure measures 179x 135cm. (Plate-162)

At Dolgobinda, an isolated figure of *catturbhuja* Ganesa in *rajalilāsana* posture with Vāhana mouse depicted below on the pedestal is found at the entrance of

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the temple but the image is in broken condition for identification of āyudhas. This apart a miniature bronze image of Ganeśa in maharajalilāsana is found at Kahlilipara in Narakasura hill now at A.S.M. It measures 8x5cm. The figure is holding padma in right upper hand, upper left hand carries trident, while his right lower hand is in varada mudrā but lower left hand is indistinct appears to hold laduka. The figure wears yajnopavitī and kirāta-mukuta and vāhana mouse is carved below on the pedestal. (Plate-163). Another two metal images of Ganeśa in rajaḷīlasana are found at Hahara in Kamrup district which were now under A.S.M. for preservation. At Chatrakar temple in Chatrachal we found a catturbhuja Ganeśa in lalitāsana on lotus pedestal and his Vāhana mouse is carved below on the pedestal. The deity is adorned with mukuta having floral motif and bala. The deity appears to carries goad in upper right hand, paraśu in upper left hand, while his lower right hand is in abhaya mudrā and lower left hand holds a vessel full of laduka. The deity holds a laduka in his trunk. It measures 63x43 cm. and datable to 10th C.E. (Plate-31).

Further, the figure of catturbhuja Ganeśa in padmāsana is found at Basistha temple. Here we found a catturbhuja Ganeśa in padmāsana at the entrance of the maṇḍapa on the lintel of the doorjamb. The figure exhibits few exceptional iconographic features like wearing dress in Vaishnavite style and wears rosary in his neck, arm and wrist as ornaments. The figure had wings on either side wears kirātamukuta on his head. Thus the figure represents vaishnavite influence in art and religion in latter period in this region (Plate-66). Another one at the site is fiund carved within niche on a pillar above an inscription in eastern entrance of the temple. Here the deity is seated on his vāhana the mouse which is in moving posture. The figure carries paraśu in left upper hand and Śakti in right upper hand while āyudhas in other two hands are indistinct. (Plate-164). There found a terracotta plaque with depiction of a figure of catturbhuja Ganeśa at the foothills of Nilachal hill near modern Viswakarma temple. The terracotta plaque is found to be fixed on the lintel of a Dharamsala in later period. The figure of the deity is in padmāsana on a simhāsana placed on a lotus pedestal. The figure wears kirāta-mukuta, hara, yajnopavitī and katisutra; The āyudhas in upper hand are indistinct, while the other two hands are rest on knees. (Plate-164-A) Another figure of the deity is found at Ambari, which is now at A.S.M.. The catturbhuja deity is appeared to be in lalitāsana, though his left leg is
missing. The figure wears kirātamukuta, hara and yajnopavita. The āyudhas in hands are indistinct. The stella has kirttimukha on the top with vidyadharā on either side. The figure measures 179 x 100 cm. and datable to 13th C.E. The figure appears to be in unfinished. (Plate-165)

Standing and dancing figures of Ganeśa

Of the standing and dancing figures of Ganeśa mention may be made of dancing figure of catturbhujā Ganeśa is found on the outer side of the wall of the garbhagriha of the Kāmākhyā temple. The figure is badly eroded and only āyudha - paraśu (axe) in left upper hand can be identified while rest of the āyudhas cannot be identified. Another one is found on the western gate of Kāmākhyā in Nilachal hill. The figure is in dancing posture having four hands and wears yajnopavītā but āyudhas in hand cannot be identified due to eroded condition. (Plate-166). At another gate wall of the Nilachal hill, the deity is in dancing posture on his vāhana, the rat is found. The figure wears jatāmukuta, keyura and girdle as ornaments. The four handed God carries mulaka (radish) in his upper right hand, rosary in lower right hand, and paraśu in upper left hand while his lower left hand is broken. The figure measures 49x32 cm. There is another dancing figure of catturbhujā Ganeśa embedded on the outer wall of the Mangalchandi temple in Chatrakar Devalaya. (Plate-167). At Nazirakhat in Sonapur of Kamrup District, we found three rock-cut catturbhujā Ganeśa in dancing posture on the slope of the hill near the water stream called Karchiya. Of these two rock-cut figures are found to be carved together and measures 120x76 cm. and 125x103 cm. respectively. Both the figures were adorned with kirātamukuta and wears katisutra. The deity on the left had his vāhana mouse, while the vāhana of the other one is found to be absent. Both the figures holds paraśu in right upper hand and triśula in left upper hand while his trunk on left side placed on left lower hand. (Plate-168) The third one found to be carved in a separate rock and measures 80x99 cm. The deity wears kirātamukuta and katisutra. The deity holds akshamāla in right lower hand and paraśu in right upper hand while his upper left hand carries triśula and lower left hand is in
varada mudrā. This apart dancing figures of Ganeśa in lintel of doorjamb and panels of temple relics are found. In this regard mention may be made of a stone panel having figures of Ganeśa, Kārtikeya and Natarāja from Urvashi now at A.S.M. The catturbhuja Ganeśa is in dancing posture within sikhara motif. The figure wears kiriṭamukuta and Yajñopavitā, but the āyudhas in hand are indistinct. Similar panels with figures of Ganeśa and Kārtikeya in between pilasters are found at Uzan bazaar now at A.S.M. (Plate-11 At Madan Kamdev Archaeological Site, a stone panel having an image of catturbhuja Ganeśa is found lying in front of the main temple. The figure is in samapada sthānaka posture in between pilasters. The āyudhas in hands are indistinct. (Plate-169). Another figure of a catturbhuja Ganeśa in dancing posture is found carved in the middle of the sira-patti of a doorjamb at Uzan bazaar, now at Ambari Archaeological Site. (Plate-170) Similar catturbhuja Ganeśa in doorframe or niche of temple are found at number of archaeological sites like Janardhan temple at Sukresvar, Pingaleswar temple, Merghar archaeological site etc. Since Ganeśa is associated with Siva hence we found the images of Ganeśa at the entrance in almost all the Saivite and Vishnu temples of Kamrup district.157

Thus it is found that Ganeśa occupies an important position either as a presiding deity or associate deity in this region through out the ages.

There are three ganas or attendants of Siva-Chandesa, Bhringi and Nandisa or Nandi.

BHRINGI - Bhringi or Bhringisa is one of ganas of Siva. There found a terracotta figure of Bhringi at Guwahati now at A.S.M. It measures 43x28 cm. The two handed figure is in dancing posture exhibiting ribs and veins. The figure holds triśula in his left hand and a darpana in his right hand while a pot is tied in his right arm. According to the Agni Purāṇa (ch.50,v.40) the figure identified as dhyana of Bhringi (Plate-171). There found another figure of Bhringi at Ambari Archaeological Site. The figure was depicted as a attendant deity with Natarāja on a stone relief in urdhvajānu karana exhibits ribs and veins. The figure had a pot on his right arm and appears to hold a darpana in his right hand, while his left hand appears to be indistinct. (Plate-187)

NANDI - According to the Siva- Maha-Purâna Nandi is the son of the rishi Salankayana. The Vishnudharmottârâ Purâna, Nandi must have three eyes and four arms. He carries trîṣula and the bhindi in his two hands while his third hand rests on his head and fourth hand in commanding posture. But Nandi is more found as a bull than a humān figure and always in front of the central shrine of all the Siva temple. Mention may be made of figure of a Nandi at Guwahati.(Plate-172). Another figure of Nandi found at Rudreswar Devalaya in North Guwahati. The figure was found to be placed in the entrace of the Devalaya. Further, another one found at Kakrasagar in Hajo.

THE SOLAR CULT

SÜRYA - The Adityas are very ancient deities of India as referred in Vêdas. There are different accounts about the origin of Adityas. The Satapatha Brahman mentions in one place that there are eight Adityas and in another place refers twelve Adityas. The twelve Adityas may refer to twelve calendar months of the year. The Adityas are sons of Aditi and Purânas mentions that they are solar deities. The twelve Adityas are Dhâtrî, Mitrâ, Aryan, Rudra, Varûna, Sûrya, Bhaga, Vivasvan, Pushan, Savitri, Tvashtri and Vishnu. The Visvakarma-sastra narrates each of them according to their Ayudhas in their hands. The twelve Adityas along with Nine planets or Nabagrahas occupies a very important position in the religious life of people of India. Ancient Indians earlier worship Sun-God not in humān form but represents him in symbols like a 'solar disc'; 'wheel'. The early North Indian Sûrya image had similarity with the Iranian Mithra. The Rupamandana narrates the monographic features of nine grahas. It mentions that Sûrya in white colour, holds lotus in his hands and the chariot is drawn by seven horses; Soma in white, carries kumuda (water lily) in his hands and his chariot is drawn by ten horses; Bhauamâ (Mangal), red colour with daârâ and kamaârâ on a goat; Budha, yellow colour in yoga-mudrâ on a sarpâsana; Guru, yellow colour carries akshâmâla and kamaârâ on his hands on hamsa, Sukra in


white colour, carries akṣamāla and kamaṇḍalu in his hands on a frog; Sani in black
colour, holds daṇḍa and kamaṇḍalu in his hands (vāhāna not mentioned); Rahu in
smoke colour on a sacrificial pit (kunda); Ketu in smoke colour with lower portion of
the body should be snake and arms folded in anjali mudrā.\textsuperscript{160} The Agni Purāṇa
described the iconographic details of nine celestial bodies known as navagrahas -Śūrya
with lotus, Chandra (moon) holds the kundika and japamāla, Mangala (mars) holds  
śakti and akṣamāla, Budha (mercury) has dhanus (bow) and akṣamāla, Bhrihaspati
(Jupiter) and Sukra (venus) holds kundi and akṣamāla, Sani(Saturn) kinkini and sutra,
Rahu holds arddhachandra and Ketu carries khaṇḍa and dipā\textsuperscript{161}. But there are some
variations in respect of āyudhas and vāhāna s of the celestial bodies as describes by
Purāṇa (ch.79, v.122-142) mentioned iconographic features of Navagraha at
Chitrākuta hill with some variations. It referred catturbhuja Mangal as seated on goat
and carries śula, śakti, gada and varada mudrā; Budha as catturbhuja seated on lion
and holds khaṇḍa, charm, gada and in varada mudrā; catturbhuja Bhrihaspati holds
akṣamāla, kamaṇḍalu, daṇḍa and in varada mudrā; Sukra holds pustaka and
akṣamāla, varada and abhayā mudrā and seated on śankhanaga; Sani holds pāśa
and dhanus and seated on volture; catturbhuja Rahu holds kadga, charm, varada
and abhayā mudrā, and seated on simhāsana; catturbhjā Ketu holds kadga,
charma, gada and bana, and seated on savāsana. According to the Yajnavalleyasutra
the worship of Navagraya should be performed through grahayajna for various
reasons; the Śūrya should be made of copper, Soma (Moon) of crystal, the son of
Earth (mangala, mars) of red sandal wood, Budha and Bruhaspati of gold, Sukra of
silver, Sani of iron, Rahu of lead, and Ketu should be made of bell-metal.\textsuperscript{162} According
to A.K.Bhattacharjee, Ketu should be in East, Sani in west, Budha in North, Mangal in
South, Rahu in south-west, Sukra in south-east, Brihaspati in north-east, Chandra in
north-west and Ravi in centre. Further it appears that there is no uniformity in the
description of the iconography of the navagrahas in the Purāṇas and other literary texts

\textsuperscript{160} Rao, T.A.Gopinath, Elements of Hindu Iconography vol.1,part-II,The Law Printing House Mount
Road, Madras,1914,pp.322-323.

\textsuperscript{161} Das, Paromita, The Purāṇas and Iconography, seminar presentation.

\textsuperscript{162} Banerjea,J.N. Development of Hindu Iconography, Munshilal Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. Fifth
like the AgniPurāṇa, Rupmandana, Silparatna and Vishnudharmottarā etc. Thus Sūrya is one of the important solar deities in early Vedic period and post Vedic period. The Rig Vēda refers to Sūrya as a 'beautiful winged bird or as moving in a car drawn by one, seven, or several fleet and strudy horses'. He has Samājīna, Rajīnī, Prabha, Dyau, Nikshubha, Chhaya etc. as his consorts. He was regarded as the life giver, the supreme soul and creator of the universe. Further he was also one of the member of Pancadevata of Hindu pantheon. In Hindu- pancayatana system, Pancadevata – Vishnu, Sīva, Ganeśa, Sūrya and Durgā are worshiped installing one of them as main and four others in four sides as subsidiary Gods. In Sūrya- pancayatana Temple, the main temple enshrines Sūrya, while Sīva, Vishnu, Devī and Ganeśa occupies subsidiary quarters. The Brihat-Samhitā, the Matsya Purāṇa, the Agni Purāṇa, the Bhavishya Purāṇa and Vaikhasagama etc. narrates the iconography of Sūrya. Amsumādbhedagama and the Suprabhedagama narrate that the figure of Sūrya must have two hands holding lotus in both the hands in the level of his shoulders. The deity wears only one cloth and covered his body with a coat. The deity wears karanda-mukuta, kundala, hara and yajñopavītā on his body. His head is surrounded by halo and stands on apadma-pitha or stands on a hexagonal chariot drawn by seven horses. The chariot has only one wheel which is driven by the lame Aruṇa. The God is flanked by Uṣha on right side and Pratuvasha on his left side. The Śilparatna states that the Sūrya is flanked by dvarapalaka - Mandala and Pingala on either side. According to some texts the God is accompanied by his other four consorts namely-Rajnī, Suvarna, Suvarchasa and Chhaya. The God wears a protective armour. He wears a boot in his legs covering his lower part of his legs. According to Matsya Purāṇa, the deity is flanked by Danda and Pingala holding swords in their hands. The God Brahmā must be on his one side with a pen in his hand. The Matsya Purāṇa describes that the figure of Sūrya must have moustache and four arms with covering his body with a coat. In his right and left hand holds the sunbeams as the bridle and wears girdle-

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cord named Paniyanga or avyanga. According to the Matsya Purāṇa, the God has to bear two lotus by stalks in his hands; his feet should be covered by effulgence (tajas-avritau-matsya); Matsya Purāṇa-(17,31-13) says - the feet of the God should not be shown. But according to Vishnudharmottārā (part-iii) Pingala carries palm leaf and a stile while Daūḍa holds a shield and a lance. On his left there is lion standard and he is flanked by his four consorts - Revanta, Yama and a pair of manus. He is flanked by his four consorts - Rajni, Rikshubha or Nikshubha, Chhaya and Suvarchas. According to Bhavishyat-Purāṇa, Pingala with ink-pot and a pen are in right while Daūḍi with daūḍa in his hands. The Goddesses Rajni and Nikshubha represent the air and the earth. His charioteer lame Aruna rides a chariot drawn by one wheel and seven horses bearing six marks. The seven metres- Gayatri, Ushnik, Anustubh, Vrhati, Pamkti, Tristubh and Jagati are seven horses of the chariot of the Sun-God. There are variations in images of the Sūrya of South Indian and North Indian. The images of Sūrya of South India have their hands lifted as high as the shoulders holding half blossomed lotus; have udara-bandha and their legs and feet are bare. While the images of Sūrya of North India have their hands at the natural level of the hips or the elbows, holding full blown lotus rises to the level of the shoulders and covering his forelegs and feet with a pair of foot wear like boots. The udara-bandha is not found in images of North India, only a thin cloth or coat mail covered the body. The Sūrya images in some places of South India do not possess attendant deities. The mediaeval Sūrya images of Eastern India are found under two groups- one shown as standing with attendant deities and other as seated in padmāsana. Another important feature of Eastern Indian Sūrya of latter period is that there is another associated deity,
the earth—goddess *Mahasveta*, who is shown above the wheel in the centre below the feet of the God.\textsuperscript{172}

In Assam, also known as Pragjyotisa in early period was a land of planet worship from earliest times. The *Grhya-Sutra*, the Epics and the Purānas referred the existence of *Navagraha* temple in Chitrachal hill at Guwahati and twelve Ādityas at Sūrya pahar in Goalpara District of Assam relates the planet worship from the ancient times to till date. The *Grhya-Sutras* and the *Epics* mentioned Prājyotisha as a centre of Sun-worship. The Manuscripts of 6\textsuperscript{th}–7\textsuperscript{th} C.E. *Kamrupa nibandhanīya khandasadhyā* mentions cults worship in Kamrup. The *Sankhyayana - Grhyasamgraha*, states that every student should visit sacred country of Pragjyotisa before sunrise. *Markendeya-Purāṇa* (58) refers to Pragjyotisa as a land of sunrise or *Udayacala*\textsuperscript{173}. It also mentioned that *Udayacala* is the another name of *Pragjyotisa* where exists a Sun temple. The *Brhat-Samhitā*, on the basis of geography of the *Parasara Tantra* of 1\textsuperscript{st} C.E. also refers the same. The *Kālikā Purāṇa* (Ch.79,V.121-142). mentioned Prakarvat where the grahas resides. It also referred the iconography of the *Navagraha* and worship of the *Navagrahas* on Chitrarapvat or Chitrakuta hill. There found nine *Linga-Yonipithas* at Chitrachal hill which represented nine planets in Navagraha temple in Guwahati of Kamrup District. The stone inscription found on the eastern wall of the present temple referred that the temple was constructed by the Ahom king Rajeswar Singh in 1752 C.E. But it was reconstructed on the octagonal stone plinth of earlier stone temple may be of 9\textsuperscript{th} C.E. The *Navagrahas* represented by nine linga-yonipithas were placed on the octagonal *grabhagriha*, with nine sculptures identified with *Navagrahas* found to be fixed on the inner side of the wall of the *grabhagriha* of the temple. They were identified as Ravi, Som, Mangala, Budha, Brihaspati, Sukra, Sani, Rahu and Ketu. As informed the sculptures were fixed on the inner side of the wall of the *grabhagriha* in the late nineteenth century from the ruins of the earlier temple. Further there found the figures of Rahu on the right and Ketu on the left side within niche at the entrance of the *maṭapa* of the temple. The *Navagrahas* were worshiped corresponded to the respective *dhyānamantras* of each grahas as per


Further the *Yajnavalkyasutra* mentions the performance of *grahayajna* for prosperity, nourishment and safety of the life. Nowhere in India the cults of *Navagraha* were identified with *Linga -Yonipitha*. After observation it has been found that the figures of nine planets exhibit iconographic variation from the puranic texts in respect of some features of the cults. There found a *catturbhuja* figure seated on his vāhana, vulture. The figure measures 45 x 36 cm. The deity holds *dhanus* and *bana* in his left hands, while his upper right hand appears to carry *pustaka* and lower right hand in *varada mudrā*. The figure has moustache and Prabhāwali behind his head. The figures appears to represent iconographic features of Sani. (Plate-173)

Next *catturbuja* figure is in *padmāsana* without vāhana on a pedestal. The deity carries *kāmaO Ualu* in his left upper hand and upper right hand appears to hold rosary while both lower hands were in *varada mudrā*. The figure wears kiratamukuta, akshamāla and Prabhāwali behind his head. The figure measures 47 x 36 cm. (Plate-174) The figure appears to conform the iconography of the Sukra(venus). Next one is a two handed figure seated in *lalitāsana* on a double petal lotus placed on a chariot driven by nine horses. The figure measures 49 x 37 cm. The deity holds *daUa* in his left hand and right hand is in *varada mudrā*. There is a half moon behind his back and Prabhāwali behind his head. The figure appears to represents Soma (moon or Chandra) though the *Visvakarma-Silpa* states that his chariot should be driven by ten horses. (Plate-175)

The next figure is a four- handed, seated on his vāhana lion and wears usual ornaments. The deity carries *khaUga* in left upper hand, *gada* in left lower hand and right upper hand in *abhaya mudrā*, while his right lower hand holds a sword. The figure measures 47 x 34 cm. (Plate-176). The figure appears to represents Budha (mercury) Next figure represents as seated on his vāhana, goat having four hands.

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The deity wears *kirātamukuta* and *akshāmāla*. The figure holds *gada* in left hand and *khadga* in right hand, while other two hands are in *abhaya mudrā*. The figure measures 44 x 34 cm. The deity appears to represent *Mangala* (Mars) (Plate-177). Next figure found is a *catturbhūja* deity in *padmāsana* on a double patel lotus pedestal. The figure holds *kamandalu* in his left upper hand, *rosary* in right upper hand, lower right hand is in *varada mudrā* while his left hand holds *daūda*. The figure appears to represent *Brihaspati* (Jupiter). The figure measures 54 x 33 cm. (Plate-178). There found another figure on the right side of the entrance inside the *grabhagriha*. The deity had two arms and seated on chariot driven by seven horses and his left hand holds *daūda* and represented *Ravi* or *Śurya*. (Plate-179) This apart there were two figures on either side of the entrance of the temple on the wall of *maūlapa*. On the left the two handed figure holds *dvipa* (lamp) and sword in his hand, while the other one holds half moon in his both hands, thus represents *Ketu* (Plate-180) and *Rahu* (Plate-181) respectively as referred in the *Agni Purāṇa*. The figures measure 42x33cm. and 44 x33cm. respectively. This apart there found another two sculptures which appear to be not a part of the Navagrahas. Of them, one is a two handed deity riding a bird may be vulture or parrot. The deity had tiger face and left hand is in *abhaya mudrā* while his right hand holds reins of the bird. The figure measures 43 x 34 cm The another figure found to be depicted in *lalitāsana* on his *vāhana* appears to be lion. The deity had four arms and holds *gada* (mace) in his right hand and *śula* in his left hand. The figure had long hair and protruding teeth. The figure measures 41x 34 cm. All the figures adorned with *akshāmāla* as ornaments in hands and neck. Thus iconographic variations has been observed in the sculptures of Navagraha temple in *Chitrachal* hill at Guwahati. Thus we may refer it as the place, where solar cult was worshipped as mentioned in earlier texts. The *Markendya Purāṇa* (66), refers to existence of solar cult in *Kamrup*. Tārānātha, the Buddhist writer mentions that the people of Kamrupa were worshipper of the Sun before following of Buddhism. The Gauhati Grants mentions *ādiya-bhattārāka*, means Sun-God. The worship of Sun and Moon, i.e. non-

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anthropomorphic worship is still continued among the tribes of this region.\textsuperscript{182} The \textit{Kalikā Purāṇa} (ch.v.49) mentions that according to the rites of Sun worship, he should be worshipped either in an image or a water vessel at the gates.\textsuperscript{183}

First we may discuss the figure of Sūrya without attendents found in this region. Of this, mention may be made of the figure of Sūrya at Kāmākhyā in Nilachal hill. There is an image of Sūrya on the northern wall of the Kāmākhyā temple. The figure measures 131x57 cm.\textsuperscript{184} The deity is in samapapada-sthānaka posture on a lotus pedestal. The figure holds full blossomed lotus stalks in his two hands. The image wears kirāta-mukuta, hara, keyura, bala, girdle or Avyanga and vanamālā as ornaments. The deity wears a sacred waist girdle known as avyanga which is the Indianised form of Aiwiyaonghen, the sacred waist - girdle of the Iranians. The deity wears a boot covering lower part of the legs. (Plate-182) All these features represents similarity with North Indian images of Sūrya. There is a catturbhuja figures of Sūrya in abhanga posture on a pedestal. The deity carries half blossomed lotus stalks in upper two hands, lower right hand in Jnana- mudrā and lower left hand katyavalambita mudrā. (Plate-183) The figure wears similar ornaments like the earlier one. But only difference is that the figure is bare footed. Thus exhibits characteristic features of South Indian images. Similar another two catturbhuja figures are found holding lotus in upper two hands and lower two hands in karana-mudrā. There is another figure of Sūrya in the animal slaughter house of the Kāmākhyā temple in Nilachal hill. The figure measures 81x37 cm. The figure holds full blossomed lotus in hands near his chests which conforms dhyāna of the Garuda Purāṇa.\textsuperscript{185} At Madan Kamdev archaeological Site we found a catturbhuja figure in samapada-sthānaka posture in between pilasters with similar āyudhas though mutilated. The figure measures 108x57x28 cm. This apart there are about fifteen numbers of broken Sūrya images at the Site-Museum which can be identified on the basis of āyudhas in hands.(Plate-184)

All the figures are bare footed and having similarity with figures of south India, with

little variations in some holding of full blown and half blown lotus in hands. This indicates influence of South India and North India in the art style of this region. (plate LXXXVI).\textsuperscript{186} It is found that existence of large numbers of Sūrya images at Madan Kamdev archaeological Site, signifies importance of Sūrya as associated God in a Saivite temple. Another figure of the God without attendants with half -blown lotus in upper hands and lower hands in \textit{varada mudrā} is found on the wall of the Siddhesvar temple in Sualkuchi. The figure measures 100x45 cm.(Plate-185) One such bronze figure is found at Odalbakra (Kahilipara ) in \textit{samapada-sthānaka} posture on a pedestal .The God carries full blown lotus in his hands though the right hand is broken and wears boots in his legs. (Plate-186).

As regards figures of Sūrya with attendants, there are large numbers of images with minor variations in respect of attendants associated with the deity. At Urvashi there is a rock-cut two handed Sūrya in \textit{samapada-sthānaka} posture and flanked by his consorts Rajni and Nikshubha on either side . The figure wears usual ornaments and holds full blossomed lotus as \textit{āyudhas} in hands. His legs appear to be covered with boots like North Indian images. His consorts Rajni and Nikshubha carries \textit{camara} (flywhisk) and \textit{purnakumbha} in their hands. The figure measures 48x43 cm(Plate-187). Similar rock-cut figures of Sūrya with his consorts Rajni and Nikkshubha are found on the slope of the hill of the Sukresvara temple facing the River Brahmaputra on South bank. The figure measures 231 x92 cm. and carries full blown lotus in his two hands. The feet of the God are indistinct. The wheel and five horses of chariot of the God are still visible. The chariot is driven by Aruna with a whip. (Plate-188).\textsuperscript{187} Another figure of Sūrya with his consorts are found at the entrance of the Siddhesvari temple at Sualkuchi .The deity measures 186x95 cm. The legs of the God are indistinct and in \textit{samapada sthānaka} posture on a pedestal carved with seven horses driven by aruna. The deity is flanked by Rajni and Nikshuba on either side. The God carries full blown lotus in his two hands and wears usual ornaments as mentioned earlier.(Plate-189) Two such figures of the God with his two consorts are found at Ambari Archaeological site now at A.S.M.(Plate-190). The deity is in \textit{samapada - sthānaka} posture on a lotus


pedestal which stands on a chariot driven by *aruna* and drawn by seven horses carved on *Saptārātha* projection. The centre one is carved within a wheel and above the wheel there is a miniature figure which is identified as *Prithvi* or *mahasveta*. (Catalogue of Stone Sculptures Assam State Museum, p.40). The deity holds full blown lotus in his hands and appears to wear boot though feet are not shown. The God is flanked by his consorts *Rajni* and *Nikshubha* on either side in *tribhauga* posture on a lotus pedestal, carrying *camara* and *purnakumbha* in their hands. Similar miniature figures of Sūrya are found in the site in large numbers though not finely carved.

Further the figure of Sūrya with his ganas, *danda* and *pingala* are found on the wall of the Siddesvari Temple in Sualkuchi. The figure is *samapada-sthanaka* posture, holding full blown lotus in his hands. The deity is flanked by *daūli* and *pingala* on either side—bearded and potbellied Pingala holding ink-pot and pen in his hands, and *daūla* holding staff in his hands. The God wears usual ornaments on his body and boot in his legs are indistinct. The deity is on a chariot driven by seven horses of which centre one is within a circle of a wheel, though at present only five horses are distinct. (Plate-191).

Mention may be made of two bronze figures of Sūrya found at Odalbakra, Kahlipara and Hahara in Kamrup District. The God is in *samapada sthanaka* posture, holding usual *āyudhas* and flanked by *dandi* and *pingala*. The figure measures 21x15 cm. (Plate-192) While the other one is depicted as seated on a lotus with long stalk issuing out of the centre of the horses carved below on the pedestal. The seven horses carved on the pedestal is driven by Aruna, the charioteer. The deity carries *padma* in his both hands. The deity is flanked by two attendants on either side seated in *padmāsana*. (Plate—193)

There is another group of images of Sūrya with his four attendants i.e. his two ganas—*dandi* and *pingala*, his two consorts—*Rajni* and *Nikshubha* of latter period. Such iconographic features are found at Pandunath Devalaya, on the south bank of river Brahmaputra. Here exists rock-cut figure of Sūrya in *samapada sthanaka* posture and holds full blossomed lotus in his hands. The god wears *kirāta mukuta*, *vanamālā* and datable to 11th C.E. The deity is flanked by *dandi*, *pingala*, *rajni* and *nikshubha* on either side. His *vāhana*, Aruna carved below the feet of the God who appears to be

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driven the seven horses on the pedestal though indistinct (Plate-194). Another such figure is noticed at the residence of Niranjan Deka at Paltan bazaar area of Guwahati. The God is in samapada sthānaka posture on a chariot driven by charioteer Aruna seated on the feet of the deity. The deity carries full blown lotus in his hands and is flanked by his four associate deities – pingala with pen and ink-pot on right and on left, dandi holds a khaōga in his hand. In either side, stands Rajni and Nikshubha with fly-whisk in their hands. The God appears to wear boots. The figure measures 74 x 37 cm. Mention may be made of four handed figure of a Sūrya at Ambari archaeological Site in samapada sthānaka posture on a chariot drawn by seven horses of which centre one is in within a wheel. The God is carrying full blown lotus in his two upper hands, while his left lower hand holds a Śula and right lower hand is in varada mudrā. The deity is flanked by his consorts Rajni and Nikshubha on either side holding camara and purnakumbha in hands. They are flanked by dandi and pingala with their usual āyudhas. There were two figures on either side of the pedestal holding dhanus and bana in their hands. They are identified as Usha and Pratyusha, the arrow shooting Goddesses. Below the feet there is prithvi or Mahasveta above the wheel. At the feet of the deity, charioteer aruna is seated with whip in his hands. The figure measures 119 x 65 cm. (Plate-195) One very beautiful figure is found at Merghar, Chaygaon of Kamrup District. The image is carved on a stella with kirttimukha. The figure represents all the āyudhas as mentioned above and made of black basalt. The figure measures 85x36cm. and datable to 12th C.E. (Plate-49). Similar iconographic features are found on the figure of Sūrya at the Chatrakar Devalaya. The figure is found to be fixed on the outer side of the wall of temple and may be datable to 12th C.E. (Plate- 196) This apart, there found a stone relic depicting three figures at Madan kamdev referred as Adityas. Of them, the figure in the centre is in samapada- sthānaka posture, while the other two figures are in dvibhaōga posture. The relief measures 72x62x 35 cm. and datable to 11th C.E. All the three figures wears kirātamukuta, hara, girdle and vanamālā and are of equal height. The three figures carry lotus in upper two hands while lower two hands are found in mutilated condition. As per iconographic norms the twelve Ādityas

i.e. twelve forms of Sūrya carry lotus in upper two hands. Hence the figures on the relief found at Madan Kamdev may be identified as Ādityas.(197)¹⁹¹

As regards, the images of Ādityas, we do not find as a group in Kamrup District. But some of the members of the Ādityas are found in Hindu concept of Ashta-dikpālas.

ASHTA-DIKPALAS

"According to Hindu mythology, the eight quarters of the universe are governed by the eight guardian deities beginning with Indra and hence these eight deities are known by the name of Dikpalakas."¹⁹² The eight Dikpalas or guardians are Indra, Agni, Yama, Nirṛuti, Varuna, Vayu, Kubera and Ishana. These Dikpālas occupy important positions during vedic period, but with the development of Puranic system and emergence of sectarian cults they were relegated to the back ground and came to occupy respective quarters of the temple walls of Hindu concept of trinity God.¹⁹³ The Agni Purāṇa in chapter LVI, narrates the iconography of the Dikpālas. The first sixteen verses refer to the establishment of the different parts of a shrine, its entrances gateways etc. The placing of eight guardian deities in different quarters to protect the shrine or edifice. The seventeen to thirty-one verses describe that preside the different quarters of the Earth, or temple or a yajna (sacrificial).¹⁹⁴ These eight Dikpālas govern eight directions of the world as follows---Indra is the lord of the East, Yama is the lord of the south, Varuna of the west, Kubera in north, Agni in south-east, Nirṛuti in south-west, Vayu in north-west, and Ishana in north-east. But there are variations in descriptions of these Dikpālas in Vedic, early Buddhist and Jains texts. The Ramayana refers to four lokpalas- Indra, Yama, Varuna and Kubera.¹⁹⁵ In later Texts they are grouped as four chiefs and four minor guardians as Lokapālas. The manusmṛiti mentions eight Lokapālas—Soma(Chandra), Agni, Arka(Sūrya), Anila(Vayu), Indra, Vittapati(Kubera), Apapati(varuna) and Yama. The Mahabharata (VIII.45.31 ff.)

¹⁹⁴ "Purānas; an important source of Indian history" *The Purānas and Iconography* by Paromita Das.
mentions four Dikpālas or Lokāpalas—‘the gods living in the East have Agni as their leader; Yama of noble deeds guards the Pitṛs (manes) in the south; the West is guarded by Varuna who guarded the other gods; the North is guarded by Bhagavat Soma and the priest.’ Thus the names, numbers and associations of these Dikpālas are not constant in the epic and other literature. In Kamrup District, we found the members of Ashtadikpālas in different quarters of the temple walls early and late mediæval period. As a group, the members of Asth-Dikpālas are found at Aswakranta temple in North Guwahati and Hayagriva Madhava temple at Hajo.

**INDRA** - The *Satapatha-Brahmāna* mentions that the word *Indra* is derived from *Indha*, means kindler. The *Rig Veda* mentioned Indra as one without rival and wielder of *vajra*. The *Brihat-Samhitā*, the *Vishudharmottārā*, the *Matsya Purāṇa*, the *Agni Purāṇa*, the *Rupmandana*, the *Silparatna* and the *Agaumas* narrate the iconographic features of *Indra*. The *Amsumādheda-gama* states the colour of *Indra* is dark and adorned with *kirāta*, *keyura*, *hara* and *kundala* and other ornaments, draped in red garments. The deity carries *sakti* in right hand and *ankuśa* in left hand. The pot-bellied god may be seated or standing upon a *simhāsana* or may be seated on his *vāhana* elephant, (*Airavata*). The deity is flanked by his consort Indrani in left. The goddess is adorned with ornaments and carries *utpala* flower in hand. On either side of the God there are celestial pair of Gandharva woman holding *camara* in hands. The *Agni Purāṇa* (ch. LVI) mentions “*O Devraj Indra! You, who hold the Vajra in your hands and ride upon the elephant, approach with your Devos and protect my Eastern entrance; I salute thee....*” That is Indra carries *vajra* and rides his *vāhana*, *Airavata* (elephant) to protect eastern entrance. The *Vishnuḥarmottārā* described that *Sakra*, the king of Gods is white in colour and rides an elephant with four tusks and his consort Sachi seated on his lap is held by him. The God is four handed and Sachi has two hands. *Sakra* holds lotus and the elephant-goad in right hands while his one of the left hand placed on the back of Sachi and the other hand carries the thunderbolt. *Sachi* in

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her left hand has a beautiful sprout of the Santana (one of the five trees growing in Indras garden) and the right hand rests on the back of the king of Gods. Vasudeva is traditionally known as Sakra and Sachi is regarded as Lakshmi and Santana as her progeny. Iconographic features of Indra represents- the God is four handed and rides a white elephant, Airavata. The deity holds the Vajra, the thunder-bolt and sometimes conch-shell, bow and arrow, a hook and net.

In Kamrup district, we found few images of Indra. Mention may be made of a stone figure of Indra found near Chatrakar temple at Guwahati now preserved at A.S.M. The God is depicted in tribhanga posture on a lotus pedestal with figure of elephant in the centre. The figure is adorned with kirātāmukuta, hara, keyura, kuṭaala and girdle; wears uttariya and Yajnopavita. The right hand of the deity is in abhaya mudrā, while his left hand is in varada mudrā. The peculiarity of the figure is that there is a five hooded snake canopy over his head which is perhaps not found any where in the region. On the right, the figure is flanked by a pot bellied man, may be rshi with kamaatu in his left hand and kusa grass in right hand. The figure wears a turban and has bearded face. On the left side of the deity there is a female figure with a fly-whisk in her right hand and a object appears to purnakhumbha in her left hand. Though the figure is identified as Sachi or Indrani by some scholars, the figure appears to be Gandhrava or apsara since consort of Indra, Sachi does not carry camara in her hand. Further there are two female attendants, of them one holds goad while the other holds Vajra in the middle of the stella on either side of the central figure. The stella has kirttimukha on the top with vidyadhara on either side of it. The figure measures 56 x 31 cm. (Plate-22) Though the figure represents iconographic variations of characteristic features of Indra, the Vāhana elephant represents the figure as Indra. Rao Bahadur K.N. Dikshit, D.G. of A.S.I states that “The third image is certainly enigmatic. A five hooded ornaments or accompaniment is not associated either with Siva or Indra. The elephant on the pedestal certainly indicates the figure as Indra with Balarāma, the elder brother of Krishna, who is always represented with such snake hoods. In fact, the appellation Upendra given to Vishnu indicates Indra as an elder brother of Krishna. Of course, the

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distinctive plough (*hala*) and pestle (*musala*) of Balarama were not shown here, but the general idea which associates the attributes of Indra and Balarama in this figure is hinted........".202 There is another rock-cut image of *Indra* at Pandunath Devalaya datable to 11th century A.D. The figure is in *samapada sthānika* on a pedestal with *vāhana* elephant carved on it. The deity carries *vajra* in right and *padma* in his left hand. The deity is flanked by two female attendants on either side. (Plate-198). On the Narakasur hill in hoards of bronze images, image of Indra is the biggest one. The figure measures 32 x 16 cms. The figure rides his *vāhana* elephant on a lotus pedestal. The two handed God is in *varada* in right and *abhaya mudrā* in left hand. The deity is adorned with *kirātamukuta*, *hara*, *keyura*, *kundala*, *girdle* and wears *yajnopavīta* and *uttariya* on his body, usual ornaments alongwith *Prabhōwali* and *chatrawali*. The deity is flanked by female attendants, *gandharva* on either side in *ālidha* posture on lotus pedestal. Both the attendants hold *camara* in their one of hands while their other hands are in *katyavalambita* posture. There is kneeling figure of a devotee below on the pedestal in *anjali mudrā*. (Plate-35). There found a terracotta plaque with depiction of the figure of Indra at Cotton College campus which is now preserved at A.S.M. The two handed deity is depicted as riding his *vāhana*, *airavata* (elephant) and flanked by *vidyādharā* on either side. The figure carries *vajra* in his left hand. The deity is adorned with *kirātamukuta*, *hara*, *kundala* and *uttariya* datable to ninth century A.D. The figure measures 42 x 31 cm. (Plate-199) This apart we found images of Indra as members of Ashtadikpala on the walls of the Ashwaklanta temple at North Guwahati and Hayagriva-Madhava temple at Hajo. At Ashwaklanta temple, the image is found within a niche on the wall of the temple. The two handed deity rides his *vāhana* *airavata* (elephant) and holds *vajra* in his right hand, while his left hand carries a goad. (Plate-200). The figure of Indra at Hayagrava-Madhava temple is carved on the wall of temple on his *vāhana* elephant. The deity carries a *goad* in his left hand and shown fighting with stylized lion known as Meghasur. The deity wears usual ornaments and also his *vāhana* is adorned with ornaments. (Plate-201)

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AGNI- Agni is the Lord of the South-East quarter. Agni was an important God along
with Indra and Sūrya, thus formed triad during Vedic age but later relegated to minor
position like Indra in the Hindu pantheon. He was the medium through which other
Gods receive their offerings. The God was also the Lord of the house. During Vedic
age the Agni was originated from rubbing one piece of wood with another called arani
thus out of this, child fire was born. Vedic Agni has two heads, four horns, three feet
and seven arms. Later Agni was identified with Rudra and Siva and regarded as father
of Kārtikeya. Later he occupies a minor position as one of offerings to other
Gods. His consort is Svaha. The Vishnudharmottārā, the Agni Purāṇa, the Matsya
Purāṇa, the Silparatna and the Rupmandana etc. narrate the iconography of Agni. The
Agni Purāṇa mentions... “O Agni, you are full of strength, riding on the goat, and
strong, come forth with your Devas, accept my worship and protect my South East
(agni) quarter”.... According to Harivamsa, he wears black cloths and head gear
and carries a flaming spear. The deity has chariot driven by horses with the winds as
wheels. His Vāhana is ram. The Agamas narrate that Agni is red colour; with four
arms and three eyes and wears jata having prabhāmandala behind his head. The God is
seated on his Vāhana—ram. The two of his hands are in abhaya and varada mudrā,
while his right hand holds śruk and left hand carries śakti. According to another texts,
the deity has moustaches and yajnopavita. He holds akshāmāla and the kamaūalu in
his hands. The Vishnudharmottārā narrates that Vahni (the fire god) is the lord of red
with mated locks of hair. The deity wears smoke coloured cloth and surrounded by
flames; has three eyes and bearded face; four handed and four tusks; vata (wind) as
his charioteer and seated on his chariot driven by four parrots with smoke as banner.
His consort svaha seated on his lap and holds a jewelled vessel in her hand. Vahni
holds flames and triśula in his right hands and a rosary in her left hand. Thus vahni
may be identified as Agni. Another authority referred that the Agni is represented like
Brahmā with jata; the God holds akshāmāla and śaktiyayudha; seated on his seat in

204 Agni-Purāṇa translated & edited by Sri Sri Jiva Nyayatirtha, Published by Navabharat Publishers ,
Kolkata in 1389 of Bangabda, Pp 102-104 cited in ‘The Purāṇas and iconography’ by Paromita
Das, presented in National Seminar on Purāṇa: An Important Source of Indian History, Jointly
organised by Deptt.of Sanskrit, Gauhati University and Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Samity, Assam.
26th-28th August 2011.
205 Kramrich, Stella Vishnudharmottārā part-III, (Translation) Calcutta University Press, Second
Revised and Enlarged edition 1928.pp.81-82.
arddha-chandrasana. In Kamrup District, few images of Agni are found. Mention may be made of a figure of Agni on the northern wall of the Kāmākhyā temple fixed in between pilasters. The deity is in *tribha*ga posture. The figure wears kirātamukuta, hara, girdle, kundala and yajnopavītā. The deity has bearded face. The figure holds śrūk and śruva in upper hands, while his left lower hand is in *katihasta* mudrā and right hand in *karana* mudrā holding some object may be parrot though not distinct. (Plate-202). Another figure is found at Siddheswar temple in Sualkuchi. The catturbhuja figure of Agni is in *dvibha*ga posture in between pilasters on the outer wall of the temple. The deity measures 110 x 53 cms. (Plate-203). The figure carries kamaalu in left lower hand, triśula in left upper hand and akshāmāla in upper right hand, while his lower right hand in *varada* mudrā. The figure wears *jatāmukuta* and flames behind his head. The figure is flanked by ram below on the pedestal. At Aswakranta temple in north Guwahati we find the members of *ashtadikpala* on the outer wall of the temple. There we found the figure of a Agni within a niche. The deity is in moving posture riding his vāhana, ram and holds a sula in his right hand, while his left hand rests on his vāhana. The deity wears mukuta, hara, kundala and girdle. (Plate-204). There is another figure of Agni found at Hayagriva-Madhava temple in Hajo. The image is found within a niche on the outer side of the eastern wall of the temple. The deity is seated on his vāhana, ram. He wears kirātamukuta and carries sula in right hand and vase in left hand. His vāhana, ram wears a bell around his neck and he is in moving posture. (Plate-205).

**YAMA** - Yama is the lord of the south quarter. In RigVēda the god is mentioned as the son of Vivasvat and Saranya, the daughter of Tvashtri with his twin sister, Yami. The *Agni Purāṇa*, the *Matsya Purāṇa*, the *Brihat-Samhitā* and *Vishnudharmottara* narrate the iconography of Yama. The *Agni Purāṇa* cited that “…O Yama, come upon your buffalo mount, protect my south entrance; O Vaivasvata (Yama), you are full of
strength, I salute thee...". The Brihat Samhitā narrates as "...having a staff in his hand and riding on a buffalo" (dandi Yamo mahisagā; Ch. 57, v.57). The Vishnu-dharmottārā mentions that the four-armed God carries staff with flames and a sword in his right hand, while his left hand holds trident with flames and rosary. The deity is seated on his vāhana, buffalo with his consort Dhūmrornā on his lap. Citragupta dressed as northerner, holds a pen and a leaf in his hands and fierce kāla (time, the destroyer) carries noose.

According to Sanskrit authority Yama is adorned with kirāṭa-mukuta and other ornaments. The god wears red garments and seated on a simhāsana or on his vāhana, buffalo. The god holds either khaṭga and a khētaka or a fruit and leaves or danda and pāśa. Yama is flanked by Mrityu and Samhitā; female attendants with camara; dharmā and adharmā in front; Citragupa and Kali at the door. Yama as Ashtadikpala und at Ashwakranta temple in north Guwahati. The deity is carved within a niche on the wall of the garbhagriha along with other members of the Dikpalas. The figure is seated on his vāhana buffalo and wears usual ornaments like kirāṭa-mukuta, hara etc. The God carries danda with flames at the top in his right hand while his left hand rests on his vāhana. (Plate-206). Another one is found at Hayagriva-Madhava temple at Hajo. The figure of Yama in southern wall of the temple is seated on his vāhana buffalo. The deity is two handed and holds daśa in his hands. The deity is in utkutika posture on his vāhana. His vāhana buffalo wears bell on his neck. (Plate-207). There is another figure on the corner of the wall of the Hayagriva-Madhava temple wall. The figure is in standing posture and carries daśa and noose in his hands. The face of the figure is terrible with tung hanging out of the mouth and may be identified as Yama. There found another figure of the deity carved within a niche on the outer side of the wall of the Janardhan temple at Sukreswar Debala. The figure is carved in dvibhaga posture on padmapitha. The deity is adorned with kirāṭa-mukuta, hara, kundala, girdle and bala. The deity carries daśa in his right hand. (Plate-208)

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VARUNA- Varuna is the lord of the western quarter. The *Vishnudharmottārā*, the *Brihat -Samhitā* and the *Agni Purāṇa* etc. narrate the iconography of Varuna. The *Brihat -Samhitā* described — Varuna rides a swan and holds *pāṣa* in his hand. \(\text{ḥamsarudhasca pāṣabhṛd—Vāraṇuḥ; Brihat—Samhitā, ch.57, v.57}\) . The *Agni Purāṇa* narrates “-----O Varuna, whose mount is the crocodile (makara) and who is strong and holds the pāṣa in his hands! Approach and protect my Western entrance, protect me, I salute thee......”\(^{211}\) The *Vishnudharmottārā* cited (Bk.III, ch. 52, vv-1-21) described that Varuna, the pot-bellied God is the lord of waters and rides a chariot driven by seven swans. The deity is four handed and carries *padma*, a *noose*, *sankha* and a jewel box in his hands. His consort Gauri is seated on his lap; the deity is flanked in right and left by Ganga and Yamuna on their vāhana. \(^{212}\) *Ganga* stands on a matsya or makara with camara and padma, while *Yamuna* stands on his vāhana tortoise with camara and a nilotpala in his hands. \(^{213}\) In Kamrup we found figure of Varuna as members of Dikpalas on the walls of the late medieval temples. Mention may be made of such figure at Hayagriva-Madhava temple. Here the image of Varuna is seated on his makara chariot driven by five horses. The god wears kirāta mukuta, kundala, hara and bala. The deity is flanked by his consort Gauri on his back. The figure is seated in ardhaparyankāsana. There is a dhvaja upon the head of the makāra. \(^{214}\) The *Vishnudharmottārā* mentions that ‘west is dark, destitute of youth and seated on a horse’. \(^{215}\) Thus on the basis of this description the deity seated on the chariot driven by seven horses, the vāhana, makara and dhvaja indicates that the figure is none other than Varuna.(Plate- 209). There is another figure as members of Dikpālas on the outer wall of the garbhagrha of Aswakranta temple on the north bank of river Brahmaputra in North Guwahati. The figure is seated on stylized animal with a face of makara, his vāhana . The deity holds pāṣa in his right hand while his left hand is on the back of his vāhana. The figure wears kirātamukuta, hara, kundala and bala etc. (Plate-210).


NIRRTI - According to Hindu mythology, Nirrti is the lord of the south-west quarter of the universe. The Agni Purāṇa, the Vishnuḍhamottārā, Rig Veda etc. narrate the iconography of Nirrti. The Agni Purāṇa cited "...O Nirrti, you hold the khadga in your hands and ride upon (the shoulder of) a strong man, come to this quarter and protect the South-West (nairit) quarter". The deity is blue coloured, wears yellow garments seated on bhadrāpittha, a lion or on the shoulder of man. The Vishnuḍhamottārā mentions that the deity must be seated on an ass, holds a danda with terrible face. The deity has four consorts - Devi, Krishnangi, Krishnavadana and Krishnapāśa. As regard the sculpture of Nirrti, we found only as members of Dikpālas at Aswakranta temple in north Guwahati and Hayagriva-Madhava Temple in Hajo in this District. At Aswakranta temple in North Guwahati, we found the figure of Nirrti on outsides of the wall of the garbhagrha of the temple. Here the deity is seated on the shoulder of a man. The God wears kirātāmukuta, hara and kundala etc. The figure carries danda in his right hand, while his left hand placed on the head of the man, upon which the deity is riding. (Plate-211). The other figure is found on the outer side of the wall of the Hayagriva Madhava temple. The deity is seated on the shoulder of a man, his vāhana, who is in a kneeling posture. The figure wears kirātāmukuta with five full blown flowers, hara and kundala etc. The deity holds daU Ua in right hand and left hand rests on his knees. The image is flanked by two female attendants in dancing posture, may be two of his consorts out of four. (Plate-212).

VAYU - Vayu is the guardian of the north-west corner of the Universe. The Ramayana and Mahabharat mention - the deity is the father of Bhima, second pandava and of Hanumān, respectively. The Vishnuḍhamottārā, the Silparatna, the Agni Purāṇa, the Agamas and the Rupmandana narrate the iconographic features of Vayu. The Agni Purāṇa cited that "...O Vayu whose hand holds the flag (dhvaja) riding upon a strong mount (stag) approach, (along) with the Devas and Maruds, protect my


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According to the Vishnudharmottara (ch.58, vv. 1-6), the God is two-handed, holding the ends of the scarf on either side worn by him, the garment worn by him floated in the (vayyapurita-vastra), his mouth being open, his hair disheveled, thus indicating his swift movement. This narration has similarity with the Zoroastrian wind-god, vata, as depicted on the coins of Kanishka and Huvishka. All the above mentioned earlier texts except Rupmandana mentioned that the deity has two hands. Amsūmādhedagama described him as seated on simhāsana and holding a banner in his right hand and a danda in his left hand. According to the Suprabhedāgama, the deity holds a dvaja and an elephant — god in his hands, and a stag as his vāhana; while the Śilparatna lays down that the God carries a flag in his left hand and right hand in varada mudrā with stag, as his vāhana. The Rupmandana narrates the God is of green colour; as having four hands holding a banner, a flag a water-vessel and in varada mudrā; and rides an antelope. In this region Vayu is found as members of Dikpālas at Aswakranta temple in North Guwahati and Hayagriva Madhava temple in Hajo. At Hayagriva Madhava we find a figure of the deity riding an antelope; carries a danda with leafy branch on the top, in right hand and a dhvaja in his left hand. The god wears kirātamukuta, hara, kundala and uttariya that floated in the wind. (Plate- 213) While the figure of the deity at Aswakranta temple is depicted as riding an antelope and holds dvaja in his left hand. (Plate- 214)

KUBERA- Kubera is the guardian of the Northern quarter of the universe. The word ‘Kubera’ means wealth or a person with deformed body. Like other members of Dikpalas, the iconography of Kubera is described in the Agni Purāna, the Agamas, the Śilparatna and the Vishnudharmottārā etc. The Agni Purāna cited as “— O Som! You ride upon a strong mount with the mace (gada) in your hands, approach (together) with Kubera to protect my North entrance, I salute thee…” The Agamas regarded him as the lord of the Yakshas and narrates that the colour of the God is golden yellow.

or crimson; wears *kirāta* or *karanda mukuta*, *kundala* and *hara* with golden coins. The two-handed God may hold *gada* or *abhaya* and *varada mudrā*. If four handed embraces Vibhava and Vriddhi on either side, seated on the lap of the God; the other two hands holds the *gada* and the *śakti*. The *Vishnudharmottārā* narrates that the left eye of the God is yellowish brown (*pingala*), wears dress as westerners (*apichyavesha*), protected the body with an armour, has moustaches and side-tusks in his mouth. All the texts refered him as having big and hanging belly. The deity seated on a *padmapitha* either on a chariot drawn by on the men or seated on the shoulders of a man. The *Amsumādbhedāgama* described that the god has *ram* as his *vāhana*. The deity has two consorts – Śankha-nidhi and Padmanidhi. But the *Rupmandana* described elephant as the *Vāhana* of the god. Here the deity holds *gada*, money, a pomegranate fruit and a *kamandalu*.223

In Kamrup District, we found only one sculpture that may be identified as Kubera at Hayagriva-Madhava temple at Hajo. Here the deity is in *samapada sthānaka* posture. The āyudhas in hands are indistinct, but the tundila (pot-bellied) feature of the deity with *apichyavesa* identifies the God as Kubera of *dikpālas*. (Plate-215). There found another figure of the deity at Bhubaneswari temple in Nilachal hill, which is now at A.S.M. The figure has been identified as Agni. But the beared figure with *tundila* and bag in his right hand represented the figure as Kubera. (Plate-216)

**ISANA** - Isana was the guardian of the north-eastern corner of the universe. The iconographic features exhibits that he is same as Mahadeva or Siva. The *Agni Purāṇa* narrates “----- O Isana who holds the śula (spear) and rides on the powerful Brihaspati, approach and protect the North East (isana) quarter, I salute thee...”224 The *Vishnudharmottārā* also describes Isana. The god wears tiger skin, *jatāmukuta*, *yajhopavita* or *nag-yajhopavita* alongwith other usual ornaments. The deity seated on either a white bull or on *padmāsana*. The God carries a *trīśula* and a *kopala*, also may be in *varada* posture. Thus represents all the iconographic features Siva.225 As regards the image of Isana at Kamrup district we may mention a figure of Isana found on the


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wall of the Surkreswar temple at Guwahati. The figure is in dvinbhaUGa posture on a lotus pedestal. There are five hooded -snake over his head. The deity wears nag-yajnopaviti and naramandala. The god carries a damaru in right hand and left hand kathhasta posture holding triśula within it. (Plate-217). There found another figure of Ishana at Hayagriva-Madhava temple in Hajo. The deity is depicted in samapada sthānaka posture and carries triśula in his left hand and his right hand in varada mudrā. The deity is adorned with kirātamukuta, hara, kundala; wears yajnopavitā and uttariya. (Plate-218). Another figure of Ishana found carved on the outer side of the wall of the garbhagriha of the Aswakranta temple. The figure is seated on his vāhana bull; and holds triśula and damaru in his left and right hand respectively. The bull wears a bell on his neck. (Plate-219). At the gate of the Siddheswar temple at Nilachal hill, another figure of Kāmdeva is found carved within a niche and may be datable to 17th century A.D. (Plate-220).

Thus we may conclude that the astha-dikpālas are found to be popular as guardian of the different quarters of the Universe during late mediaeval period in this region like rest of India. Still now the astha- dikpālas are believed and followed in Vastu-sastra while performing religious rites and constructing house.

DHARMA - The Vishnudharmottara (part III, Ch. 77, Verses 1-10) narrates that Dharma should have four face, four footed and four armed and wear white garments and usual ornaments. In his right hand the deity holds rosary and pustaka or book in his left hand. On his right side should be Adherence in person by his left Happiness and Dharma kept his on the head of either of him. Kala is traditionally known as the rosary and the Vēda (Agama), the book. The four faces are Yajna (sacrifice), Satya (truth), Tapas (austerity) and Dana (liberality). Time and place, Purity and Purification are four arms of him. His four feet are known as sruti (revelation), smṛtī (recollection), good behaviour and self - contentment. The God has fourteen wives represented Kirti, Lakshmi, Dhṛti, Medha, Pushti, Sraddha, Kriya, Mati, Buddhī, Lajja, Santi, Siddhi and Tushti. Such iconographic features are found at the slope of

the hill at Hajo. There is a broken figure having four legs, two of his legs are in *padmāsana* and other two legs in *pralambapada* (both the legs pendent). Upper part of the figure is missing and only two of his hands are found rests on his lap holding *rosary* in right hand and holding *kamandalu* in *Karana mudra*. The deity is seated in *padmāsana* on a double patel lotus pedestal. The four legs and *rosary* in his hand may be refer the figure as Dharma, though other features of the God are missing. The figure measures 25x27 cm. (Plate-221) This is perhaps one of the rare figures found in Kamrup which is nowhere found in India.

**KĀMADEVA** - According to Hindu mythology, Kāmadeva is the God of love. The *Siva Purāṇa* (*dharma sanghita*, ch.8,v.1-76) narrates the origin of Kāmdeva. It mentions that *Kama* is the Brahmā, Vishnu and Ishvaratmika. Sometimes the God regarded as the son of Brahmā and has four hands. The deity holds *sankha, charka, gada* and *padma*; and surrounded by Lakshmi, Saraswati, Rati, Garuda, Pusti, Tusti, Kirrti and Shanti. The God is adorned with heavy ornaments. Brahmā created Rati devi as his consort and, with her the God is shown as holding *puspa, dhanus* and five *puspa-banas* in hands. According to Puranic legends, the God Kāmdeva after being burnt to ashes, got back his form (*rupa*) in this territory. Thus the region came to be known as *Kamarupa*. Such iconographic representation is found at Kāmākhyā temple in Nilachal Hill of Kamrup District. There found two figures of the deity at Kāmākhyā temple. Of them, one of the figure is depicted in between the pilasters on the outer side of the wall of the *garbhagriha* of the temple. The deity is two handed and in *samapada-sthānaka* posture. The figure holds *bana* in right hand and *dhanus* in left hand. The deity is adorned with *Kirāta-mukuta, hara, kundala, girīḍle, keyura* and *konkana*. Thus the figure may be identified as God Kāmadeva. The Goddess Kāmākhyā is also known as *Kamesvari* Devi. (Plate-222). Another figure of Kāmadeva appears to be fixed on the outer side of the wall of the *maṭāṇa* of the Kāmākhyā temple in later period. The deity is in *katibhanga* posture under the bounce of tree. The deity is adorned with *kirātamukuta, hara, kundala girīḍle* and *vanamāla*.

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The figure carries *bana* in right hand and *dhanus* in left hand. (Plate-223). Another one is found at the *batchora* of the Siddheswar temple at Nilachal hill. The figure is in *samapada sthānaka* posture on *padmapitha* in between pilasters belonging to early period, which appears to be fixed on the *batchora* in later period. The deity is adorned with *kirāṭa-mukuta*, *hara*, *kundala* and *girdle* etc. (Plate-224) There found another figure of the deity carved on the exterior of the *garbhagriha* of the Aswakranta temple within a niche. The deity is two-handed and in *samapada sthānaka* posture. The deity carries *pushpa-bana* and *dhanus* in his hands. (Plate-225)

**DEVI**

Śakti is the essence and life of all things, who creates and protects the world as benign mother. The worship of mother Goddess as a principal deity can be traced in pre-historic and historic period in India. Like rest of India, Kamrup District of North-East India is no exception from this. Worship of Devi or female Goddess as fertility cult and animistic worship was popular among the people of the region, and was the origin of the Śaktism and Tantrism. We find the cult of Mother Goddess in non-anthropomorphic form at Kāmākhya in Nilachal Hill and Ugrātārā in Uzan Bazar which was known as *peethas*. According to mythological tradition, in these places the female organs of Sati are believed to have fallen which are regarded Śakti-pithas in later period. The *Kālikā Purāṇa* (64/59), the *Devi Purāṇa*, *Yogini Tantra* and other literary texts narrate the tradition. The *Devi Purāṇa* (39/14) mentions that the Devi was worshipped in different forms in Kāmarupa, Kāmākhya, Bhottadesa etc. The Kāmākhya and Kamarupa means goddess of spirits or ghosts, worshipped in cremation ground. According to the *Yogini Tantra* (1/11) Kāmākhya is *Kali-smāsana*. According to *Kālikā Purāṇa* (38/44), King Naraka of Prāgjyotisha propitiated none other than Devi Kāmākhya. Thus the fertility cult and the motherhood led to the development of supreme goddess who governs the Universe. She rules over the creation (*srishti*),

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232 Chodhury, P.C. *History and civilization of Assam from the earliest times to the twelfth century A.D.*, P.418-419.

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preservation (sthiti) and destruction (samhriti). There are many mythologies related to the concept of Devi. Devi is correlated with nature and mother earth who is creator of the world. It was later hinduised and worshiped in humān form as a female goddess. The goddess is known by various names as found in earlier texts. The Purānas and Agamas narrate the iconography of different Goddesses. According to Devimahatmya of Markendya Purāna, the supreme Goddess Mahalakshmi creates the cosmic Gods and Goddesses. This Devi is worshiped as Supreme Goddess as Śakti. The association of Devi with Siva is Saivism and with Vishnu is Vaishnavism. The Śaktism is more associated with Saivism than Vaishnavism. The Agni Purāna (ch. 40) narrate the iconography of different forms of Devi or Goddesses. We shall discuss only the iconography of the Goddesses as found in this region.

SARASWATI - Saraswati is the Goddess of learning and music. The deity was worshipped by Hindu, Buddha and Jains by different names. The Rig Veda mentioned Saraswati as a river and later refers it as Vedic Goddess Vak. As an individual Goddess she is the consort of Brahmā, later consort of Vishnu or Ganeśa. Primarily as associated with Brahmā, the deity has the hamsa (swan) as her vāhana. Sometimes the deity also is associated with mayura (peacock). If four handed the Goddess holds pustaka, rosary, vina and padma; or pustaka, akshāmāla, padma and one of the hands in vyākhyāna mudrā; or pustaka, rosary, vina and ghata; or pustaka, sudanda (sacred staff), rosary, and one of the hands in kataka mudrā or varada mudrā or abhaya mudrā. If the God is ten handed she carries chakra, śankha, kapāla, pāśa, parasu, vessel of ambrosia, Vēda, rosary, vidya and padma. Again if eight handed she carries dhanus, gada, pāśa, vina, chakra, śankha, wooden pestle and ankuśa. The Agni Purāna (ch. 49) narrates that the deity carries manuscript, akshāmāla in her two hands while her other two hands hold Vina. In Kamrup, there are few independent images of Saraswati. The Matsya Purāṇa, Agni Purāṇa and Vishnu Purāṇa etc. narrate the iconography of the deity. It may be mentioned that there are two broken images of Saraswati found at

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Kamakhya in Nilachal Hill. Of them one in mutilated condition is on the plinth of a residential house in western stair-ways. The broken part of the image is measure 48 x 43 cms. The deity wears jatāmukuta, kundala, hara and bala etc. The Goddess is four handed though all the three hands are missing, only upper right hand is found to carry pustaka which identifies the deity as Goddess Saraswati. Another figure of the deity found in seated posture appears to be fixed on the wall of the western gateway of the Kamakhya temple. The deity is in ardhiparyākasana posture and wears jatāmukuta, hara and snake-armlet etc. The deity holds a pustaka in his left hand and rosary in her right hand. Holding of pustaka in hand identified the Goddesse as Saraswati and snake armlet exhibits her as a consort of Siva.237 There is another image of Saraswati at the entrance of the Kamakhya temple in dvibhāga posture. The figure holds Vina with her two hands which appears to co-relates the image as Saraswati. (Plate-226). Another figure of the deity is found at Pandunath Devalaya in dvibhāga posture carved on a pillar. The figure is two handed and carries vina in her hands. (Plate-227). Similar figure of the deity is found at Uzan Bazar in Guwahati, which is now in A.S.M. The two handed figure is in dvibhāga posture on a padmapitha and holds vina with his two hands. The figure is adorned with mukuta, hara, kundala, keyura and girdle. The figure is datable to 9th century A.D. (Plate-228). At Madan Kamdev archaeological site at Baihata Chariali we find two images of Saraswati which are now preserved at site Museum. Of them one seated figure of Goddess Saraswati is in padmāsana and holds vina with her two hands. The figure measures 19 x 20 x 57 cms. (Plate-229) Another one in samapada-sthānaka posture and carries vina with her two hands. The deity measures 33 x 40 x 23 cms. (Plate-230). This apart a figure of the deity is also traced at the entrance of the mandapa of the Ganeśa temple at Hajo. The figure holds vina with her two hands and wears conical mukuta in vaishnavite style. The figure appears to datable to 18th century A.D. (Plate-231)

LAKSHMI - Lakshmi is the chief consort of cult of Vishnu and Goddess of wealth and prosperity. The Goddess is known by various names – Sri Padma, Gajalakshmi and Kamala. The deity is seated on a padma and holds padma in her two hands. The deity is adorned with lotus garland and flanked by elephants on either side. According to the

Vishnudharmottārā, the Goddess is depicted in dark complexion. The Aṃsūmāḍheāgama states that the Goddess is golden colour and decked up with heavy ornaments. The deity carries lotus in the right hand and a bilva fruit (wood apple) in her left hand. The Silparatna narrates that the Goddess is white complexioned and holds lotus in left hand, bilva fruit in right hand. The Goddess is flanked by two female attendants, each holding camara in their hands. The goddess is two-handed if she is associated with Vishnu and is four handed when she is worshiped as an independent deity. If four-handed, the deity seated upon padmāsana placed on simahāsana. The Goddess carries lotus stalk and bilva fruit in right two hands; an amritagātha (a pot containing ambrosia) and śankha in left hands. The goddess wears keyura, kundala, mukuta and kankana etc. and lotus on her head. The goddess is flanked by two elephants who pours pure water from vessel on her head. According to the Visvakarmasastra, the Goddess Mahalakshmi is four handed and carries patra and gada (kaumodaki) in right hands; while in left hands holds bilva fruit and khētaka.238 At Madan Kamdev archaeological site in Baihata Chariali we found two figures of Goddess Lakshmi. Of them one is in padmāsana on a full blown lotus pedestal. The figure is two handed and adorned with tiara – mukuta, hara, kundala and girdle. The deity holds the stalk of the padma in her two hands on either side and measures 52x40x30 cm. (Plate-232) The other figure of the deity is in lalitāsana on a lotus pedestal. The deity holds padma in his left hand and adorned with similar ornaments. It appears that a bilva fruit is carved on left side of the deity on relief. The figure measures 36x18x35 cm. (Plate-233). There is another figure of Lakshmi at Kāmākhyā in Nilachal Hill. The figure appears to be later fixed on the eastern gateway of the Kāmākhyā temple. Here the four-handed deity is seated in padmāsana, lower part of which is fixed on the wall. The deity wears puspa-kundala, kankana and padma on her head. The Goddess carries amritghata in her left hand and padma in her right hand. Holding of ghata and padma in her hands appears to identify the Goddess as Lakshmi. (Plate-234). There is another image carved on a stone block at Pingaleswar Archaeological Site at Karara in Kamrup District. (Plate-235) The deity is in ardhaparyanka posture on padmapitha. The Goddess wears hara, kundala, keyura.

and girdle etc. The figure is two handed and carries padma in her right hand and bilva fruit in her left hand. The Silparatna mentioned that the Goddess Lakshmi holds the padma and bilva fruit. Hence it appears that the figure is none other than the figure of Goddess Lakshmi. There is a bronze figure of Gajalakshmi found at Hahara in Kamrup District. The four handed deity is seated in padmāsana and surrounded by four elephants in four corners, each on high pedestal, though one of them is missing. Each of the elephants holds water vessel in its trunk pouring water on the head of the Goddess. The Goddess wears kirāta- mukuta and padma on her head; hara and kundala etc. as ornaments. The deity carries padma in two of her hands, and other two hands are in abhaya and varada mudrās. The presence of elephants (gaja) identifies the Goddess as Gaja Lakshmi. The figure may be datable to 16th century A.D. (Plate-236).

ANNAPURNA - Annapurna is the youthful Goddess of red complexion, with face of a full moon, three eyes and high breasts. In her left hand, the Goddess carries pot with rubies and honey in it, while in her right hand, she carries a spoon with rubies and rice. The deity also holds pāśa and ankuśa in her two hands, while her other two hands are in abhaya and varada mudrā. The Goddess has crescent moon adorning her crown. Such iconographic features are found in the catturbhujā figure of the deity at Umānanda. The deity is in samapada-sthānaka posture on a pedestal and flanked by two female attendants in dvibhāga posture on either side. The upper part of the stella is broken and measures 88x48 cm. The image is datable to 10th century A.D. The deity is adorned with mukuta, hara, girdle and keyura. The deity holds a bounce of grain (dhan) or rice in her lower right hand and śankha in her lower left hand, while other āyudhas are indistinct. (Plate-237)

ŚAKTI GODDESSES - The concept of Śakti is associated with the worship of female Goddess as a supreme deity and known by various names, as mentioned in Purānas and Āgamas. These different names represent different iconographic aspects of this female Goddess or yoni form, symbolizing fertility cult, who is regarded as consort or

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energy of supreme God Siva. Thus Śakti is associated with Siva and sakta cult. The nature of worship of śakti refers in the tantras, which is the origin of śakti worship. The Goddess is worshiped in benign (saumya) and terrific (ugra) forms as lord for good of mankind and for the destruction of evil respectively. The Markendya Purāṇa, the Agni Purāṇa, the Kālikā Purāṇa and the Matsya Purāṇa etc. mention this aspect of the Goddess. The Purāṇas mentioned one-hundred and eight names (108) of the śakti Goddesses. The ancient Kamarupa or modern Assam is referred as a land of śaktism in many earlier texts. The Devi-Purāṇa mentioned ‘khaḍga-khētaka dharīni’ Kāmākhyādevi in Kishkindhya parvat. The Kālikā Purāṇa mentioned six sacred places associated with śakti Goddess where sacred parts of Devi had fallen, namely – Devikut, Uddiyān, Kamparvat, Jalamidhar, Purna parvat and Kamrupa. In Devikut, she was called Mahabhaga; in Uddiyān, she was called Kattyayani; in Kamarupa she was called Kamkhya and in Purnagiri known as Purneswari and in east of Kamarupa the deity was known as Dikkarvasini. It referred to Kamarupa and Kāmākhyā temple. In Nilachal Hill there are ten different pithas known as Śakti-pithas in which ten incarnations of Sati are worshiped. These ten forms are known as Dasamahavidya – Kali, Tārā, Sodasi, Bhairavi, Bhuvanesvari, Chinnamasta, Dhumāvati, Bagala, Matangi and Kamala. All these Śakti –pithas represent non-anthropomorphic cult and relate to the worship of deities of Grahas. The oral history of Dasamahavidya is mentioned in the Kālikā Purāṇa and the Chandi Purāṇa. In this aspect we will discuss the different forms of Śakti Goddess as found in this region. In Kamrup District, the figure of the Goddess in destruction of evil is found more than other. The Devaimahaatmya chapter of the Markendya Purāṇa narrates various forms of such as the Mahishamardini, the Matrikas, Camunda and others. The Devi - Mahatmya mentions three characters – (i) the Goddess kills the Madhu and Kaitabha, (ii) the

Goddess kills the Mahishasura and (iii) the third Goddess is shown with Sumbha and Nisumbha along with their generals - Dhumranetra (dhumralochana), Chanda, Munda and Raktabija. Of these the figure of Goddess with Mahishasura is found more in numbers than others. Even now, in Eastern India including Assam worshiped Goddess with Mahishasura known as Mahishamardini Durga. In this region the images of Mahishamardini are of three types - Katyayani, Ugrachanda and Chandanayika. The Śīlparatna describes that the Mahishamardini must have ten hands and had three eyes; wears jatāmukuta with Chandra-kala (moon) on it. The deity is in ālidha posture and carries trisula, khaḍga, Saktiayudha, chakra and a dhamus in right hand pāśa, ankuśa, khētaka paraśu and a bell in her left hands. Below at her feet there is a buffalo with its head cut off from which half of the human form of asura emerges whom is bounded by the Devi by the Nagapāśa. The asura carries khaḍga and khētaka. The Devi placed her feet leg on her vāhana lion and right leg on the buffalo body of the asura. The Agni Purāṇa (ch.40, v.1-12) narrates the iconography of Chandi and Durga.

KATYAYANI - The Matsya Purāṇa (ch.259, 55-6.) narrates the Katyayani form of Mahishamardini Durga. According to this text the deity is ten-handed and in ālidha posture with her right leg placed on the lion while her left leg slightly bent, placed on the buffalo. The deity represents all the features of Brahmā, Vishnu and Siva; and carries trisula, khaḍga, bana, chakra, śakti or saktiayudha in her right hand and khētaka, pāśa, ankuśa, ghanta and paraśu in her left hand. The Goddess wears jatabhara in which the crescent moon is tucked up. Below, from the headless body of the buffalo Mahishasura emerges his human form with a sword and shield. The Goddess attacks the asura in his chest by her trisula.

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is found at Siddheswari temple in Sualkuchi. Of them one is fixed on the maO □ apa at the entrance of the temple. The ten handed deity represents similar iconographic manifestation as mentioned above, though not distinct. (Plate-238). The figure measures 170 x102 cms. Another similar figure is found within the compound in a modern temple complex at the back of the Siddheswar temple. The deity is ten-handed (dasabhuja) with kiritinukha and vidyādharā on the top; and measures 117x 75cms. (Plate-239) There is a rock-cut image of the deity at Sukresvara Temple on the rock facing the river Brahmaputra on the South bank of the river. The figure is crudely carved and attributes in hand are indistinct. The ten handed deity holds trident in second right hand piercing the body of the demon mahishasura. The lower right hand holds vajra and upper most left hand holds the hair of the demon and second left hand carries dhanus. The deity is carved with four other members of pancadevata.253 (Plate-240). At Ambari archaeological site, during the course of excavation about sixty-eight numbers of ten handed images of Katyayani form of Mahishamardini were found. All of them are of similar size and maximum size is 29 x 13 x55cm. All the figures are badly corroded and difficult to identify the ayudhas in hands. The Goddess is in ālidha posture with her right leg on vāhana, lion and the left leg on the buffalo- Mahisha and carries trisula in one of her right hands which pierces the chest of the Asura, while rest of the ayudhas are similar with the above mentioned description, though some of the ayudhas are not distinct.(Plate-241).254 There is another rock-cut figure of daśabhuja (ten handed) Katyayani aspect of Mahishamardini at Basistha Asrwam. The figure is carved on on the rock on the slope of the hill near the water-stream. The deity is in ālidha posture with left leg bent on knees. The ayudhas in the hands of the deities cannot be identified due to defaced and deplorable condition of the sculptures. The figure measures 80 x60 cms.255 This apart there found two Bronze images of Mahishamardini at Hahara in Kamrup. Both the figures are ten-handed and in ālidha posture. Though in mutilated state, both of them are in usual ayudhas, except that one of them is flanked by catturbhuja Ganesa on musika in her right and Kartikeya on his

255 kouli, Deepi rekha, A note on Pre-Ahom stone sculptures of Vasistha temple, Guwahati. in Kala, VOL.XVD.2011-2012.
vāhana, mayura in her left. The Goddess wears kirāta- mukuta with crescent moon on it. The figure measures 8 x5 cm and the other one measures 6x4 cm.(Plate-242, 243).256 Another figure of this aspect of Mahishamardini is found at the eastern slope of the Nilachal hill near ancient stair-ways and found in defaced condition. The figure measures 40x32 cm.

UGRACHANDA - Durga is worshipped in the nine forms of Durga called Nava-Durga, with one of them in the centre and eight others in eight directions. These eight figures are seated on lotus pedestal. The central figure is eighteen-handed while the other eight figures are sixteen-handed. The names of these nine Goddesses are Rudrachanda, Pra-chanda, Chandogra, Chanda-nayika, Chanda, Chandavati, Chandarupa, Atichandika and Ugra- chandika.257 Of these the centre figure is Ugrachanda with eighteen hands. All the them are shown as killing Mahisasura in the same manner. The Goddess Ugrachanda has a decapitated head, khētaka, ghanta(bell), adarsa (mirror), tarjani, bow, dhvaja (standard), damaru and pāśa in left hands and mudgara (mallet), śula, (triśula), vajra, khadga, ankuśa, salaka (stake or small stick), margana (arrow) and chakra in the right hands. Such iconographic representation of Ugrachanda is found at Uzan Bazar. The figure is eighteen-handed but in deplorable condition to identify iconographic details. The image measures 151x104 cm. The figure is in ālidha posture and holds the asura by his hair with her one of the left hands and with her one of the right hands pierces the chest of the demon by the Śula who came out from the decapitated body of the buffalo. This apart only the khaḍga in upper most right hand, a bana in one of the right hands; and a dhanus and khētaka in corresponding left hand can be identified. This eighteen-handed sculpture represents features of Goddess Ugrachandi figure and a rare image found in this region. (Plate-244).258

CHANDANAYIKA - Chandanayika, as mentioned earlier, is one of the sixteen-handed forms of Nava-Durga. At Ambari Archaeological Site, an image of Mahisha

mardini has been unearthed during excavation. The deity is sixteen handed and on a pedestal bearing an epithet ‘Chandanayika’ inscribed in script circa 11th C.E. The deity is in ṛidha posture with one leg placed on her vāhana, lion and the other on the decapitated buffalo. The figure wears kirāta mukuta, hara, patra-kundala, keyura and katisutra etc. The Goddess holds tanka, kha.align, śakti, mudgara, vajra, chakra, ankuṣa and sula in her right hands; and khētaka, dhanus, dhvaja, tarjani-mudrā, ghanta, darpana, pāsa in her left hands while the last one holds the hair of the asura. The deity with one of her right hands pierces the asura by the sula. The stella has kirttimukha with vidyadharā in either side on the top. (Plate-245) According to the Kālikā Purāṇa (K.P.60/58 ff.), the figure represents Bhadrakali form of Durga. Bhadrakali carries khētaka, charmā, chapa, pāsa, ankusha, ghanta, paraśu and musala in her left hands. In her right hands carries sula, kha.align, śankha, chakra, bana, śakti, vajra and daUa. The deity is in ṛidha posture with right leg on her vāhana lion and left leg on the decapitated buffalo from which the asura came out in his asura form. The devi pierce chest of the demon with her sula. The Agni Purāṇa (21/7-12) described the figure as Chandanayika. The text narrates that the Goddess is sixteen handed and holds all the sixteen āyudhas except damaru and tarjani mudrā. The analysis shows that the image does not conform the āyudhas of Chandanayika of the Agni Purāṇa or Bhadra kali of Kālikā Purāṇa. This represents unique form of Chandanayika.

OTHER FORMS OF MAHISHAMARDINI - Another figure of a Mahishamardini is found at udalbakra in Kahilipara, which is now preserved at A.S.M. There found a bronze medallian with depiction of a bust of human figure, sprang out from the neck of an unfurned buffalo head with horns. The head of the bust wears mukuta like cap on top and kundala. The face of the deity is flat and round measuring 50-5cms.dia. The


deity has three eyes and thick lips. The association of buffalo identified the figure as a Mahishamardini Goddess. (Plate-246).261

**Parvati** - The iconographic feature of the Goddess Parvati represents that the Goddess has four arms and carries akshāmāla, kamandala, an image of Siva and an image of Ganeśa in her hands. Her abode is in between agni-kundas.262 There found a bronze image of Parvati at Hahara in Kamrup District datable to 10th century A.D. The image is now at A.S.M. The deity is two handed and seated in lalitāsana on a lotus pedestal. The Goddess is adorned with kirāta-mukuta, hara, kundala, girdle and keyura. The deity has a Prabhāwali behind her head, The Goddess has a head of Siva on her mukuta and Ganeśa on her left lap. Both of her hands is in abhaya mudrā, with a object in her right hand, which is indistinct.(Plate-247)

**MARIKAS**

There are legends associated with the origin of the Matrikas. The Matrikas are the Śaktis created by the Siva and other Devas to fight the demon, Andhakasura.263 The Uttārā Charita of Devimahatmya in the Markendhya Purāṇa mentions that the śaktis of various Gods along with Brahmā created from the head of their respective Gods to help the Devi to fight the asura, Sumbha and Nisumbha. Each of these Śaktis are female counter parts of a particular God and carries the same attributes, ornaments and ride the same Vāhana of their respective Gods. They are Brahmāni (śakti of Brahmā), Mahesvari (śakti of Siva), Kaumāri (śakti of Kumāra or Kartikeya), Vaishnavi (śakti of Vishnu), Varahi (śakti of Varaha), Narasimhi (śakti of Narasimha) and Aindri or Indrani (śakti of Indra).264 The number of the Matrikas vary in different texts. The Varaha-Purāṇa mentions that there are eight śakti Goddesses. They are Yogesvari represents kama or desire; Mahesvari, krodha or anger; Vaishnavi, lobha or covetousness; Brahmāni, mada or pride; Kaumāri, moha or illusion; Indrani, matsarya or fault-finding; Yami or Chamunda, paisunya i.e. tell-bearing; and Varahi, asuya or

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envy. Suprabhedagama narrates seven Matrikas created by Brahmā for killing Nirrita. Their iconographic details are narrated in the Agamas. They are Brahmāni, Mahesvari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Indrani, Chamunda and Kaumārī. All the Matrikas are seated on Padmāsana with two of their hands in abhaya and varada mudrā, while other two hands held attributes according to their male counter-parts. (i) According to Amsumādbhedagama, the Brahmāni has four faces and carries the sula in right hand and akshāmāla in left hand; other two hands in abhaya and varada mudrā. The deity is seated on lotus pedestal with Hamsa as her vāhana, under a palasha tree. The Vishnudharmottārā states that if six-handed holds sutra, śrūva and varada mudrā in right hands; abhaya, pustaka and kamandalu in left hands. (ii) Vaishnavi carries chakra, śankha, abhaya and varada mudrā. She is adorned with kirāta mukuta and other ornaments as worn by Vishnu; had Garuda as her Vāhana. The Vishnudhamottārā mentions that the deity has six hands—gada, padma, and abhaya mudrā in right; Śankha, chakra and varada mudrā in left hands. The Goddess wears vanamālā like her associated God Vishnu. (iii) The Goddess Indrani has three eyes and four arms—carries the vajra and the śakti along with abhaya and varada mudrā. Her Vāhana is elephant and seated under a kalpaka tree. The Vishnudharmottārā, the deity has six arms—carries sutra, Vajra, kalasha, pot, varada and abhaya mudrā. The Devi Purana states that the Goddess carries the ankusha and vajra in her hands. The Puurna-karanagama mentions that the deity has two eyes and holds lotus in one of her hands. (iv) The Chamunda has four arms and three eyes with hair upwards. The Goddess wears humān skull as yajnopavītā and seated in padmāsana. She holds kopala, sula and varada mudrā. She wears a tiger skin and seated under a fig tree. According to the Vishnudharmottārā, the Goddess is seated on the dead body of human being and has terrible face with sunken eyes and open mouth with powerful tusks. The deity has empty and thin belly with ten arms. The deity carries musala, kavacha, bana, ankusha, khaṅga, khētaka, pāśa, dhanus, dāru, and parasu in her hands. The Goddess has owl as her vāhana and an eagle as her emblem of her banner. (v) The Goddess Mahesvari has four hands carrying sula, akshāmāla and; in abhaya and varada mudrā. Her Vāhana is the bull. The Vishnudharmottārā states that the deity has five faces and wears jatamukuta with crescent moon. She has six arms carrying sula, sutra, damaru and ghanta with abhaya and varada mudrā. (vi) The
Goddess KaUmāri has four hands having śakti and kukkuta in her hands along with usual abhaya and varada mudrā. The deity has peacock as her vāhana. The Vishnudharmottārā mentions that the deity has six faces and twelve arms, carrying the śakti, dhvaja, daśa, dhanus, bana, ghanta, padma, patra and paraśu with remaining two hands in abhaya and varada mudrā. (vii) The Goddess Varahi has faces of a boar and adorned with ornaments. The deity holds the hala and the śakti in her hands alongwith abhaya and varada mudrā in other two hands. The figure seated under a kalpaka tree with her Vāhana elephant. The Vishnudharmottārā mentions that the deity has big belly with six arms carrying the daśa, khaṭa, khētaka and pāśa with abhaya and varada mudrā. The Purva-karanagama the deity carries sargma–dhanus, the hala, and the musala as weapons. The Sapt-Matrikās are flanked by Ganesha and Virabhadra on either side. The Virabhadra has four arms carrying the śula and in abhaya mudrā in right hands; holds the gada and in varada mudrā in left hands. The deity seated under a vata-vriksha (banyan tree). The deity wears jatamukuta and bull as her emblem. The Ganeśa is found as seated or standing posture on a padma-pitha.265 All the members of Matrikās are not found as a group in this region. Some of them are sculptured as Goddess in this region. In this regard mention may be made of figure of Camunda in various places of this region.

CHAMUNDA - The Devī Purāṇam (v.97, ch.83) mentioned that the Goddess Chamunda holds kopāla and khatavga in her hand.266 As per iconographic norms Goddess Camunda has four hands and three eyes with hair bristles upwards. The deity holds kopala, śula in her hands, while the other two hands abhaya and varada mudrā. The Goddess wears a garland of skull as yajnopavītā. The Vishnudharmottārā states that the deity seated in padmāśana on a corpse of humān body and she has a terrific face with powerful tusks. The deity has sunken eyes and empty belly. The deity is ten handed and carries musala, kavacha, bana, ankuśa, khaṭga, khētaka, pāśa, dhanus, daśa and paraśu.267 Of these we found two figures of Camunda at the complex of the Kāmākhya Temple in Nilachal Hill. Both the figures are seated in padmāśana. Of

266 Tarkaratna, Panchanan, Devī Purāṇam, ch.83, v.97, p.294, 1334 sal, Bangabasi Karyalay, Kolikata.
these one is seated in *ardhaparyanka* posture on a double petalled lotus pedestal. One of them wears *jatāmukuta* with three human skulls and two serpents on it. The figure wears *naramandala* and *sarpa* as ornaments and measures 90 x 56 cms. The deity is four handed and holds *kartri* in right upper hand, *kapāla* in lower right hand, *naramunda* in upper left hand and *trisula* in lower left hand. The figure has *Prabhāvāli* with beaded and flame borders. (Plate-17) The other figure is seated on a prostrate corpse below on the pedestal. The figure has sunken belly with terrible face and *jatāmukuta*, *naramundala* and *śarpa* as ornaments. The deity is four handed and carries similar *āyudhas* though lower left hand is in mutilated condition. The stella hans *kirttimukha* with *vidyādharā* on either side on the top. It measures 91 x 57 cms. (Plate-28) Another figure of Chamunda is found at Merghar of Chaygaon in Kamrup District. The figure is found within the modern temple complex. The deity is in *ālidha* posture on a lotus pedestal with a prostrate corpse below on the lotus pedestal. The Goddess is four handed and carries similar *āyudhas*. The figure measures 90 x 48 cms. The deity wears *mukuta* with hair flare up and adorned with *hara*, *kundala*, *kankana* and *girdle*. The Goddess wears *naramundala* as garland and flanked by attendant in *tribhāṅga* posture on either side—one holding *camara* in left and other in *anjali mudrā* in right. The figure had *kirttimukha* and *vidyādharā* on either side (Plate-46). Another image of Chamunda is found on the outer side of the *garbhagriha* of the Hayagriva Madhava temple at Hajo. The Goddess is four-handed and in *ālidha* posture on an prostrate corpse. The deity is adorned with *jatāmukuta*, *hara*, *kundala* and *naramunda* as garland. She holds *khaṭa*, *khetaka* and *musala*; while she holds the hair of the asura with her fourth hand in left. The deity has a horrible face. From the *āyudhas* in hand the figure may be identified as a Camunda. (Plate-248).

**YAMI** - There is a figure of sakti Goddess found at Udalbakra in Narakasur Hill of Kahlilipara. The figure is depicted on a bronze plaque and is in *samapadaSthānaka* posture on her *vāhana* bull. The deity is adorned with *hara*, *kundala*, *girdle* and *kirāta mukuta*. The four-handed deity carries *trident* in upper left hand, *chakra* in
upper right hand, pāśa in lower right hand left hand and gada (mace) in lower left hand. The deity has been identified as a Yami by the scholars. (Plate-249).268

OTHER ŚAKTI GODDESSES

CHANDIKA - There is a figure of Chandika at Chandika temple opposite merghar archaeological site in Chaygaon. The figure deity is ten handed and mounted on a buffalo. But the rest of the iconographic details of the Goddess cannot be made as the figure covered with cloth as a local belief.

MANASĀ - Manasā is a folk Goddess which is adopted within its fold of the Brahmānical religion in this region in later period. The concept of worship of the Goddess is evolved out of the early practice of snake worship in the region. The worship of snake to propitiate them led to the emergence of the concept of Goddess in iconic form, known as Manasā or Vishahari i.e. reliever of poison. The Goddess is also known as Padma in parts of Bengal. It has been found that the worship of Manasā is associated with tantricism in Eastern India, which originated in later period. As regard iconic description of Goddess Manasā, we donot find any reference in Puranic and Canonical texts. The deity is represented as surrounded by snakes or with snake-canopy over her head. Sometimes the Goddess is shown as holding snake in her hands or a child in her lap. The deity is flanked by Jaratkaru, her husband and Astika, her son. As per legends, she is the daughter of Siva, sister of Vasuka, wife of Jaratkaru muni and mother of Astika.269 The Buddhist Tantricism preached worship of serpent Goddess known as Janguli, Which was a ancient practice in Mahayana Buddhism. The Buddhist Goddess, Janguli came to be known as Manasā under Hindu influence.270 There are two images of Goddess Manasā among the findings of Narakash hill in Kahilipara. Of them one is carved in stone and other in Bronze. They are now at A.S.M. Both of them are two-handed and in lalitāsana posture on a lotus pedestal. Both

of them have snakes canopy over their head. The Bronze image measures 8x7 cm. and the deity holds a snake that is coming out of the jar placed in front. The right hand of the deity rests on knees in varada mudrā. Both the figures are flanked by two attendants on either side –jaratkaru in right and Astika in left. (Plate- 250).

TRIPURA- BHAIKAVI - As per iconographic norms, the Goddess Tripura Bhairavi has three eyes and ratna-mukuta with crescent moon on it. The head of the Goddess is surrounded with garland of skulls. The catturbhuja deity carries rosary and pustaka, while his other two hands are in abhaya and varada mudrā. Such iconographic features are found at Narakasur hill, where a hoard of bronze images are found. Mention may be made of two metal images found there. Of them one of the figures is seated in padmāsana on a corpse. The Goddess has three eyes and crescent moon on her tiara. The deity wears a garland of skull. The deity carries rosary, pustaka and in abhaya and varada mudrā. The deity is surrounded by four female deity on four corners seated in padmāsana and in anjali mudrā. The other bronze image also represents similar iconographic features except that the catturbhuja figure has two of her hands in abhaya mudrā.

MISCELANEOUS GODDESSES - This apart, there found a mutilated figure of female śakti Goddess at the compound of the Siddheswar temple in Nilachal hill. The figure is in alidha posture and datable to 10th century A.D. The deity is adorned with mukuta, puspa-kundala, hara, keyura, girdle; and yajnopavitā. The Goddess wears uttariya that flows on either side. The stella of the image has a floral motif behind the deity. The catturbhuja deity holds dhanus in her upper left hand and bana in her right hand, while rest of the āyuḍhas are indistinct. (Plate-251) As per iconographic norms Mangala holds śula, akshāmāla, dhamus, mirror, bana, khētaka, khaṅga and chandra. Bhadrakali aslo carries akshāmāla, trīsula, khaṅga, chandra, bana, dhamus, sankha,

padma, śruk, śruva, kama, a, da, śakti, agni, krishnajina in her hands. Thus the figure may be identified either as Bhadrakali or Mangala.

Further, there found three sculptures at Madan-Kamdev Archaeological site which require special mention. Of them one is preserved in the site museum and the other two are fixed in the adhishthana of the Umā-Maheswar temple at the site. The figure of the Goddess preserved at the museum appears to be in rajalilāsana on a corpse, though mutilated. The deity had three faces, facing three directions. The face in the centre is female faced, the face on the right had Výala or lion faced, while left one had Varaha face. The deity is adorned with long kirāta-mukuta, hara, kundala, keyura, bounce of bala and girdle. The Goddess also wears yajnopavitā and measures 106x60x40 cm. (Plate-41). The deity carries gada in her right hand and pāśa in her left hand. The pedestal of the image had figures of birds, maybe swan in the right, vulture in the middle and an animal, bull on the left. The figure is found in the adhishthana had three faces of a female deity. The deity is seated on a corpse like the earlier one, placed on the pedestal. The figure is adorned with kirāta-mukuta, hara, girdle etc. but deviod of yajnopavitā. The deity carries pustaka in her left hand, while rest of the āyudhas are in mutilated conditions. The pedestal of the image had figure of an animal, may be bull on it. (Plate-252) As regard the third image, we found only the is lower part of the pedestal and beyond recognition. Some earlier scholars regarded the figures as Baikuntha-vaishavi or Brahmāni, but the figure does not conform to the iconographic norms the Goddess Baikuntha-Vaishnavi or Brahmāni as mentioned in the Agamas and the Purānas. As mentioned in the Agamas, the Goddess Brahmāni has four faces and holds śula and akshāmāla in two of her hands while other two hands in abhaya and varada mudrā unde palasa tree, while the Vishnudharmottārā refered Brahmāni as six handed carrying kamandalu, pustaka, akshāmāla, sutra, śruva and varada and abhaya mudrā. The deity has goose or hamsa as her vāhana. While Vaishnavi has śankha, chakra, gada and padma if four handed and abhaya and varada mudrā if six handed with garuda as her vāhana. She wears vanamālā. The figure of the deity with gada and pāśa as āyudhas and having faces of Výala, Varaha and female goddess represents Vaishnavi and Brahmāni, while the corpse represents Śakti.

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Goddess, while the figure of the Goddess with pustaka represents Brahmani. Thus all the three figures do not exhibit these iconographic norms of a single cult. Hence it appears that the Saivite temple of Madan Kamdev has been influenced by tantricism and the figures of Pārśadevatas with corpse represents the Brahmā, Vishnu and Siva in one form as Biswarupini Mahamaya, as protector of the world. Such iconographic features of Goddesses are not found anywhere in India.

GANGA AND YAMUNA: RIVER GODDESSES

Like the rest of India, river occupies a very important place in the life of the people of this region. From the earliest times river Goddess Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati were worshiped as legendary deities. In Gupta period it took iconic form and placed at the entrance of the door jamb of the temple. As per iconographic representation, mentioned in the Agni Purāna, the Goddess Ganga has makara as her vāhana (cf. makaropari Jahnavi) and kurma as the vāhana of Yamuna (kurmago Yamuna). According to this texts Ganga is white and Yamuna is blue. According to this texts, Ganga holds water pot and lotus in her hands while Yamuna holds water pot in her hand only. Here we found only two figures of Ganga and Yamuna at Ambari Archaeological Site which is now at A.S.M. Of them the figure of Ganga is in tribhāga posture on her vāhana, makara. The figure measures 121 x 64 cm. The deity holds a water pot in her right hand and lotus stalk in her left hand. There is a cobra- hood coiled around her left arm and her coiffure has large buns. The goddess is adorned with hara puspa – kundala girdle etc. She wears a tiara, over which there is three hooded snake canopy. (Plate-253) The other figure is river Goddess Yamuna in tribhāga posture on her vāhana kurma or tortoise. The deity carries a water pot in her right hand and the left hand is in abhaya mudrā. The Goddess has a single snake canopy over her head. Like the earlier ones the figure wears hara, kundala and girdle etc. The figure measures 130 x 60 cm. (Plate-254).

BUDDHA

In Ancient Kamrupa, Buddhism was not a popular religion as found in earlier Buddhist and Puranic texts. N.K. Bhattasali mentioned that there was no trace of Buddhism till the coming of Hiuen-tsang and there was a strong-hold of Brahmanical religion in the region. R.C.Majumdar also express the same views. Silabhadra persuaded Hiuen-tsang to accept invitation of Bhaskarvarman as the law of Buddhism was not widely accepted in the region. It indicates Buddhism though not widely popular but was prevalent in the region in 7th C.E. Kāmarupa was an important centre or pitha of Vajrayana Buddhism or Tantric-Buddhism in later period in Eastern India which was patronized by the Pala rulers. But Tārānath’s ‘History of Buddhism in India’, referred to the prevalence of Buddhism in Kamarupa as early as third century B.C. The detail iconography of the figures of Buddha found at Kamrup District has already been discussed in ten incarnations of Vishnu. This indicates influence of Buddhism in the region along with Brahmanism.

AVALOKITESVARA - ‘Bodhi’ means knowledge (enlightenment) and ‘Sattva’ is essence. The Bodhisattvas originated from the five Buddhas of meditation or Dhyāni-Buddhas. They are Samantabhadra, Vajrapani, Ratnapani, Padmapani (avalokitesvara) and Visvapani, Vairocana, Aksobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha and Amogasiddhi along with their consort – the sakti. Of them Avalokitesvara and Manjusri are most popular. Of these Avalokitesvara presides over the Kalpa. A Buddhist legend referred to 333 incarnations of Avalokitesvara. Numerous varieties of Dhyāni-Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (Padmapani) are described in the Sadhanamala. It referred that the iconographic traits of Padmapani Avalokitesvara represents the iconography of Vishnu while some aspects of the other forms of the deity represent features of Saivite form like wearing of jatāmukuta and tiger skin. There are two

bronze images of Avaloketesvara found at hoards of Narakasur Hill at Udalbakra. Both the images are now preserved at A.S.M. Of them one is in *dvibhāṅga* posture on a lotus pedestal. The figure is two handed and carries *utpala* in his left hand, though the flower is missing only the stalk of the flower is found while the right hand is in *varada mudrā*. The deity wears *ushnisa* and other usual ornaments. There is a *Prabhāvalī* behind the head, of which only the lower portion is visible on the stella. The figure wears a *kativāstra* covering up to the knee. (ASM.3015)(Plate-21)282 The other image is seated in *rajalilāsana* on *simhāsana*. (ASM.3004) The deity was four handed and wears *kərətəmukuta*, *kundala*, *hara* and *keyura* etc. His lower right hand was in *varada mudrā* and upper right hand carries *padma* and upper left hand holds *pustaka*, while his lower left hand holds lotus. The deity is flanked by two female attendants on either side. The attendant on the right holds a *padma*, the stalk of which touches the *mukuta* of the main deity. The *āyudhas* in the hands of the attendant on the left were indistinct. There were *Prabhāvalī* behind each of the figures. The *Prabhāvalī* of the central figure had a stylised human figure on the top, while other two had a pointed top. (Plate-255).283

**ICONS OF FEMALE BUDDHIST DEITIES**

**TĀRĀ** - As per iconographic norms Goddess Tārā has number of forms with many hands. Of them two important are-white Tārā and Green Tārā. The white Tārā holds full blown *padma* and symbolize day, while green Tārā carries *utpala* with petal closed and symbolize night. The white Tārā is regarded as the consort of Avaloketeswara. If Tārā is represented as śakti, she seated in *paraya-kāśana* with right hand in *varada mudrā* and left hand holds *visva-vajra* over a *padma*.284 In Kamrup District, there found two metal images of the Goddess Tārā of Buddhist pantheon. The images are found at Narakasur Hill at Udalbakra. Of them one is in *dvibhanga* posture and measures 17x4 cm. Here we find that the standing figure though mutilated has two hands; one in *varada mudrā* and the other in *abhaya mudrā*. (Plate-256) The other

figure of the deity is seated in lalitāsana posture on a lotus pedestal figure and adorned with kirāta-mukuta, hara, girdles etc. The figur measures 28x10cm. The deity is two handed and right hand in varada mudrā and left hand holds full blown lotus stalk which bloom on either side of the Goddess.(Plate-52)

**PRAJNAPARAMITA OR CHUNDA** - Another tantric Goddess of Buddhist pantheon is Prajnaparamita or Chunda. We found the metal image of the tantric Goddess at metal hoards of Narakasur hill, Kahilipara datable to 11th -12 th C.E. The deity is in vajraparayaoka posture on a lotus pedestal. The figure is eight handed and measures 18x105 cms. One pair of her hands are in anjali mudrā and another pair in dhyānamudrā; her another right hand in varada mudrā and another holds rosary; and her other two hands hold water pot and pustaka placed on lotus.(Plate-257). The figure wears usual ornaments and jatāmukuta. There found a chatrawali on top of the stella. This iconographic descriptions are narrated in Sadhanamāla.285

Thus it appears that religion was basic force in development of art and iconography in Kamrup from the 5th C.E. to the 18th C.E. either in aniconic or iconic forms. The iconographic aspects of various cults exhibits that the cult images were carved or moulded as per norm of the Silpāśastras and Purānas with some regional variations as found in some of the sculptures of different historical period.

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