CHAPTER 11

FORMS OF LORD SIVA

Description of Siva Images

Lord Siva is one of the popular gods to whom a very large number of incarnations are ascribed. Devotees of Lord Siva imagine their adorable divinity as the omnipotent supreme being and make different images for their widespread activities of worship. Various icons of Lord Siva bear the evidence of anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, theriomorphic and therioanthropomorphic appearance of the god. Varieties of Siva images are available all over India. Bengal has also a rich collection of different images of Siva. Anthropomorphic form of Siva has two ascriptions. Few of them manifest the benignant aspect and others are malevolent. In this connection we may draw the attention to the following remarks—"One unique feature of Indian Iconography is that each of the divinities, particularly those belonging to the Brahmanical and Buddhist pantheons, is endowed with two basic forms: the saumya (benign) and the raudra (wrathful). In the former role, the deity bestows kindness and benevolence to the devotees, and in the latter, he chastises them if there is the need."16 Various figures of Siva indicate the distinct features, which are familiar to the votaries.

The forms of the Indian gods can be classified into two categories. Those are as follows—Viradrupa (the great form) and suksmarupa (the

subtle form). The former mentions the manifestation of the divinity as representing the multi-dimensional events of the whole cosmos. The latter is identified by its unitary figuration. The *Srimadbhagavadgita* narrates the cosmic as well as to the subtle form of Lord *Krishna*. The great form of Lord *Siva* is frequently mentioned in the scriptural texts, written in Sanskrit. *Isana Siva Gurudeva Paddhati* says—'"Namaḥ śambho trinetṛyā rudrāya varadāya ca sivāya visvarūpāya svapnādhipataye namaḥ."' Chapter seven of the *Siva-gita* gives elaborate information about the great form of the Lord *Siva*.

A chart, comprising the detailed classification of Saivite images is submitted below.

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Each of the aforesaid categories is again sub-divided according to different features of the image.

The anthropomorphic representation of Lord *Siva* has different types of symbols. The chief symbols of *Siva* image are as follows—the bull, tiger skin, sacred thread of sacrificial rites, crescent, matted locks of hair, trident, shield, spear, staff and citron. The bull symbolizes *dharma*. The tiger skin represents *trishna* (desire). Sacred thread is the emblem, which signifies the subjugation of evil. Crescent means *Siva’s* godliness.

Matted locks of hair manifest absolutism. Three *sulas* (lances) of a trident say about the virtues, like *sattva*, *raja*, and *tama*. It is also familiar in Indian context that the trident indicates Siva’s triple activities of creation, protection and destruction. Staff represents the death. *Khetaka* (shield) means the protecting power of virtue, which rescues everybody in the world.

Now our discussion will proceed through the benignant forms of anthropomorphic Siva, can be explained on the basis of mythical episode and these are *akhyana–nirvara* (episode oriented) and *akhyana-virahita* (non episode oriented). Again the icons are visualized either in sitting or in standing posture. Description of each type of benignant form is furnished below.

**Chandrasekhara Murti**

Chandrasekhara figure indicates an idol of Siva, which possesses *chandra* (moon) on his head. The Tantric text *Saradatilaka Tantra* produces the iconographic features of the auspicious Siva, which are almost similar to the iconic representations of Chandrasekhara. The eighteenth *patala* (chapter) of this text says—“One should eternally meditate Maheswara, who is of white colour just like the mountain of silver. The god bears moon on his head. The icon of the divinity holds an axe and back by his upper right and left hands respectively, while the *varada mudra* and *abhaya mudra* by the lower two hands. The five faced propitious god sits on a white lotus and wears tiger’s skin. Each face of the god has three eyes.”

**Umasahita Murti**

When Chandrasekhara Siva has his consort *Uma* by his side, then the image is called *Umasahita Murti* (Fig.2). In most of this

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*Sastri, Panchanan, Saradatilak Tantra, 1982, p. 485.*
manifestation, the icons of Siva and Uma are placed on the same pedestal. Uma-Maheswara, Soma-Skanda and Alingana Murti are the variations of the Umasahita type of image.

In the figure of Umasahita representation, the female divinity is to the left of the male god. Two armed goddess bears a lotus in her right hand and displays simhakarna pose in her left. The body complexion of Uma is glass green colour. Nimbus is depicted by covering the heads of the Lord Siva and his consort.

The icon of Lord Siva has four arms and three eyes. The male god is of very graceful appearance.

**Vrisabahana and Vrisaruda Murti**

Vrisa (bull) is not only the vehicle of Siva, it also treated as the indifferent soul with the Lord. When Maheswara and Uma are manifested with the standing bull, then it is called 'Vrisabahana' figure. Vrisabahana figure shows a standing bull as the conveyance of Siva. Generally it stands behind the couple image of Uma-Maheswara. While in Vrisaruda form, the god is situated on his vehicle with his consort.

Siva is appeared generally in his four handed or even two handed forms. The god stands on the right side of the Uma. Here, Siva is represented like his 'Chandrashekhara' figure.

**Nritta Murtis of the Lord Siva**

Siva is the great performer of the various types of dancing. The concept of Nataraja Siva mainly comes from the idea of destructivity of Rudra and his annotation work related to dancing. Iconographical analysis says that the image of Nataraja is benignant appearance of the Lord. It is noteworthy that the wall of gopuram of the temple of Chidambaram displays hundred and eight kinds of dances. Various types of bronze images of Nataraja have been found in South India.
Nataraja images of Bengal are noticeable for their variations and excellences. Their peculiarities are discussed under the heading 'Local Variation'.

The influence of Nataraja on the images of other gods is remarkable. The Buddhist deity Heruka and the Hindu divinity dancing Ganesha are made by the influence of Lord Nataraja.18

Anugraha Murtis of the God Siva

Anugraha Murtis are the important group of episode-oriented figure of Mahadeva. The term anugraha means grace. In those forms, Siva demonstrates gracious attitude to his admirers both heavenly and earthly.

Mainly Siva has six forms in his graceful appearance. Those are as follows—Vishnavanugraha, Chandesanugraha, Kiratarjuna, Ravananugraha, Vighnesvaranugraha, and Nandisanugraha.

Vishnavanugraha

Specifically Lord Siva has three eyes, four hands and the head with the crown shaped matted locks of hair. On the right and left sides of the image, Parvati and Brahma are depicted. Vishnu, depicted in anjali-hasta attitude acknowledges his allegiance to the Lord Mahesha with his offerings.

Chandesanugraha

Vicharsarman, a devotee of Siva got favour from his Lord. Once he was worshipping Siva, Yajnadatta the father of Vicharsarman trampled on the sand phallus. Angrious son cut down his father's leg. Observing votary's deep devotion, Siva appeared with Parvati before him and offered boon. The image of Chandesanugraha depicts the episode of Vicharsarman. In this representation, it is seen that Siva seated with his

consort on a seat. Vicharsarman (Chandesa) is seated below the divine couple.

Ravanayanugraha

The Pauranic legend said that the demon King Ravana was subdued by Mahadeva. It’s iconographic description is as follows—

Showing abhaya mudra on right hand, Mahadeva embraces Parvati. War-minded Kartika and Ganesha are visualized beside the god and goddess. Just below mountain where family of Siva resides, the demon King Ravana is appeared with offensive mood. People of Eastern India are familiar with this type of icon.

Kartarjuna Murti

Vanapurva of the Mahabharata, sixty seventh chapter of Jnanasamhita in Sivapurana and famous literary work Bharabhi’s Kiratarjuniyam narrate that how did the great warrior Arjuna acquires Lord Siva’s grace for his war expedition against Kauravas.

Siva has four arms, three eyes and matted locks on the head. The god bears a sacred thread on his body. The Lord Siva carries the bow, the arrow, the axe and antelope on his four hands. Arjuna and Gauri stand on the right and the left side of the god respectively.

Nandisanugraha and Vighneswaranugraha

Nandisanugraha and Vighneswaranugraha are the important aspects of Siva’s gracious representations. No evidences of Nandisanugraha and Vighneswaranugraha are found in Bengal.

Dakshinamurtis of Siva

In Indian myth, Lord Siva is the preceptor of yoga, music and dancing. Dakshinamurti represents the teaching activities of the god on different types of sciences and arts. Dakshinamurti has four types of manifestation.
Four handed god shows preaching attitude on the frontal right hand. While the frontal left hand is bedecked by the boon giving attitude. The rosary and the serpent are hold on the back right and left hand respectively. South Indian provinces have a rich collection of this type of icon.

**Sadasiva**

Philosophical aspects of the God Siva are opened to the devotees by the two representations viz, Sadasiva (Fig.5) and Mahasadasiva. Saivite philosophy says that the primordial power Parama Siva comes into the contact with his Sakti. As a result panchakritya occurs methodically. In the time of panchakritya, the Parama Siva gets uniformity with it’s consort. Finally the unified divine entity is identified as the Sadasiva.

The icon of Sadasiva represents that the white coloured god stands upon the padmasana. The five faced figure is decorated with the crown of matted hair. In his ten hands, he carries sakti, sula, khatvanga, abhayamudra, and prasadamudra on his five right hands. Five left hands display the snake, rosary, small drum, blue lotus and a fruit.

**Maha-Sadasiva**

The contemplation of Maha–Sadasiva image is known to the worshippers, who can believe their idea of the god as the all pervading supreme authority.

The icon of Maha–Sadasiva possesses twenty five heads and fifty hands. The jatamukuta is the ornament of the god. Varadamudra and abhayamudra are generally shown in the image.

**Kalyanasundara or Vaivahika Image**

The Kalyanasundara icon (Fig.3) is the married representation of Siva and Uma and is appeared in two different forms. Firstly, it is
manifested as an elaborate form of the episode related to Siva’s wedding. Secondly, the spouse is visible only in the sculpture. Lord Siva is fashioned in his standing figure. The front right hand ought to be stretched to touch the right hand of his consort. While boon giving attitude is shown in front left hand. The figure carries an axe and antelope in his back right and left hands respectively. Parvati is appeared on the left side of the god. Lord Brahma, the priest of the marriage is delineated in front of the god.

Eastern India has a few numbers of devotees who praise the figure of Kalyanasundara. Bengal images of Kalyanasundara are classified into two groups on the basis of the number of the Siva’s hands. Siva is represented either in his four handed or two handed.19

**Nilkantha Siva**

Nilkantha icon of the Lord Siva is a peaceful figurization where Siva’sazzling of fatal poison is represented. The legend shows that Siva took a pivotal role for saving universe in time of the charming of ocean (samudramanthan).

South Indian specimens are made generally following the description of Karanagama. While the Bengal representations are dependants on the Saradatilakatantra. Nineteenth pataka of the aforesaid text tells us—

\[ Vālmīkijyatejasam dhṛṣṭajātyujendukhandajjvalam \]
\[ Nāgendraih Kṛtābhusanairjapabatisīkām Kapālāḥ Karośaḥ \]
\[ Khaṭvāṅgam dudhātāṃ trinetravelasat pancehānamāṃ suṇḍaram \]
\[ Byāghratvakapardhānāmabbājanilayam śrīśilakantham bhaje \]

Nilkantha's splendour is similar with the myriads of rising suns. The god has jatamukuta, which is radiant in moon light. The four hands of the figure hold rosary, trident, kapala and khattvanga. The five faced god is clad with tiger's skin and bedecked by snake.

Siva Lokeswara

On the basis of a few sculptural specimens, found in different places of Bengal, it is determined that those are the witnesses of the cultural interchange between various systems and sects of different religions. Lokesha image is an example of the same. Buddhist Avalokiteswara influenced the image of Siva and the form of Siva Lokeswara is worshipped by the devotees.

The iconic features of the divinity are as follows—Two handed standing god carries rosary and water vase in his right and left hands respectively. Trident is placed on the left side in front of the image. Below the lower portion of the image, a couple of worshippers and a small bull are visible. An effigy of Dhyani Buddha is placed upon the head of the image.

As Siva subdues destructive powers and evil spirits, the god has some terrific forms in Indian icono-plastic art. The main types of his terrific representations are narrated here.

Bhairava

The Sivapurana tells that the Bhairava (Fig.10) is the aweful form of Sankara. Bhairava is the mightiest authority of the both protection and destruction. He is the creator of the bharana (nourishment) and bhisana (terrificness). The description of Bhairava image is found in the Vishnudharmottaram. The text shows the image as follows—
Bhairava should be flabby bellied, yellow-eyed and adorned with snake. He has tusks and wide nostrils. The body colour of the god is dark as cloud. Trident, bow and arrow, axe, khattvanga, noose and sword are the implements. The god is clad by the elephant's or tiger's skin.

Asita, ruru, chanda, krodha, unmatta, kapala, bhisana, and samhara, the eight principal incarnations of the god, are the group leaders of eight Bhairava families. Each family has eight members. Total number of bhairava is sixty four. Except different types of Bhairava figures, there are so many awful representations, like Aghora, Virabhadra popular to the devotees of Siva.

**Gajasura Samhara Image**

In Gajasurasamhara image normally eight handed god is depicted for slaying the demon Gajasura. By his two principal hands the Lord Siva bears a spear to kill the demon. Rest of his six hands display the symbols and implements, like drum, kharga, skin of elephant, etc.

**Image of Andhakasuravadha**

Eight handed Andhakasura murti of Siva carries a trident, by which he pierces the body of the demon Andhaku. Goddess yogini, situated on the ground holds a cup to catch the blood drops from the wounded body of asura. God Siva carries the implements same as the Gajasurasamhara icon. It is noticeable that the artists represented the image of Andhakasuratadhv in two different ways. First is the

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composite figure of the Gajasurasamhara and Andhakasurabodha icons. While the second is only manifestation of the episode related to the killing of Andhaka.

**Viksatana or Kankala Murti**

Viksatana is an episode based terrific form of Siva. The word means the form of Siva dressed like a begger. Once Siva was accused for slaying Viswakrsna, the door keeper of Lord Vishnu. For expiation of sin, the Lord was sent to Varanasi. During the atonement, Siva maintained his life by the alms, he acquired. The four handed image is depicted as a naked figure. He bears the skeleton of Viswakrsna.

**Other Malevolent Images of Siva**

Among the other forms of angrious Siva; Kalari, Tripurantaka, Kamadahana, Sarabhesha and Virabhadra are famous. Indian icono-plastic creations illustrate the stories connected with Siva’s particular activities of destructions. In the depictions of Kalari, Kamadahana and Sarabhesha, Siva punishes the other gods, like Yama, Kamadeva and Vishnu.

**Ardhanarishwara**

It is interesting that some of the sculptures, which in characteristic manner, are the rapprochement between two, three or even four competitive cults. Siva’s dual representations can be divided under binary heads. Mainly sex of the divinities are considered as the standard of judgement. Those are as follows. Forms displaying two male divinities and forms consisting one male and another female deities. Siva has five dual forms and three multiple forms, which show the god-combination of different cults. The composite Saivite figures are Ardhanaariswara, Hari-Hara, Marthanda-Bhairava, Siva-Rama, Hari-Hara – Surya – Buddha, Brahma – Vishnu – Siva – Surya and Panchayatana linga.
The image manifests the male and female principles of Siva and Parvati. We find an exposition of this type of image in the epic Raghuvamsam of Kalidasa. Visnudharmottaram gives the iconographic feature of this image as follows—The four handed image of this god has rosary and trident on its two right hands and two left hands showing the mirror and the lotus. According to the Manosalasa, the right chest of the image is flat, but the left is same as the female breast. Matted locks of hair embellish the right side of the head of the image. While the top knot of coiffure is placed on the left side.

Hari-Hara Image

The combined image of Vishnu and Siva is called Hari-Hara (Fig.6). This type of image indicates the idea of amalgamation of the supreme gods of two most famous Hindu cults. Manosalasa says that the right side of the figure represents Siva, while the left shows Narayana. In the right half of the body, matted hair with crescent, garment of elephant skin, snake-ornaments are shown. Two right hands hold a spear and varada mudra. The left half has the yellow garment, kirti mukuta and makara kundala. Two left hands of the god’s composite figure show conch and discus. Literary sources and inscriptions narrate a few names of this type of image, like Hari-Sankara, Siva-Kesava, Sankara-Narayana, Murariswara, Ardhasauriswara.22

Siva-Rama

A specimen (Fig.4), discovered from Barakar and preserved in Patna Museum is significant to draw the attention for its peculiar iconic features.23 In this representation it is seen that the god has bearded face,

22 Bhattacharya, D. C. Iconography of Composite Images, 1980, p. 11.
horrid expression and protruding fangs. Four armed deity carries Siva's implements in his principal right and left hands. Remaining right and left hands display an arrow and a bow.

**Martanda-Bhairava**

The figure of Martanda-Bhairava bears the iconographic features of Sun God and Mahadeva. The central face of the image is calm, but the side faces represent the fearful aspect. Three faced and ten armed god's figure carries the attributes, like khattanga, trident, sakti, blue lotus, drum and serpent.

**Brahma-Vishnu-Siva-Surya**

Brahmanical triad with Sun God are familiar to the worshipper of India. In the description of Saradatilaka Tantra, there is the figure of the Ballabhardha type of the sun God, which represented with the attributes, like khattanga, padma, chakra, sakti, posa, aksamala and kapala. The three headed figure holds various emblems of Sun God and also of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara. Many of the Indian temple architectures have the images as their architectural part. In this connection, mention may be made about the temple of Chidambaram.

**Hari-Hara-Surya-Buddha**

A syncretistic sculpture from Bihar, conserved in Indian Museum is mentionable as the specimen of the multiple god. In this image (Fig. 7), four handed Hari-Hara is depicted in the central position. Buddha and Surya are placed in the right and left sides of the Hari-Hara image.

**Panchayatana Linga**

Five renowned cults of the Hindu faith are the Vaisnava, Saura, Ganapatya, Saiva and Sakti. When Linga (phallus) is surrounded by the

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24 Sastri, Panchanan, Saradatilaka Tantra, Chapter XIV, Verse 66, p. 389.
four different cult gods, then it is called *Panchayatana linga* (Fig. 13). Though it is a phallus oriented form, and for its special features it should be included in composite form. The images of *Vishnu, Devi, Surya,* and *Ganesha* are engraved on the four sides of a *Sivalinga.*

**Linga with Saktis**

Some phallic representations are the combination of *Siva* and *Sakti.* When the phallus, appeared with the engraved female figures, on it's four sides it is identified as the *Linga with Saktis* (Fig. 12). Most probably Tantric exposition is liable for this type of image.

**Linga with Buddhist Deities**

In Nepal, there are some evidences of *Sivalinga,* which show on the upper part the images of *Bodhisattva.* On the top of the image a *stupa* is placed. This type of image is frequently shown in this region.

**Hanu-Bhairava**

*Hanu-Bhairava* is the synchronised illustration of *Hanumana,* the foremost devotee of *Rama* and the *Bhairava,* the terrific aspect of Lord *Maheswara.* The five faced figure has ten hands, principal face is of a monkey. Representations of this type of figure could be found in the pictorial art of Pahari school and Nepali manuscripts. But no sculptural instance of this icon is noticed as a piece of unique art.

**Phallus and Phallus Oriented Forms of Siva**

Phallus is the auspicious emblem of the Lord *Siva.* According to the *Siva Purana,* the phallus itself is equivalent to the *Mahadeva.* On the basis of iconographical assessment, there are two types of phallus viz, *Svayamvu linga* and *Manusa linga.* There is another category, namely *Vana linga.* It should be included in the class of *Svayamvu linga* for its

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similarity. Phallus is further classified in two classes, viz, Chala linga and Achala linga ascertaining the capability of movement or the stability of the same.

Phallus like natural object is called Svayambhu linga. There are many sacred places in India, where Svayamru lingas are worshipped. Some of them are as follows—Varanasi, Prayag, Kedara, Tarakeswara, Vaidyanathdhamma, etc. Svayamru lingas are generally made by the stone or any other solid material, like ice, crystal, etc.

Human made symbol of Siva is called Manusa—linga. This type of linga has three divisions—Ordinary Manusa linga, Mukhalinga and Lingodbhava murti. As Manusa-lingas may have the shape with the help of different types of material composition, consequently their identifications are noted in the name of different kinds of the ingradiants, like sailaja, darruga, ratna, etc.

Mukhalingsas have one, two, three, four, or five faces on the phallas. Mukhalingsas are denominated as Ekamukhalinga (Fig.11), Dvimukhalinga, Trimukhalinga, Chaturmukhalinga (Fig.14) and Panchamukhalinga. Dharalinga and Sahasramukhalinga are popular to the votrees of South India.

Man made linga has three structural parts, which are brahmabhaga, vishnubhaga and rudrabhaga. The lower shaft with it’s square is called brahmabhaga, the middle portion with octagonal shape is identified as vishnubhaga and the top most cylindrical part is known as rudrabhaga. In the middle of the phallus a circular object encompasses the shaft which is called gauripatta or arghyapatta.

Scriptures

Different scriptural books on iconography furnish iconography of Siva, making techniques of icons and their aesthetics.

Vedic literatures are sources, which represent religious belief, activities and rituals of ancient people. Few hymns of Vedic literature give the foundation of the Indian iconography. But we have no evidences of any icon, which fully built up on the basis of the description of Vedic text. Iconographical texts came to the lime light in the age of Purana.

Many Pauranic and Agamic texts have the descriptive features of the god and tell the fact related to the eminence of the icono-plastic art. Among the eighteen Mahapuranas, Agni, Siva, Matsya and Skanda are mentionable for Saivite iconography. Vashvudharmottaram, an Upapurana elaborately narrates the iconic variations of Mahadeva.

Except the Pauranic texts, Agamic and Tantric scriptures have also valuable material to cater information about Siva icons. Most familiar Agamic books are as follows—Karanagama, Amsumatvedagama, Supravedagama, Kamikagama, etc. Among the tantric texts, Sarvatilaka Tantra, Kulamata-Tantra, Rudrayamalam are well known for that. There are some books which have different aspects of art and science bear the information related to iconography. As for example we may denote the name of following books—Silparatna, Manosollasa, Vrihatsamhita, Rupamandanam, Rasapupasita, Isanasiva-gurudeva-paddhati and Sudhanamala. Noteworthy that those books are considered as desiderata for describing few special types of Siva image.

In the Kingdom of Bengal's ritualistic, activities chapter 259 of Matsyapurana, Sarvatilaka Tantra and Vrihatsamhita play the vital role to construct the figures of Siva. There are many images of Siva, which familiar in Bengal figured after the scriptural prescriptions of those books.
Local Variations and Their Features

Generally the pacific beauty of the Lord Siva is accepted by the people of Bengal. Despite of the aforesaid fact, the region has a good collection of malevolent sculptures, which are the probable instances of the popularity of Tantrikism (tantrachara). Saivites were able to establish and circulate their ideology through the local people besides the two powerful cults namely, Vaishnava and Sakta. Local variations of Siva’s figure, found in Bengal collection are discussed here.

The Uma–Maheswara class of image is a very common type in Bengal. This type of image has some peculiarities. According to the number of hands and the implements held, the image is classified in four groups as two handed, four handed, six handed and ten handed. Each group has also different types according to the special iconic features of the sculpture. In many cases ithyphallic representations are shown in the instances of Bengal image.

The Bengal image of Uma-Maheswara was generally made on the basis of the description of the Matsya Purana. For this reason, most of the Bengal collections of this image have two or four hands. The figure of Uma-Maheswara is denominated as Hara-Gouri, Siva-Parvati, Alingana-murti, Kalinga Maheswara, etc. in the different regions of Bengal.

A large number of Siva images represent the sole specific figure of the god. The site of Paharpur temple basement depicts the god’s figure with varada mudra and the trident in his right and left hands. The snake appears over his right shoulder. The bronze specimen from Habibpur, preserved in the Anutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University is also mentionable in this connection. A two handed terracotta figure of
Siva with trident, depicted in the left side of the god has been excavated from the site of Nandadighi Mahavihara at Jagjivanpur, Malda.27

Chandrashekha murti is one of the most popular type of image, where anthropomorphic Siva bears a crescent on his head. Bengal's renowned museums, like the Indian Museum, Kolkata, the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Bangladesh National Museum in Dhaka, Varendra Research Museum in Rajahi, Bangladesh have the evidences of Chandrashekhara image.

The Bengal specimens of Vaivahika image are classified according to the number of Siva's hand and the depiction of the image composition. In the local instances, regional speciality is found frequently. A few of those instances have seven step movements (saptapadi gamanam) related to marriage ceremony. The icon of Kalyanasundara, collected from Rampal and preserved in the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Museum, Kolkata is considered as an eloquent piece of iconic art as it has seven tiers for exhibiting the whole episode of Siva's wedding. The Bengal sculptures, displaying the marriage scenes of Siva and Parvati are not many in number, though they have the variations on the basis of iconic features.28

The regional popularity of the worship of Natesha (Nataraja) is remarkable, but the absence of satisfactory iconographic text arises complicity to determine it's own characters. In case of Bengal specimens, icons have eight and ten hands with the peculiar variety of twelve armed forms. It is noticeable that the twelve handed Nataraja holds lyre by his lower most two hands. Uppermost two hands are interlocked, manifesting the karkatahasta pose. One pair of hands holds snake. Rest three pair of the hands display trident, skull cup, pot, rosary.

drum and boon giving attitude. It is mentionable that the figure of the god is placed on the bull instead of *apasamara purusa*. On the basis of peculiarity, remark may be made that Bengal’s twelve handed *Nataraja* (Fig. 4) is influenced by the *Vinadhara murti* and the *Vrisabahana murti* of Siva.

The figures of *Ravanaviraha* and *Kiritarjuna*, two episode oriented graceful appearances of Siva, are possibly well known to the votaries of Bengal. Though we have no sculptural evidences of both the aforesaid images in Bengal, yet observing the specimens of neighboring provinces, it is logical to assume that once Bengal had also a few representations of those images, which presently lose their existence. A *Ramcharitmanasua* manuscript, possibly edited during 17th century and preserved in the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art has a pictorial depiction (Fig.28) of the *Ravanaviraha* image. A bas-relief collection of the Indian Museum, brought from Rajawana village of Bihar is identified as the *Kiritarjuna* form. In this relief, three human figures are visualized. One, situated on the left is configurated on the horse chariot and the other is manifested as a standing figure involving himself in a penance work. A celestial tree is engraved between the two. Third figure of the panel is not clearly shown. Though some identify the image is the representation of *Kiritarjuna*, but iconographers face difficulties to ascertain rightly it’s original character.

Numismatic evidences offer new idea about the royal patronage of the *Vrisaruda* (bullrider) form of the god. King Sasanka as an admirer of Siva offers his reverence displaying the unique figure of *Vrisaruda* (Fig.27) on the device of his royal coin. Here the main divinity is seated

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on the bull in sukhassana. It is noteworthy that Uma is absent in the whole representation.

Episode related to Siva's drinking of poison is manifested in Indian iconography. The episode oriented idol is known as Vishapaharana, which influenced the Buddhist Pantheon and took part to create the figure of Buddhist Nikantha. Thirty ninth sadhana of the Sadhanamala narrates the iconic features of Nikantha. Worship of Nikantha Lokesvara is considered as a part of rituals among the people of Eastern India including Nepal.

Iconic evidences show that the image of Sadasiva was very popular in Bengal. The majority of them come from North Bengal. It is rememberable that each of the copper plate of the Sena rulers of Bengal had a Sadasiva seal attached to it. Haridas Mitra proves that Garuda Purana and Uttarakamikagama are closely related to accomplish the figure of Sadasiva in Bengal. Both of aforesaid texts are more intimate for making the local images of Sadasiva. The Indian Museum, the Balurghat District Library Museum, the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Museum have a number of Sadasiva icons specified to the eleventh or twelfth century. These instances are three headed and ten-handed. Some of the specimens have eight arms also. Sometimes the figure of the god is accompanied Manomani, an attendant of the Lord.

Terrific forms of Lord Siva are not many in number in Bengal. The malevolent images of Siva do not seem to be depicting much of the mythology connected with various destructive aspects of the god. Those are the Siva's forms of Bhairava, Mahakala, Aghora, etc. Thirty five specimens are collected from the different zones of Bengal, which have the variety of features having two to eighteen hands. Implements are

almost similar to the images of manifold types of Bhairava and the body complexions are fierceful and pot-bellied. The Indian Museum, Kolkata and the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University have some good sculptural specimens of Bhairava. The Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Museum of Bishnupur has also a good collection of that specimen. Bhairava, Batuka Bhairava, Ekapada Bhairava, Mahakala, Aghora, images collected from different provenances like, Bankura, Hooghly, Mahanada, Dinajpore, etc. are preserved in those museums of Bengal.

Andhakasurabadha icon, discovered from Deul Talandia of Rajahs\(^2\) tells that episode oriented malevolent forms are not fully unknown to the adorers of Bengal. The icon of Andhakasurabadha is exhibited in the Varendra Research Society Museum. An image of Gajasurasamhara, which once upon a time consecrated at Balurghat and presently preserved in the Indian Museum, Kolkata further supports the aforesaid fact.

Amalgamated images took a vital role in case of Bengal's icono-plastic art. Aradhanariswara, Hari-Hara, Marthanda-Bhairava, Siva-Rama, Hari-Hara-Surya- Buddha are excavated from the different parts of Bengal and Bihar and carefully kept in the collection of different museums. The evidences of synchronised gods represent the fact related to communal harmony among the people of ancient Bengal.

Icons of Ardhanaarishvara apparently emphasise reconciliation between Satism and Saktism which by joining Siva and Sakti in one body. It points to the inseparable existence of the primaeval parents. The Naihati copper plate of Laksmansena begins with an invocation of Ardhanaariswara. According to poet Dhoyi, there was a temple of the God Ardhanaariswara on the bank of Bhagirathi. Four specimens of that image have been discovered from Bengal. The images of Bengal may be

divided into two groups. First group represents two handed god and second displays four handed form. Attributes are generally trident, skull cup, which visible on the right. While the left portion manifests kundala, keyura, valaya, etc.

As in other parts of India, so in Bengal, the most popular form of Siva is his linga. Villages and towns in Bengal are literally strewn with such Sthabaralinga. The majority of the aniconic form is quite similar. Ordinary Sivalinga and Mukhalinga, both types are considered as the evidence of symbol worship in Bengal. Mukhalinga specimens of Bengal are classified into following groups. Those are Ekamukhalinga, Chaturmukhalinga and Panchamukhalinga. In Ekamukhalinga, representation shows the human bust of the Lord on the rudrabhaga of the shaft. Though most of the specimens have four faces, seldom Chaturmukhalinga carries three faces on the shaft. In case of Chaturmukhalinga, found at Paharpur relief three faces are shown on the top of the shaft. Forth face is not shown in the specimen. Linga with four Saktis represents four female figures with anjali-hasta pose. There is a fragment of black stone slab in the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, which shows the small lingas with gauripatta in rows of seven in a line. The slab has 14 rows, which denotes the possibility of 108 representations of small lingas. The slab is identified as the Astottarasata-linga (Fig.29) by the icon experts. The Indian Museum specimen of Panchayatana linga, bears the icons of Vishnu, Surya, Devi and Ganapati on it’s four side and highlights the fact related to Siva’s worship, done by various other sects.

Iconography focuses manything about the votaries and their devotion, their rites and rituals and even the nature and the characteristics of the process of worship. The religious credence of the devotees is reflected in the figure of the god. Social condition of the people and the observances related to specific religious sect are also focused in iconography. In case of Bengal it may be stated that as phallus
is the sacred emblem of Siva, so is too much popular to the general people of local area. It is also the fact that the anthropomorphic, therio- 
anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations are well known. The 
number of benignant anthropomorphic figure indicates that the adorers 
pREFERRED the pacific mein of the Lord Siva. Simultaneously Bengal has 
also the fearful representations, which are made and worshipped for 
showing the opposite type of activities to subdue evil spirit.

Depending on the discussed images, it may be emphasized that 
Bengalees had deep devotion to Lord Siva and acknowledge their 
homage to the god by making different types of images. From the Sena 
Period, they were partially influenced by the South Indian system of Siva 
worship. As a result, the images of Siva got some distinctions in their 
characteristics and were increased gradually in number.

On the basis of the observation on the personification of Siva it is 
right to decide that the god is promoted on it’s spiritual excellencies from 
the imagination of his devotees. In course of time, different types of 
image can influence the inner minds of votaries and reach on the unique 
arena of eloquent art. Indians as well as Bengalees are fortunate as they 
can feel the soul of Lord Siva through their literature and art. The 
incarnation of Lord Siva is true to say, the embodiment of renunciation 
and the destroyer of evil. He is, besides, the personification of 
contemplation and divine consciousness.