CHAPTER – IV
RELIGIOUS CULTS, RITES AND PRACTICES

The term ‘religion’ has been derived from the Latin word ‘religio’ meaning one’s own personal piety or devotion towards a particular god. The concept of ‘religion’, as understood today, is of recent origin. It stands for a system of observances or beliefs and rituals, which through a process of ‘deification’ has established it as an abstract entity. Therefore instead of considering religion as a concrete concept we can regard it as a ‘faith system’. D. N. Jha explains regarding the evolution of Hinduism that it was originated from a number of personal systems of faiths. It was the resultant of the European Colonial construct to denote the existing personal system of faiths in a single term. In the Brahmaputra valley of Assam, we can find such personal systems of faith, which were termed as Saivism, Saktism and Vaisnavism. It is believed that such faiths developed in the valley, only after the advent of the Vedic culture, which according to the Kālikapurāṇa entered into the land when Naraka was installed upon the throne of Kamarupa by Vishnu.

Verse, 128-130:

1. tasmāt kirātānusārya Vedaśāstrātigān bahūn/
   dvijātin vāsayaṁāsa tatra varṇān Sanātanān//128//

2. Vedādhyaṁ yan dānādī Satatīm vartate yathā/
   tathā Cakāra bhavyān munibhirvāsayaṁ vibhuḥ//129//

3. Vedavādaratā Sarve dānadharmaparāyaṁah/
   nacirādbhavadesaṁ Kāmarupāhvayastadā//130//

1 Wilfred Cantwell Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion, p-43.
2 D.N.Jha, Discovering Hinduism, Presidential Address, Indian History Congress, 2006.
Further it also states that in order to install Naraka on the throne, Vishnu invited many sages from the different holy places who performed sacrifices (yajña) and chanted various mantras. Later on the process of granting lands to the Brahmanas by the Kamarupa kings led to the gradual expansion of the Vedic culture. Earlier, the religion of the valley was non-brahmanical in nature as the land had been populated by various Indo-mongoloid tribes. Ancestor worship, human sacrifice, animism, fetishism and cult of fertility were the popular beliefs and rituals practiced among the non-brahmans. The patronage of some of the rulers of Kamarupa encouraged the brahmanas to settle in the land which directly and indirectly led to the expansion of Vedic culture.

It is difficult to trace the history of religion in the Brahmaputra Valley from the decline of the imperial power of Palas in Kamarupa to the growth of the Neo-Vaisnavite cult. This period of study witnessed tremendous changes such as such as transformation of the society from a tribal to a brahmanical society, economic changes and political changes with the advent of the Ahoms, who ruled the land for about 600 years and the Neo-Vaishnavite reformation initiated by Mahapurusha Sri Sankardeva. All these changes transformed the land into a meeting ground of many races and diverse cultures. It facilitated the emergence of a liberal and tolerant humanistic religion that taught the people to respect this assimilated culture.

From the remote past, the early religious practices were the worship of fertility cult and ancestor worship and these practices took the form of phallic worship and

---

4 K.P. op. cit., p-491.
headhunting. The different megalithic remains recovered in the different parts of Assam indicate the popularity of such practices among the aboriginals.

In Dimapur, the ancient capital of the Kacharis and in the areas near the banks of the river Dhansiri and Dayang, a number of monuments have been identified having considerable significance. T. Bloch classified these into three categories i.e. Chessman type, Y-shaped type and buffalo-horn type. Further Bloch explains that the first type has hemispheric top, floral and geometrical ornamentations, carvings of swords and daggers and horizontal bands around the neck of the column; the second has three rosettes and carvings of animals and the third which resembles a pair of buffalo horns stuck to the skull has rosettes and animal carvings. The chessman type megaliths were similar to the male generative organ. On the other hand the Y-shaped or the buffalo’s horn type megaliths resemble the female organ. Thus these monoliths were believed to be associated with the fertility cult and animal sacrifices. Moreover they can also be considered as a link between the early tribal religions with practices like ancestor worship, fertility cult and phallic worship and the later brahmanical Saiva-Sakta rituals. The above description by Bloch leads one to conclude, that the non-Aryan beliefs rituals and practices had a great influence on the Vedic-brahmanical religion of Kamarupa which assimilated the existing beliefs and practices. The Vedic- brahmanical religion was introduced in Kamarupa by the brahmans and hence designated as the brahmanical religion. Brahma literature, Puranas and Epics contains evidence of the early Aryan contact with the tribes of Kamarupa. Further these contacts initiated the growth of

different Brahmanical faiths in Kamarupa. The *Aitareya Brahmana*\(^7\) refers to the prevalence of early contact of the Brahmans with the non Aryans tribes. Pragjyotisha and its king Naraka are also mentioned in the *Ramayana*\(^8\) (Kiṣhindhyā Kānda). The references in the *Raghuvaṃsa*\(^9\) and the *Markandya Purana* also show that ancient Assam came into contact with Vedic-brahmanical culture at an early period. The statement given by Hieun-Tsang about the existence of Deva temples in Kamarupa\(^10\) also indicates to the growth of the brahmanical religion in ancient Assam by the early 7\(^{th}\) century C.E. Moreover the *Kalikāpurāṇa*, datable to the 10\(^{th}\) century C.E. also records the settlement of twice-born classes in Kamarupa.\(^11\)

Verse-128: \[\text{tasmāt kirātānusārya Vedaśāstrātīgān bahūn/} \]
\[\text{dvijātin vāsayāmāsa tatra varṇān Sanātanān} //128//\]

It has been mentioned that Naraka from whom the rulers of Kamarupa traces their lineage, settled a number of twice-borns, who were in the country and were experts in Vedas and Sastras. Moreover the land grants issued by the rulers of Kamarupa also bears testimony of the early settlement of the Vedic-brahman people. The Nidhanpur Grant of Bharakarvarrman (which had been earlier issued by Bhutivarman), re-established the authority of 208 Brahmans over the land formerly donated by the king Bhutivarman.\(^12\) The inscriptions also refer to the performance of *Aśvamedha Yajña* by the Kamarupa rulers. In this context mention may be made of the kings Vajradatta, Mahendravarman and Sthiravarman. The Doobi grant\(^13\) describes Vajradatta as a performer of a number of *Aśvamedha Yajña* (v. 5), again

---

7 *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, 1.3.7 cited in (ed) H.K.BarpujarīTCHA, p.306.
9 *Kalidasa, Raghuvaṃsa*, Ch-4, v-81-84.
11 K.P., Ch-38, v-128, p-491.
12 Nidhanpur Grant, v-25, K.S, p-III, p-165
the same grant\textsuperscript{14} and the Nalanda seals also refers to Mahendravarman and Sthiravarman as the performers of Asvamedha sacrifices.\textsuperscript{15}

The copper plate land grants issued by the Kamarupa rulers were all in favour of the brahmans. Royal patronage towards brahmans by the rulers was extended to such an extent that a new post had also been created to look after the welfare of the brahmans. An officer named Bhatta Śrī Kaṇṭhawas the Brāhmanādhikara\textsuperscript{16}(the Brahman in charge of sacerdotal functions) appointed by the Salastambha king Harjaravarman.

Thus, the gradual growth of the brahmanical influence resulted in the popularity of a number of Vedic-brahmanical gods and goddess and rituals related to their worship. Moreover at the same time special cults, sectarian rites and rituals and myths related to brahmanical deities also originated. Puranas and Upa-Puranas and Tantras were also composed to popularize and propagate these newly emerging cults. In this backdrop, this chapter has tried to examine the position, nature and practices of the different cults like Saivism, Saktism and Vaisnavism on the basis of the Kalikāpurāṇa and the Yoginītantra.

SAIVISM: From the remote past, Saivism has been a popular cult both amongst the aboriginal and the Vedic-brahmanical people of the Brahmaputra Valley. H.K.Barpujari states that Saivism is a term, used for the Kashmir Saiva Darshana, a form of the Advaita Vedanta philosophy.\textsuperscript{17} But in the Brahmaputra valley, there is no such evidence of the prevalence of this school of philosophy. The worship of

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{14} Doobi Grant, v-24, K.S., p-154
\textsuperscript{15} Nalanda Seals, \textit{Ibid}, p-151.
\textsuperscript{16} Hayungnthal grant, v-13-14, \textit{Ibid}, p-169.
\textsuperscript{17} M.M.Sarma, (ed) H.K.Barpujari, \textit{TCHA}, V-I, Ch-XII, p-313.
\end{footnotesize}
Siva in his different manifestations both in his phallic and iconographic representations has a great antiquity in Assam. The Kalikāpurāṇa itself mentioned that, Pragjyotisha had been the land of Siva’s līlā bhūmi before Varaha, Vishnu and Goddess Earth came to place Naraka in Pragjyotisha.

Verse-101: Sa ca deśaḥ Svarājyārthe purvam Suptaśca Śambhunā/
               kirātairbalibhiḥ Krūrairajnairapi ca Vāsītah∥101∥

Not only the Kalikāpurāṇa even the other Pauranic texts also indicate that Saivism had a strong hold over the land. In the Sabhā-Parva of the Mahābhārata, the Kamarupa King Bhagadatta has been regarded as a “friend of Siva”.

The Kalikāpurāṇa records that before the settlement of the Vedic-brahmans, the land was inhabited by Kirātas and Siva seems to have been the guardian deity of the kingdom. The same text mentions that the land was reserved by Sambhu for his own domain.

The Yogītantra, datable to 16th century also records that in the Yonippīthā the religion has originated from the Kirāta and Sambhu was worshipped in his linga form and millions of lingās exist in Kamarupa.

Verse-37: manobhayaghāmadhye raktapāṇīyarupini/
               kotiliṅgasamākirnā Kāmākhyā Kalpavallā∥37∥

The Kalikāpurāṇa in its chapter on Naraka and his invasion of Pragjyotisha relates that the guardian deity of the city was Sambhu. However even after the introduction
of the cult of Mother Goddess in Kamapurpa by Naraka, Saivism did not entirely disappear from the country. Siva was then secretly worshipped by the inhabitants.23

Verse-64: \[\text{Viṣṇunaridhanīyo me tatra hetusvayoditaḥ/}
\[\text{navārādhyaṭaḥ Śambhurantarguptīḥ Sa me pure}//64//

Asura King Bana of Sonitpur, Naraka’s contemporary, was also a non-brahman and a great devotee of Siva; he had Sambhu as his friend.24

Verse-3: \[\text{tasyāṅnidurga nagaraṁ sa ca Śambhusakho balī/}
\[\text{sahastrabāhu durghaśaḥ priyaḥ putraḥ Sa Vai baleḥ}//3//
\[\text{tatastu Kāmarupasya Vāyavyāṁ tripurāntaka/}

Hieun Tsang also observed some hundreds of Deva temples while visiting Kamarupa and the various systems had some myriads of professional adherents. Most of these temples were probably dedicated to the god Siva and so Saivism was perhaps the dominating religions of the time25.

Again the popularity of Saivism can also be judged from the mention that has been made in the Kalikāpurāṇa about the places connected to Siva. It says that the places connected with Siva are larger in number than those connected with Devi and Vishnu. There were as many as twenty holy places and these were the Jalpiśa, Surasācala, Krittivāsa, Sutīksna giri, Vibhrāta, Śubanācala, Goloka, Śṛiṅga, Gandhamādana, Kālahaya, Bhadrakāmada, Gokarna, Kedāra, Śambhu, Manikarna, Pāṇḍunātha, Kāmeśvara, Heruka, Śṛiṅgātā, Viśvanātha and Dikkaravāsinī. Among these the Jalpiśa Ksetra occupies the most prominent place.26

Verses-1&33:  
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{atmano liṅgamatu} & \text{āṁ jalpiśākhyāṁ vyadarśayat}//1// \\
evāṁ punyaka} & \text{araḥ pīṭho jalpiśasya mahatmanaḥ/} \\
evāṁ jiṅātvā naro yāti Śaṅkarasya pura} & \text{āṁ pratī}//33//
\end{align*}
\]

Gunabhiram Barua in his book *Asam Buranji* identified the *Jalpiśa Ksetra* with Jalpaiguri, now situated in North Bengal. He states that Siva worship was first introduced in early Assam by Jalpēśvara, a king of Jalpiśa Ksetra, which was formerly included in the kingdom of Kamarupa.  

Moreover according to the *Skanda Purana* King Jalpa was connected with the tradition of worshipping a particular Siva Linga called *Jalpeśvara*. According to the account, the linga on which, the King Jalpa was meditating during his retirement to the forest, was there from a remote past. The linga came to be known as *Jalpeśvara*, because the king got merged in it.  

The *Kālikāpurāṇa* refers to a story of Parasurama and refers to the Kshatriyas who surrender themselves to Jalpisa Siva for protecting themselves from Parasurama.  

Verses 29-30:  
\[
\begin{align*}
jāmadagnyabhayād bhītāḥ kṣatriyāḥ pūrvameva ye//29// \\
mlecchacachayāvyupādāya jalpiśam Śara)ānam gatāḥ// \\
te mlecchavācaḥ Satatamāryavācaśa Sarvadā//30//
\end{align*}
\]

Moreover the various contemporary archaeological remains, found in the form of inscriptions, sculptures and other iconic figures also indicates the popularity of this cult. The epigraphs issued by the different rulers of the country records their devotion towards Siva. In the Gauhati grant of Indrapala it has been stated that Siva temples were erected on a profuse scale throughout his kingdom by the king.  

---

The same king in his Gauhati Grant also narrated the story of Siva and Gauri.\textsuperscript{31} Prior to Indrapala, Kumar Bhaskarvarman was also a staunch devotee of Siva. In his Nidhanpur and Doobi inscriptions it has been seen that he always offers obeisance to Siva. Banabhatta’s \textit{Harsacharita} also inform us that Kumar Bhaskarvarman was a devotee of Siva. According to the \textit{Harsacharita}, “from his very boyhood, he took a firm resolve not to pay homage to anybody other than the lotus feet of Siva”\textsuperscript{32}. Inscriptions issued by other rulers of Kamarupa viz. Vanamalavarmadeva\textsuperscript{33} and Dharmapala\textsuperscript{34} bear testimony to the popularity of Siva Worship.

Besides the inscriptions, the temples also provide evidence regarding the existence of Saivism. Rulers of both ancient and medieval period erected various temples to glorify the deity. In the Dhanukhana hill in the district of Sonitpur on the North Bank of the Brahamputra, the remains of two Siva temples have been found. They belong to the reign of Harjaravarman of 8\textsuperscript{th} century C.E. In the medieval period the Ahom rulers also patronized the erection of Siva temples in the land. It has been observed that from the days of the Ahom King Pratap Singha Siva temples were erected.\textsuperscript{35} Pratap Singha describes himself as a devotee of Hari (Vishnu) and Hara(Siva) in his own coins.\textsuperscript{36} Gadadhar Singha (1681-1696) was generally considered as an anti-Vaisnavite. His anti-Vaisnavite activities however prove that he was a great devotee of Siva Mahadeva. He reconstructed the temples of Umananda and Viswanath with adequate facility for their maintenance. Even the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ibid}, v-1. \\
\textsuperscript{32} E.B.Cowell and Thomas, trans.\textit{Harscarita}, p-217. \\
\textsuperscript{33} Parvatiya Plates, v-5, K.S.p-III, p-177 \\
\textsuperscript{34} Khonamukh Plates, v-20, K.S., p-III, p-215. \\
\textsuperscript{35} M.MSarma, (ed) Barpujari, \textit{TCHA},V-III,Ch-VII, p-218. \\
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Orumodol}, Assamese monthly,Vol-IX,1854, p-57. \\
\end{flushleft}
queens of Siva Singha also built temples on the banks of Gaurisagar and Sibsagar tanks, which were mainly dedicated to Lord Siva. Later Ahom rulers like Rajeswar Singha had also built the Siva temples of Vasisthashrama, Manikarneswar and Chitracala. Therefore, Sir Edward Gait commented that among the Ahom rulers, Saivism became a popular cult and to propagate this cult they started to erect Siva temples. However it is more likely that the Ahom rulers patronized Saivism so it was popular among their subjects.

Not only the Ahoms, the Koch rulers, who formally came into the political scenario of the Brahmaputra Valley during the first decades of the 16th century C.E were also patrons of Saivism. The *Darrang Rajvamsavali* mentions that the Koch-royals of Koch Behar and Kamarupa were the descendents of Siva. The founder of the kingdom Vishwasimha was born of the union of Siva assuming the form of a Mech male called Haria Mandala and his wife Hira. Even in their royal seals they have designated themselves as ‘Siva-Carana-madhukara’. It appears that they were greatly devoted to Lord Siva. The Koch ruler Naranarayana once organized a ceremony at the direction of *Mahādeva* (Siva). It was when, he was advancing towards the Ahom Kingdom and he received the message in a dream, in which *Mahādeva* (Siva) is said to have dictated that the king should organize a dance in honour of him (Siva) according to the traditional Kachari rites. So Naranarayana conducted the ceremony on the banks of the river Sonkosh, and there he offered pigeons, duck, liquor, pigs, and buffaloes to Mahadeva. According to Hudgson, Buchan on and Latham, the Koches were allied with the Bodos and the Bodo

39 M. Neog, *Sankardeva and His Times*, p-80.
Kacharis worshipped a god called Batho, Bathau or Bathau-Siv-Rai who was perhaps identical with Siva. So it is possible that due to their ‘Bodo’ origin, the Koches claimed themselves as the descendent of Lord Siva and Siva as their chief deity. Moreover, the Koch Kings of western Assam also trace their mythological origin to *Mahādeva*, though they were also devotees of goddess Kamakhya. Thus it can be observed that the royal powers of the medieval period, not only trace their origin from the god Mahadeva but they also consider him as the settler of different conflicts and battles that took place among them.

Even the works written during the Neo-Vaishnavite era also shows that at this stage Saivism as a dominant religion lost much of its force and in the works of Sankardeva Siva was not depicted as the principal deity, he was treated as a god subservient to Vishnu. Still in some Vaishnava works composed in the Sankardeva era, the glorification of Siva is clearly perceived. *Babruvāhana Yuddhā* work written by Harivar Vipra in 14th century mentions that Babruvahana advised Arjuna that if he wants to earn the blessings of Siva, than he should worship Siva by offering the skull of the deceased Vrsaketu. This explanation denotes that perhaps the society of the valley believed that like his consort Kalika or Kali, Lord Siva also wore garlands of human skull, which signifies the *Rudra* form of lord Siva. *Aśvakaṛṇa-Vadha and Bhīma carita Kāvyā* written by Ramasarswati in 16th century also gives importance to *Mahādeva* in spite of the fact that both the works were written in the Vaishnava context. Siva-Mahadeva was also represented in the folksongs. The form represented in the folksongs was no more that of an

---

40 Cited in M. Neog, *Sankardeva and His Times*, p-81.
41 S. N. Sharma, *A Socio-Economic Cultural History of Medieval Assam*, p-190.
agriculturist. He often indulges in amorous adventures and is described as naked; having matted locks, easily appeased and often indulges in dance at the rhythmic sound of the dambaru.

“E sadasiva tomar sire Jata
Jagatak bar diya apuni nagatha”.
“dub dub dub baje dambaru, nace
Sadasiva Kalpataru”.

This form of Siva is recognized as ‘Natarāja’ in his cosmic dance of creation and destruction. Such images of dancing Siva are found in abundance in the valley of the Brahmputra. A dancing image of Siva on a stone slab found near Guwahati shows that the god is dancing on his bull with his left foot planted on the back of the mount and the right raised up in the rhythm of the dance. Six and four handed dancing images have also been found at the Bamuni Hills and Madana Kamdeva Parvat in Sonitpur and Kamrup district respectively.

Thus it can be asserted that from the time of the legendary king Naraka upto the Neo-Vaisnavite movement Saivism prevailed as a living religious cult and in spite of the development of Neo-Vaisnavism, Saivism had its hold over the religious sentiments of the people of the Brahmaputra valley.

Among the different forms of the god Siva, the linga form of Siva was the most popular form. The linga is a perpendicular pillar of stone erected on a pedestal, and is formed either single or in combination with the female reproductive organ, called yoni. Yoginī tantra also stated that such linga forms of Siva are commonly met with in Assam\(^{43}\).

\(^{43}\) Y.T. P-I., P-9, v-37, p-78.
Verse-37:  kotiśgasamākīrṇā Kāmākhyā kalpavallarī//37//

Sometimes, the linga with mukha (human bust) is also found in the Valley, these lingas have a mukha on one face and were known as the Mukhālinga. These lingas seem to have four faces and such motifs are known as the Chaturmukhalinga. These four faces stand for the five aspects of Siva namely Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Aghora, Tatpuruṣha and Īśāna. The Kālikapurāṇa mentions those as the five faces of Mahādeva.44

Verse-142:  sadhyojātaṁ Vāmadevamadhīraṁ ca tatah param/

tatpuruśaṁ tatheśānain pancavaktra prakṛītittam/142//

Kālikapurāṇa also refers to the worship of Siva in his linga form by the King of Kamatapur named Jalpa. This Siva linga is called Jalpeśvara and is now found at Jalpaiguri in North Bengal45.

Verse-1:  tatastu Kāmarupasya tāyavyāṁ tripurāntakah/

ātmano liṅgamatulaṁ jālpīśākhyāṁ vyadarsayat//1//

On the other hand Skanda Purana46 also refers to a king named Jalpa, a staunch follower of Siva who initiated the tradition of worshipping a Siva linga named Jalpeśvara. According to the account the king Jalpa worshipped Siva in the forest of Mahākāla. The ruler Jalpa referred in both the texts were probably the same and worship of the god in the forest lead us to determine that the cult had its origin among the forest dwelling non-Vedic people of the region. Dr. P.C. Choudhury also states that the cult of linga worship is associated with the pre-Aryan culture.47 Moreover the Yoginītantra also states that in the Yonipitha the religion has

44 K.P. Ch-51, v-142, p-735.
45 K.P. Ch -77, v-1, p-1179
47 P.C.Choudhury, THCPA, p-413.
originated from the Kiratas, i.e (Siddhesi yoginipitha dharma Kirātajo) and different scholars regards the Kiratas as the Indo-Mongoloids, who often dwell in the forest.

Again the Seventy eighth chapter of Kalikāpurāṇa refers to the existence of a Siva linga named Bhrngesa on the Gandamādan Mountain

Verse-68  
\[ yatra bhrṅgāhvayaṁ linga Śivasyāste mahattaram/ sa evaṁ parvataśresthaḥ prāpta kṣetraya paścime//68// \]

The archaeological remains also prove the prevalence of linga worship. A ruined temple with a Siva linga was also found in Western Tezpur. Even today a number of devotees offer their worship in the temple. K.L. Barua\textsuperscript{49} asserts that the temple belongs to 12\textsuperscript{th} century C.E. and was established by King Tingyadeva. Perhaps for this reason, there, Siva was named as ‘Tingyeshwara’. It is also found that the linga symbol of Siva who is believed to be united with his consort Parvati together is also worshipped at the Kedar temple of Hajo. The Siva lingas without their consort are worshipped in Baneswar and Sukreswar temple at Guwahati even today.

Another important form of Siva has also been referred to in the Kalikāpurāṇa. This form of Siva has been identified with the Sadasiva form. Chapter fifty-one of the text mentioned Mahadeva with a huge body having five-faces. This multi-faced manifestation of Siva is represented by a fairly iconic theme known as Sadasiva. According to the Kalikāpurāṇa this form of Siva was adorned with cluster of matted hair, charming crescent moon studded on his head decorated with serpents having the mark of Kala-Kuta on his throat, shining with the necklace of serpent, and serpents as the tie of his crown and as the ornaments on the arms.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item K.P.Ch-78, v-68, p-1196
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
body besmeared with ashes he has three eyes on every face and he wears elephant hide


H.K. Barpujari states that the Senas of Bengal had Sadāśiva as their īshṭadevatā (tutelary deity) and in Eastern India this form of Siva is most popular. Rajatananda Das Gupta in his book Art of Medieval Assam mentions that the Silver Chalanta image installed by King Rudra Singha at the temple of Umananda on Peacock island, Gauhati perhaps resembles the same image as referred to in the Kalikāpurāṇa. It is because the Siva images at Umananda carry Siva with five faces and ten arms who was riding on his bull mount. Further Kalikāpurāṇa also mentions the names of the five-faces of Mahadeva i.e. Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Aghora, Tatpuruṣha and Īśāna.

Verse-142: Sadhyojātaṁ Vāmadevamodhyoraṁ ca tataḥ param/ tatpuruṣaṁ tathēśānaṁ pañcavaktraṁ prakṛitiṁ//142//

51 RajatanandaDasGupta, Art of Medieval Assam, p-83.  
52 K.P.Ch-51, v-142,p-735.
Another form of Siva described in the *Kalikāpurāṇa* is the ‘Bhairava’. It is considered as the *Ugra* form of Siva. *Agni Purana* also gives a short description of this fierce form of the god. *Kalikāpurāṇa* in its chapter Sixty three mentions that *Bhairava* consumes human flesh; he is crowded by ghosts, stands on a corpse. He carries various weapons of destruction in his hands among which the *Khatvāṅga* and the *Kapāla* seem to be the most prominent.

Verse-133b -136:  

*bhairavaḥ pānduṇāthaśca raktaguścarbhujah//33//
gadāṁ padaṁ ca Śakti ca cakraḥ cāpi kareṣu ca/
vrbhad devyāḥ purobhāge pujyo’yaṁvisagurupghṛkah//134//
Śmaśānaiṁ herukāḥhyaṁ ca raktavaría bhyaṅkaram/
sicarmadharam Śāidram bhuṇjānam munujāmiśam//135//
tisrbhiṃuṇāṁśaḥbhirgaladraktā bhirāpitam/
agninirdagdhaṅgala dadanta preto paristhitam//136//
pūjayecpintanaivaṁ Śātraspāhanabhūṣaṅam//

Images of Siva recovered in few places of the Brahmaputra valley of Assam also highlights the same picture of the Bhairava form as described in the *Kalikāpurāṇa*. At the Kamakhya hills, two rock-cut images have been found with four and eight hands respectively. In these images a corpulent god striding on a prostrate corpse has been found. A long garland of skulls adorned the Bhairava. *Trisūla, Śakti or ankusa, Khatuanga and Kapāla* were the *āyudhas* held by the four hands of Bhairava. Thus, the construction of such images asserts, that this form of Siva was equally popular among the people as the ‘linga’ form.

---

54 *K.P*, Ch-63, v-133b-136, p-948
The *Yoginītāntra* again refers to another manifestation of Siva, which is recognized as that of Mahadeva Kamesvara. This form of Siva is seated in *Padmināsana* and has four arms holding *trīśūla, khatvanga, kapala and aksamala*.

However some other forms of Shiva are also represented on the various structural images. But these forms did not find mentions in the *Kālikapurāṇa* and *Yoginītāntra* though people of the Brahmaputra valley used to worship them. Among these ‘*Nataraja*’ is one of the famous forms. In this manifestation, Siva represents the cosmic dance of ‘creation and destruction’. A stone slab, probably intended for use in the ceiling of a Siva temple is found near Guwahati, now preserved at the Assam State Museum. This image of Siva depicts the ‘*Nataraja*’ form of Siva. The image stands within a circular medallion, surrounded by diamond shaped rosettes in the border. Here, the god is shown in a dancing posture over his bull vehicle *Nandi* with his left foot firmly planted on the back of the mount and the right risen up in the rhythm of the dance. The *Uttariya* placed around the shoulder of the god with fluttering ends on two sides and the bull also seems to have joined in this rhythm. The god has ten hands of which the two lower ones on right and left are broken. A similar image engraved on granite has also been recovered from Ambari and is now at the Assam State Museum at Guwahati. It also shows the god Siva dancing on his bull. Here the god is found with ten hands, the right, from the top holds the *khadaga*(sword), *karti*(dagger), *trisula*(trident) and *varada*(boon giving hand gesture) the left holds the *khetaka*(shield), *kapala*(skull), *naghi*(serpent), *ankusa*(elephant goad) and *rosary*(aksamala) in the same order.

In the Khonamukh and the Subhankarpataka grant of Dharmapala, Adi Deva, has been mentioned as *Ardha-juvatiswara* (*Ardha Nariswar*)\(^{57}\). The inscription begins with the adoration of the *Ardha-Nariswar* form of Adi-Deva. This form of Siva combines himself and his consort in one body. Matsya Purana\(^{58}\) also identified this form of the god with Siva and Pravati. According to the Purana half of the body is of a male bearing the iconographic cognizance of the god Siva and the other half is that of a female showing the iconic traits of the goddess. Thus it can be asserted that this form of unification of the god and goddess denotes the syncretisation of both the cults of Saivism and Saktism.

*Kalikāpurāṇa, Yogini tantra* and other contemporary literary works gives an elaborate description of the different practices, rites and rituals that have been observed at the time of worshipping the god Siva.

It has been observed that in the Brahmaputra valley Siva is not only worshipped as a great god but he is also considered as the bestowes of the four principal objects of human pursuit, namely, *dharma, artha, kama* and *moksha* (virtue, wealth, sensual enjoyment and final beatitude). He is also regarded as a very merciful deity, deity pleased and forgiving the transgression of his devotees. In the aphorisms of *Dak*, cultivators are advised to worship Mahadeva to obtain better crops. The conjugal life of Hara and his consort Gauri is considered a happy and prosperous one. So the elders in Assam usually bless a newly married couple by uttering the words “*Hara Gaurī basaī haok*”. Siva is again considered to be a benign deity. On the first of Bohag (the first month of the lunar calendar falling in mid April to mid May) some Assamese Hindus write a mantra on a *nāhar* leaf praying to Mahādeva for

---

\(^{57}\) Khonamukh Grant & Subhankarpataka Grant, K.S, P-III, v-1, pp-214, 217.

\(^{58}\) Matsya Purana, Ch-260, v-1-10,p-898.
protection against hail and storms. The Kalikāpurāṇa describes about the procedure of worshipping Siva. According to this text there were five secret mantras the Paṇcāśara (five-syllable) 59 which should be uttered while worshipping the five-faced Mahadeva.

Verse-136:  

\[
\text{paṇcāśaraṁ tu yanmantraṁ paṇcavaktasya kīrtitam/}
\]
\[
\text{yuvāṁ tenaiva mantreṇa ārādhayatmiśvaram//136//}
\]

The secret five mantras are Sammanda, Sandoha, Nāda, Gaurava and Prasāda. One could worships Sambhu by applying one of these mantras or by applying them jointly, besides one could worship the god by applying Prasāda mantra alone. Prasāda was highly recommended because it is applied for propitiating Sambhu to be graciously pleased, therefore among all the mantras Prasāda is the highly pleasing one60.

Verse-129-132:  

\[
\text{ebhiḥ paṇcāśarairmantraṁ paṇcavaktrasya kirtitam/}
\]
\[
\text{kramāt Sammadasandroha nādagaaurava Sanjñakāḥ//129//}
\]
\[
\text{prasādastru bhaveccheṣah paṇcamantrā pakīrtitāḥ/}
\]
\[
\text{ekaikena tathakaikaiṁ vaktrein devaiṁ prapujayet//130//}
\]
\[
\text{Sammadādiṣu mantraṣu prāsādastru praśasyate/}
\]
\[
\text{Śambhoḥ prasādanainaśa yasmād vṛṭtastu mantrakah//132//}
\]

Apart from Prasāda, the other mantras have also their own significance. The Sammanda mantra gives excessive pleasure, the Sandoha mantra fills his mind, and Nāda mantra attracts his mind and gaurava the last one gives dignity to Sambhu.61

60 K.P., Ch-5, v-129-132.
61 K.P., op. cit., v-134-135
Verse-134-135:  
āmodakārakaḥ Śambhormantraḥ sammada ucyate/  
manah prapūrāṇāccāpi sandohaḥ parikīrtitaḥ//134//  
ākarsako bhavennādo gurutvād gauravāhvayaḥ/  
Satadavya samastāṃ ca mantram Śambhoḥ prakīrtitam//135//

No doubt, the above mentioned five mantras have their own significance but it was not known whether in the later periods the five mantras were uttered together while worshipping Siva. Though the temple of Umananda at Guwahati has a five faced Siva image but we have no evidence that within the period of study whether these five mantras were uttered separately for each of the five manifestations of Siva.

The performance of natis or dancing women was another popular practice in Saivism. The Kālikapurāṇa itself mentions that an adept or devotee should always satisfy Ganesa with sweet-meat, the Sun with ghee or clarified butter, Siva with music, dance and instrumental music, Vishnu with observance of austerity and Candika with balidāṇa.62

Verse-1-2:  
balidanam tatah paschat kuryad devyah pramodakam//  
modakegarjavaktram ca havisa toshayedravim//1//  
toryatrikecha niyameah Sankaram toshayeddharim//  
chandikam balidanen toshayet sadhakah sada//2//

King Vanamala of Kamarupa of 9th cen. C.E. rebuilt the temple of HāṭaṅkaŚūlin Siva and endowed it among others with Vesya or prostitutes.63 Again in a chronicle of the Ahoms, there is the mention of the abduction of dancing girls from the temple of Viswanatha in Tezpur during the reign of the Ahom king Pratap Singha

---

63 Tezpur Grant, v-24, KS, P-III, p-175.
by a Bengali general named Satrajit of the Mughal army. The three Siva temples at Doobi, Biswanth-Ghat, Negheriting respectively and the Hayagriva-Madhava temple at Hajo were famous for their natis. But in course of time the institution of natis came to be associated with the impious ideas of extraction of money from the pilgrims. Later on tantric rites were also followed as part of worship, and the inscriptions of the kings of Assamindicate the prevalence of a tantric form of Saivism.

Offering of animals and their blood, was also considered as an important practice in Saivism. B. K. Kakati explains that “on the occasion of the Siva Chaturdarsi” festival, numerous goats are sacrificed. We also find some references to the practice of sacrificing goats on the occasion of Siva Puja in the Chronicles of the medieval period. Even Kālikapurāṇa also indicates its existence. It records that Pinākpati (Siva) with a noose in his hand accompanied by his spouse drunk blood with raw meat.

Verse-14-15: kṛṣṇaṁ pinākapāṇīṁ ca kālarātrisvarupiṇam/
utraṁ raktāsyanayanaṁ raktamālāyānulepanam//14//
rakṭāmbaradharāṁ caikaṁ paśahastaṁ kutumvinam/
pīyamānaṁ ca rudhirāṁ bhuṣāṇaṁ kravyāsamaṁhitam//15//

In the temple at Umananda, Kedar and Bilvesar temples animal meat is offered to Siva whereas in some others the castrated goats are offered to Siva during the festival of Sivarātri and they are strangled to death as special offerings.

---

64 Assam Buranji obtained by the family of Sukumar Mahanta, cited in (ed) H.K.Barpujari, TCHA, V-III, Ch-VII, (author) M.M.Sharma, p-221.
Strangulation of sacrificed animals was also common in the Vedic sacrifices. Moreover it has also been observed that in the Kamakhya hills a castrated goat is decapitated on the occasion of Sivarātri.\textsuperscript{68} Besides goats, ducks, pigeons, liquor, pigs, fowls, buffaloes were also offered to satisfy Mahadeva. It is evident from the reference made in the \textit{Darrang Rajvamsavali}, as mentioned earlier that it has been mentioned that once king Naranarayan while proceeding to attack the Ahom Kingdom, he had a dream in which Mahadeva is said to have ordered the king to organize a dance in his honour according to the traditional Kachari rites. Naranarayan accordingly organized a Kachari dance performance offering ducks, pigeons, liquor, pigs, fowls, buffaloes to Mahadeva, on the bank of the Sonkosh Rivers. Moreover the King also issued an order to the effect that in all the temples lying to the north of the Brahamaputra, the rituals would be performed by the Koches themselves and in the south bank by the Brahmans\textsuperscript{69}.

Among the festivals of Saivism Sivarātri is the most popular and celebrated in each and every parts of Assam. Even today Sivarātri is considered as the most auspicious night for worshipping Siva. According to the \textit{Matsya Purana}, if one observes the Sivarātri, he can earn the blessing of a thousand Ashvamedha sacrifices and all his sins are wiped out in a moment.\textsuperscript{70} The \textit{Yoginītantra} also asserts that anyone who worships Siva with the offering of a bilva leaf, a flower, a fruit and a wood apple paste would become an affectionate devotee of Siva\textsuperscript{71}

\textbf{Verse- 39-40:}
\begin{quote}
\textit{Śrīvṛkṣaḥ parameśāni ata eva na Saṁśayah/}
\textit{tatphalaistatprasūnairvā tatpatairyaḥ prayujatet/39//}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{68} B.K.Kakati, \textit{Mother Goddess Kamakhya}, p-21.
\textsuperscript{70} Panchanan Tarakanatha,(ed)\textit{Matsya Purana}, Ch-93, v-32-37, p-276.
\textsuperscript{71} Y.T, P-I, P-5, v-39-40, p-34.
Thus the above discussion leads us to conclude that Saivism as a religious cult has been popular since the reign of Naraka and the three main ruling dynasties of the Brahmaputra Valley of namely the Varmans, Salastambha and Palas prior to the 13th century were devotees of Siva and their land grants start with adoration to different forms of the deity. They also patronized the cult by erecting various Siva temples and Siva images which still stand as mute testimony to the popularity of this deity. The archaeological sources, namely lingas in the temple remains, and icons of Siva indicate that the deity remained popular at a later period too and the Koch and Ahom rulers too continued to patronize this popular deity by erecting temples. The Yogiňitantra also indicates the continuing popularity of Saivism as shown in the foregoing discussion.

Vaisnavism: Vaisnavism refers to the cult of worshipping Vishnu in any of his several forms as the chief deity. It is difficult to determine exactly when Vaisnavism first appeared in the Valley of the Brahmaputra. The Umachal rock inscription of Surendravarman provides the earliest evidence of Vaisnavism.\(^{72}\) The references in the Kalikāpurāṇa and Yogiňitantra indicate that Vishnu worship was also prevalent side by side with the worship of Siva and Sakti. In the primeval phase of religious history, it has been observed that the deity is almost identical with the Sun-god. At Surya Pahar of Goalpara district situated in the western part of the Brahmaputra Valley we find Vishnu represented as one of the twelve Adityas. But in course of time, Vishnu came to be identified with Krishna - Vasudeva and the

\(^{72}\) Umachal Inscription, v-1, K.S, p-149.
worship of *avataras* (incarnation) like Rama, Krishna etc spread to the different parts of the country. But in the later phase a new form of Vaishnavism emerged, known as Neo-Vaishnavism initiated by Sri Sri Sankaradeva. The new form propagated in the 15th-16th century C.E laid emphasis on *bhakti* (devotion) and the singing of prayer songs rather than the tantric and Sakti rituals.

Though *Kalikāpurāṇa* and *Yoginītantra* are Sakti tantras, they provide information regarding the prevalence of Vaishnavism in Kamarupa. The Naraka legend of *Kalikāpurāṇa* mentions that it was none other than Vishnu who installed Naraka to the throne of Kamarupa and enjoined him to worship the goddess Kamakhya who dwelt on the Nilachala. Thus Vaishnavism appears to have emerged in the Brahmaputra Valley together with Saktism. Again the Purana mentions the worship of Vishnu in his different forms such as *Hayagriva-Mādhava, Matsya-Madhana, Pāndunātha, Varāha-Mādhava and Vāsudeva*. The same Purana also prescribes the eight-syllabled, twelve-syllabled and eighteen syllabled mantras of the *Pāncarātra* rituals (where *mantra, yantra* and other *tantric* procedures were employed) for worshipping Vishnu. The Yoginītantra also refers to the *Pāncarātra* system of worship in respect of Hayagriva and Vasudeva forms of Vishnu.

In this section, the particular manifestations exhibited in the *Kalikāpurāṇa* and *Yoginītantra* is mainly discussed along with the other forms. In the Seventy eighth chapter of the *Kalikāpurāṇa* various manifestations of Vishnu has been mentioned while describing the holy places of Kamarupa. Here Vishnu is described in the form of Hayagriva, who resides in the Mani-Kuta hills, which is now identified as Hajo and there Hayagriva killed the fever demon Jarāsura.⁷³

---

⁷³ *K.P. Ch-78, v-75-76, p-1197.*
Verse-75-76: varṇāśaya dāksīnasāyām laonityo nāma sāgarah/
manikutāḥ shtītāḥ pūrve hayagrīvo hariryataḥ//75//
Sa hayagrivarupeṇa Viṣṇurhatvā jīvarāsuraṁ/
nihatya sa hayagrīvaḥ kṛiḍāyai yatra Saṁsthitaḥ//76//

Again it mentions that to the east of the hill called Rakshakuta, Mahadeva and Vishnu, resides there in the form of Bhairava and he is celebrated as Pāndunath.  

Verse-64; rakṣah kurāt pūrvasiśi bhairava nāma mādhavaḥ/
Paṅdunatha iti khyāto grāvarupeṇa saṁsthitaḥ//

Further in the hill of Citrahara, Vishnu resides in the form of a Boar (Varāha) and then on the eastern bank of the river Lalita, he resides in the form of a linga (phallus) and lastly in the region of Dikkarasini he was worshipped in the form of Vāsudeva. 

Verse-74-75: pāṅdunāthaḥ pūrvadesi giriscitraharo hariḥ//74//
Satataṁ yatra ramate Viṣṇuvaharupadhrk/
tatstu nilakutākhyaṁ Kāṁkhyānilayanīparam//75//

A complete chapter has been dedicated in the Kalikāpurāṇa to the worship of Vishnu in his Vasudeva form, whereas Yoginītana is silent in this regard. The Upa-Purana while describing the sacred places of Kamarupa gives more importance to the holy places of the Vaishnava cult. It leads us to assume that Vishnu is superior to Siva and Kamakhya is none but Vishnu's Yoga-maya. So, R.C. Hazra in his book Studies in the Upa purana observed that in the Kalikāpurāṇa (Chapter 62,  

---

74 K.P, Ch-79, v-64, p-1213
75 Ibid, Ch-79, v-74-75, p-1214.
Vishnu has been given a superior position by an identification of the primordial Kalika with his yoga-nidra and Maya. The different contemporary epigraphic records and those which were issued prior to the composition of both Kalikāpurāṇa and Yoginiṭantra also indicate the existence of Vishnu worship in the Brahmaputra Valley. Though the early rulers of Kamarupa were the followers of Shiva they claimed their origin from Vishnu in his different incarnations. In the Barganga Rock Inscription King Bhutivarman is described as a 'Paramabhāgavata', which implies that he was a great worshipper of Vishnu. Again in the Doobi and Nidhanpur Copper-plates of Bhaskarvarman, there is the reference to Vishnu as the holder of the chakra (wheel) in his Varāha (boar) incarnation. Apart from these the donees of the Nidhanpur grant also signifies the popularity of the Vaishnava faith as they bear the names of different forms of Vishnu. For e.g. Narayanasvamin Vishnusvamin, Janardansvamin etc. The Pushpabhadra grant of Dharmapala, a Kamarupa King of the 11th century also mentions the boar incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The inscriptions also carries the pictures of garuda, padma, sankha and cakra, which were closely related to lord Vishnu, as garuda is considered as the vehicle, cakra is the weapon, sankha and padma are also believed to be the distinguishing marks of the god. Some of the architectural and sculptural remains also prove the existence of the Vaishnava faith. Among the contemporary sculptural remains are ninth century C.E images of Vishnu found near Deopānī at Golaghat. Another bell-metal image of Vishnu, belong to the 11th - 12th century C.E has been recovered from an old temple near Dibrugarh, the 12th cen. image of Vishnu in his eternal sleep also has been found in the Aśvakrānta temple. It leads

---

77 R.C.Hazra, *Studies in the Upa-Purana*, p-904ff)
78 Puspabhadra Grant, *K.S.v-1*, p-222.
one to conclude that at his stage the practice of worshipping Vishnusimultaneously existed along with the other gods. Besides, in Dikkaravasini Pitha, (present areas of Sadiya), Vishnu resides there in the form of a stone along with Sambhu and Brahma in the form of lingā and devi in her two forms viz- Lalitakanta and Tikshnakanta.79

Verse-34b-36: sitagaṅgājale snātivā dṛṣṭvā Śambhuṁ hariṁ vidhinī/34b//

iṣṭvā lalitakāntākhyāṁ punaryānau na jayate/

liṅgasvarupī bhagavānchambhustatra svayaṁ sthitah/35//

Viṣṇuḥ śilasvarupiṇa brahmaliṅgasvarupdhrk/
pithe dikkaravāsinyā dhvirupā ranate śivāḥ/36/

A copperplate inscription found in North Lakhimpur also reveals the worship of Vasudeva during the period from the end of the 14th century to the first years of the 15th century.80

The literary works of the pre-Sankardeva era also indicates the prevalence of Vainavism. In most of the poetical works of Harihara Vipra references have been made to the devotion towards Lord Vishnu. In the Babruvahanar Yuddha the poet notes that while fighting a battle, Babruvahana offered silent obeisance at the feet of Vasudeva.81 Again the poet also glorifies the god by representing him as the rescuer of life from different diseases82 and he takes man to heaven after death.

Prahalāda Carita a poetical work by Hema Sarasvati also asserts that it is Vishnu or Narayana who is the Lord of Vaikuntha, and there is none other than him who can save man.83 In some other places, the poet also mentions about the different incarnations of the deity as such as Matsya, Kurma etc. Sātyaki Praveśa of Rudra

79 K.P, Ch-80, v-34b-36, p-1238.
80 Sarbeswar Barua, Some Ancient relics found in North Lakhimpur, JARS, Vol.- III pp- 40-41
81 Babruvahanar Yuddha, v-105, p. 58.
Kandali also highlights the influence of Vaisnavism. In his writing he describes that his patron King Srimanta Tamradhvaja was a devotee of Lord Vishnu. Moreover Kaviratna Sarasvati also speaks of Vishnu Mantra as the essence of religions.\(^{84}\) Thus the above mentioned archaeological and literary references clearly prove that along with the faiths such as Saivism, and Saktism, Vaisnavism equally penetrated into the religious life of the people of Brahmaputra Valley.

It was already been mentioned elsewhere that prior to the emergence of Neo-Vaisnavism, \(\textit{Pāncarātra}\) method was adopted for worshipping Vishnu. Both \(\textit{Kalikāpurāṇa}\) and \(\textit{Yoginītantra}\) prescribe the \(\textit{Pāncarātra}\) method of worship.\(^{85}\) \(\textit{Mantra, Vijā, Yantra Nyāsa, Mudrā}\) are the different ways of offering worship to the god.

It is the \(\textit{Kalikāpurāṇa}\) which explains the three kinds of \textit{mantras} for worshipping the god. These are the \textit{bija mantra, anga mantra and pratyanga mantra}. The \textit{bijamantra} states - \textit{Om namo nārayana}, the \textit{anga mantra} states - \textit{Om namo bhagavate Vasudevāya} and the \textit{pratyangamantra} - \textit{Om namo Vaisnavē surapataye mahābalaya svahā}.\(^{86}\)

Verse-89-92:

\[
\begin{align*}
tadaṇgangamantrāṁ rājendra dvādaśāsākṣaramucyate/namo bhagavate pūvaṁ Vāsudevāya vai param//89//\nnāṃgaṇaṁtantrāṇaṁ caiva Vāsudevasya kīrtitam/\nasaṇya pratyāṅgasya tu dadhīvāmanasāṅkṣaramucyate//90//\ntasya mantra naraśreṣṭha Śambhunā bhāṣita Śrīnu/\nūmrī namo Viśṇive purvaṁ padaṁ tasya prakīrtitam//91//
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{84}\) Arunima Bharali, \textit{Assamese Culture as reflected in the Medieval Assamese Literature}, p-19.
\(^{86}\) \textit{K.P, Ch-80, v-89-92, p-1246.}\n
However Yoginītantra is silent about the mantras but gives a detailed description about the worship of Hayagriva. It is noteworthy that the Kalikāpurāṇa also mentions the nārada pancārātra mantra\(^87\) and purusā sukta stuti \(^88\)for worshipping Vasudeva. It is doubtful whether such mantras were used for worshipping the god in the latter phase. The composition of the Yoginītantra in the later half of the 16\(^{th}\) century indicates the strong presence of tantric practices. But the development of the Neo-Vaisnavite movement, to some extent hampered its growth and many times the number of tantric texts continued through oral tradition in the succeeding period.

The worship of Vishnu in Vasudeva form was quite popular. As stated in the previous discussion three kinds of mantras were popularly uttered while offering worship to Vasudeva. In these mantras Vasudeva has been stated as white as the full moon, syama (dark) as Nilotpala and Dadhivamana (milky) as the full moon.

The bija-mantra states that Vasudeva is as white as the full moon, he is seated on the king of birds (garuda) having four arms, his body is wrapped with three pieces of yellow cloth, he holds a mace in his upper right hand; a fully blossomed lotus in the upper left hand, a sharp discuss and a conch in the two lower hands. He wears a very bright crown on his head and a pair of ear rings in his ears of variegated colour. He is flanked by the goddess of wealth (Lakshmi) on his right and (Saraswati) to his left.\(^89\)

\(^87\) K.P, Ch-8, v-139-140, p-1257.
\(^88\) Ibid.
\(^89\) Ibid, v-95-100, p-1247
Verse-95-100:      rupaṁ tu bijamantrasya prathamaṁ śṛṇu bhupate/
pūrṇacandrapamaḥ śuklaḥ paksirajoparistitaḥ/95//
caturbhujaḥ pūtavastribhiḥ savitaḥabhrto/
dakṣiñoahrve gadāṁ dhatte tadadho vikcāmbujam/96//
vāmohareve cakramatyagraṁ dhatte’draḥ Śaṅkhame ca ca/
srīvatsavakṣāḥ satataṁ Kaustubhaṁ hṛdi cānśumat/97//
dhatte kakṣe hṛdhovāme tuṁraṁ bhaṇaparitam/
dakṣiñe koṣagaṁ khadgaṁ nandakaṁ caṣarāsanam/98//
śiśe kiritaṁ südhyotaiṁ karṇayoḥ kuṇḍaladvayam/
ājānulamvinīṁ citrāṁ vanamālaṁ gate sthitām/99//
dadhānaṁ dakṣiñe devinṁ śrīyaṁ parśve tu tribhratam/
sarasvatīṁ vāmaparśve cintayed varadāṁ harim/100//

The Anga-mantra reflects Vasudeva as syama as Nilotpala, he has four arms holding a lotus in the right upper hand and a mace in the lower one, an unique discuss in the lower left hand and a conch in the upper left hand.90

Verse-102,103:      nilotpaladalasyāmaṁ tathaiva ca caturbhujam/
dakṣiñoḥvasthitam paḥyaṁ gadāṁ Cātha prayojyet/102//
vāmedhacakraṁtlamurdhve Śakhaṁ ca bhibratam/
cintayed varadam devaṁ sarvamanyacca purvavat/103//

On the other hand the pratyanga-mantra describes Dadhivamana form of Vasudeva which is white as the full moon. He holds a pot full of nectar in his left hand and in his right hand a golden plate containing cooked rice with curd. He is seated on a lotus in the midst of the realm of the moon.91

90  K.P. Ch-80, v-102, 103, p-1247.
91  Ibid, v-105-107, pp-1248,1249
Verse-105,107:  

purṇendusadrśaṁ kāntyā śuklavarnaś vicintayet/  
kare vicintayed vāme pīyuṣāpuritaṁ dharma//105//  
dadhyannakaṁdasasanyuktāṁ dakṣiṇe svariabhājanam/  
pahysanagataṁ devaṁ candramaṅdalamadhyagam//106//  
śuklavastradharaṁ devaṁ pramānād vāmanaṁ sadā/  
īśaddāsasamāyuktāṁ trilokeśaṁ trivikramam//107//

The contemporary iconographic representation of Vishnu as found in the icons of the deity leads one to believe that the different forms that are mentioned in the Kalikāpurāṇa were all popular. It has been noticed that the images depict the same features as described in the Kalikāpurāṇa. Most images of the god is adorned with jewelled ornaments, including jewelled conch, the deity has two, four or eight hands holding the same ayudhās (i.e. Sankha, Chakra, Gadā & Padma). The pedestal sometimes bears the figure of Garuda and a lotus also.

The majority of images of Vishnu found in Assam were in Trivikrama form. Agni Purana mentions the Trivikrama as the order of arrangement of ayudhas, which includes the god with padma in lower left hand, gada in upper right, chakra in upper left and sankha in lower left. A metal image of Vishnu has been found from Narakasur hoard, now at Assam State Meuseum, where the god stands sampada on a lotus over a plain pedestal, flanked by (Sri Lakshmi) on the right and Pushti (Saraswati) on left. The lower right hand is in Varadawith a lotus mark on palm, gada in upper right, chakra in upper left and sankha in lower left. The deity wears a pointed crown kiritamukutaon head and a vanamala reaching down to the knees. Garuda is seen in profile in the centre of the pedestal. This form of the image is datable to the tenth century C.E.
Again, another such image of Vishnu has been recovered from Budhabudhi and is now preserved in the Assam State Museum. Here the god stands on a lotus over a carved pedestal. The image has four hands; lotus mark has been noticed in his lower right hand, gadā in upper right, chakra in upper left and a Sankha in lower left. He wears a number of jeweled ornaments including a high pointed crown. He is flanked by his two consorts on both side, i.e. goddess Sri and goddess Pushti. Moreover, the Kalikāpurāṇa and Yoganītantra give a long list of objects offered to Vasudeva. According to the Kalikāpurāṇa, the twelfth day of the fortnight of the moon and the spring season are the best time for worshipping Vishnu. Vasudeva may be worshipped briefly or elaborately. One should offer him red, yellow and white silk cloths, which are his favorite. Among lamps, the ghee lamp, perfumeries obtained from Malaya Mountain, copper vessels for drinking, incense prepared from agaru, rice cooked in milk, ghee and pulses and leaves of tulasi, bilba and of amalaka should be offered to Vishnu. Among flowers Kadamba, Kubjaka, Jati, Mallika, malati and lotus are significant. The crown, the earrings and the necklace are significant. The above mentioned offering are said to give pleasure and satisfaction to Vasudeva.92

Verse-179-180: Śaṅkhāḥ snānīyapātreṣu dhapesṇgumureva ca /
prīdido Vāsudevasya satata parikīrtitaḥ //79//
kadambaṁ kubjakāṁ jātī mallikā mālatī tatra/
paṅkajaceti puṣpāṇi tad viṣṇaḥ prītidānyut//180//

Besides these, the eight yogis of Vasudeva are also to be worshipped on the eight petals, each one separately and in their respective form and mantras. These eight

yogīs are Balabhadra, Kāma or Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Nārāyana, Brahmā, Vishnu, Narasimha and Varāha. Moreover yogīnis are also there with the yogīs having same complexion and form of their respective yogīs: Utkarsini, Jana Kriya, Yoga, Prahvi, Aisani and Anugrahi are the Yogīnis.  

Verse 123-127:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{balabhadrasca kāmaśca hyaniruddhastaddabhavah/} \\
nārayaṇastathā brahmā viṣṇu sāṣṭhāḥ prakṛtītāḥ//123// \\
narasimho varāhaśca yoginno'ṣtau prakṛtītāḥ// \\
purvādyastadale śvetāṃ rupatō mantraṭaḥ prthak//124// \\
pūjayet karnikāmadhye vāsudevāṁ tu nayakam/ \\
vimalā nāyikā tasya vāsudevasya kāṛitā//125// \\
balabhadramukhām tu yoginiḥ śṛṇu pāṛthava/ \\
ādabukarṣṇī jñeyā jñāṇa paścāt kriyaparā//126// \\
yogā prabhā tathaiśāṁi anugrāhī tathāṣṭamī/
\end{align*}
\]

Thus the forgoing discussion leads us to assume that Vishnu in his Vasudeva form was equally popular along with Siva among the inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley. It has also been noticed that Vasudeva form of Vishnu was not free from the influence of tantric mantras which became the special feature of Vasudeva worship in Assam.

Hayagriva Madhava is another form of Vishnu. A legend associated with the origin of Hayagriva-Madhava is described in the Kalikāpurāṇa, according to which Vishnu in the form of Hayagriva resides in the hills of Manikuta, which is located at present Hajo.

Verse 75-76:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{varṇāśāyā daksiṇsyāṁ lauhityo nāma sāgarah/}
\end{align*}
\]

93 K.P. op. cit., v-123-127, p-1251.
94 K.P. Ch-78, v-75-76, p-1197.
Vishnu assumed this form (Hayagriva Madhava) after killing the demon Jarasura and started to reside there for the benefit of gods, men and demons. But in other literary texts like Mārkanda Purāṇa, Mahābhārata, Harivamśa and in Vāmana Purāṇa, legends related to the origin of Haryagriva incarnation do not tally. The Harivamśa states that Krishna, after killing Naraka, Nisunda and Hayagriva went to Manikata or Mani Parvata.\(^95\) Again the Kalikāpurāṇa in its Forty first chapter refers to Hayargiva while explaining the Naraka legend. Here Hayagriva has been mentioned as the keeper of the eastern gate of Naraka's city and he was killed by Krishna who invaded Naraka's kingdom. In connection with the origin of Vishnu in the Manikuta, the Yoginītantra gives a separate account. According to this text King Indradyumna of Orissa dreamt at night that a big nameless tree would come floating by the sea-shore. He has to cut it into seven pieces in the morning. Among these seven pieces two were brought over to Kamarupa. Hayagriva and Madhava fashioned out of these two pieces. On the other hand the translated version of Yoginītantra by Ramchandra Borpatra (1608 A.D.) gives a different description that after a long period of meditation, Vishnu manifest before Urva rishi and the rishi requested Vishnu to kill Hayagriva who resided at Manikuta. According to this legend Vishnu in the form Madhava killed Hayasura in a decisive battle and stated to reside there for the welfare of the people and finally, Madhava took the form of Hayagriva and began to reside at the Manikuta hills. It can be observed from these

legends that the Tantra writers have tried to display the legends of Hayagriva according to the Puranas. Dr. B.K. Kakati states that 'this form of Hayagriva was traced from the Buddhist Tantras as in the Buddhist tantras a god named 'Hayagriva' finds special mention and at some places he was also addressed as 'Tārā'. But Maheswar Neog denied the Buddhist origin of Hayagriva on the ground that in the Kalikāpurāṇa Hayagriva has been exhibited as white as camphor and the kunda flower, seated on a white lotus and has four arms, his two left hands are in the posture of granting boons, in one of his right hands he holds a white lotus in the other hand a book. 96 Thus this form of Vishnu was completely dissimilar to the Mahayana Hayagriva of Buddhism. Though it might be possible that, the increased influence of tantric Buddhism over the prevalent religion resulted in the emergence of ‘Hayagriva' in the Buddhist Tantras and even in the temple of Hayagriva Madhava at Hajo, no traces of Buddhist influence has been noticed. It is believed that the temple has been found in a jungle and in 1550 A.D. it was re-innovated by Naranarayan by granting lands, pujari, gayan-bayan and nati. 97 The Darrang Raj Vamsavalis and the temple inscription described that in 1583, Raghudeva Narayana reconstructed the temple of Hayagriva-Madhava. 98 Therefore it was certain that, at the time of the composition of Kalikāpurāṇa there existed a temple name Hayagriva. Thus, the worship of the 'Hayagriva' form of Vishnu has been patronized and popularized by the Koch rulers in Kamarupa, which is still in vogue today.

96 Maheswar Neog Rachanavali, Vol-I, complete works of Dr Maheswar Neog, compiled by Dr Maheswar Neog Publications Trust, published by Sri. Surjya Kanta Hazarika, Dibrugarh, 1986, p-208
98 Ibid, p-25.
In both the Kalikāpurāṇa and the Yoginītantra various mantras have been prescribed for the worship of Hayagriva. The Kalikāpurāṇa states that Hayagriva was worshipped by uttering the bija mantra, i.e. Om namo nārāyana. According to Yoginītantra Purushasukta mantra, Krishna bija mantra and other Vaishnava mantras are also to be uttered while worshipping Vishnu.99

Verse-178-179:  
kiṁ kārya bahubhiryaatnaiścittavibhramakārayaiḥ/
Om namo nārāyanāyeti mantraḥ sarvārthāsādhakāḥ//178//
yajasteneiva mātraṇa sūktena puruṣeṇa vā/
dvādaśākṣaravijena kṛṣṇavijena pūjayet//179//

Kalikāpurāṇa again mentions that to obtain Siddhi one should mutter the Hayagriva mantra two hundred thousand times. By offering wheat cooked with milk and performing oblation with ghee one should carry on purascarnava.100

Verse-99:  
hayagrīvasya mantrasya siddhilakṣadadvayena tu/
Yāvakaiḥ pāyasairājyaīhīman kurvanpuracarat//99//

Yoginītantra gives a long list of objects which were offered to the deity as naivedya. Among these fruits; vegetables, green leaf were important naivedya. Fruits like berry, amla, jackfruit, pomegranate, banana, guava, etc offered to the god. Animal meat was also offered, among these meat of deer, goat and rabbit were allowed but offering of buffalo meat, curd and ghee were not allowed. Thus Vaisnavism in the Brahmaputra Valley became intricately linked with Saktism and Tantricism.

Finally this study shows that the existing religious system, in lieu of becoming a force of social change became a ritual centric and a complex institution. Animal

100 K.P, Ch-78, v-99, p-1201.
sacrifice, tantras and mantras became the primary method of worship. Conservatism, exploitation and Brahman orthodoxy became the regular characteristic of the religious sentiments. Besides, at that time the prevalence of political instability was also one of the reasons behind the growth of such faiths. So its ability to stimulate social progress also dwindled and the process of framing a broad-based society in the valley faced a serious crisis.

At this juncture, an advanced form of Vaisnavism that is Neo-Vaisnavism, was ushered in by Sri Sankaradeva. Sankaradeva started this Neo-Vaishnava movement in Assam in the middle of the 16th century, which aimed at reforming the complicated Brahmanical ritualism and instituted a social reform programme whereby he could teach the common people simple ways of living and belief, equality of men in the field of religion irrespective of their caste or tribal identity, and to practice non-violence. Though it recognized lord Vishnu as the supreme deity but it was different from the earlier faith of Vaishnavism. The preponderance of a complex set of rituals and the ritual superiority of the Brahmans that had come to characterise Vaishnavism were absent in Neo-Vaishnavism. As against the Brahmanism orthodoxy and conservatism Neo-Vaishnavism advocated simplicity and liberalism in religious practice.

It was therefore, able to make itself acceptable to the various indigenous tribal communities of the region. By accepting the essence of Gita and Bhagwata Purana, Sankaradeva introduced the Neo-Vaishnava faith in the state. According to this new faith, lord Krishna is the greatest of all gods. He is the Supreme Lord and the destroyer of all evil. He always remains as a servant to his devotees and a deliverer to the sinners and the downtrodden. Sankaradeva considers bhakti as the easiest and
simple means to attain Vishnu. The literary works composed by Sankaradeva and his disciple Madhavadeva mainly concentrated on the glory and the divine qualities of Vishnu or Krishna. In the several works of both the saints, the ten incarnations of the Lord Krishna viz. Vishnu, Matsya, Kurma, Narsimha etc found prominence. It indicates that Vishnu in his different forms as worshipped in the Valley during Sankaradeva’s time was analogous to the worship of the deities in North India.

Sankardeva’s work Bhakti Ratnakara also emphasized lord Krishna as the supreme God or Supreme Guru. He is the ultimate Guru and the presiding deity over the Universe i.e. Visvaniyanta. He further mentions that devotion to Krishna is far superior to the worship of other deities as he is the supreme preceptor, the only giver of releaseand the sole cause of the world, so, this new faith as preached by Sankaradeva came to be known as the Eksarana namdharma. It is characterized by Sankardeva’s famous saying that is “ek deu, ek seu, ek bine nāhi keu”\(^\text{101}\) (there is but one god, there is devotion to only that god, and no other but the one). Regarding the worship of other gods and goddess he asserts that-

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{‘anya devī- deva nakari bā seva} \\
nakhaibā prasāda tāra. \\
mūrtika nācāibā grho napaśibā \\
\text{bhakti nai be vyabhiscāra. Bh- II, V- 545.}
\end{align*}
\]

i.e., "Do thou not worship any other goddess and gods, nor partake of the offerings made to them, nor cast your eyes on their idols, nor enter their temples, lest they bhakti be vitiated”\(^\text{102}\) (translated by M. Neog)

\(^{101}\) Maheswar Neog, Sankardeva and His Times, p-216.
\(^{102}\) Ibid, p-216.
Sankardeva in his works mention that **bhakti** or devotion is the ultimate way to worship god. Influenced by the Bhagavata Purana and the Bhagavad Gita, Sankardeva defined **bhakti** as a relationship of trust and love to a personal god. It has always been accepted as safest and pure path to God realization. The 'Gita' also speaks of **bhakti** or devotion as being the most potent means of attaining God. Sankardeva further mentions nine modes of **bhakti** as in the Bhagavanta Purana i.e. **Sravana, Kiratana, Smarana, Arcana, Dasya, Sakhitva, Vandana and Deharpana**\(^{103}\) of all these nine forms of Bhakti, Sranana and Kirtana are considered as the principal one. **Yadapi bhakti nanabidha Madhavera Sranana- Kirtana, tato mahasresthatara.**\(^{104}\)

One of the most distinctive features of this new faith was that it does not recognize any distinctions among castes or creed. Every person has the equal right of reciting the virtues of Hari and can attain to salvation by the recital of **Hari Nama.** (Bh. II, v- 434) Thus, Sankaradeva taught the equality of all human beings and accepted disciples from among the tribes and followers of Islam and placed them all in equal footing. For instance Chandsai, a Muslim, Goninda, a Garo, Jayananda a Bhutia, Madhava of Jayanti, Damodara a Boniya were his disciples.

Assimilation of Islam into the social fabric of Assam was another most important aspect of this new faith. Even Mir Jumla's Chronicler Sihabuddin Talish was astonished at the assimilation of Muslims into the Assamese fold. On the other hand Hindus also paid respect to the Muslim peers and the Muslims also participated in the **Nama-Kirtan** organized in the **Namghar** (community prayer hall). S.L. Baruah states that even in some of the **Satras** like Chamariya in the Kamarup district, a

---

\(^{103}\) Cited in Sankardeva and His Times, (ed) Maheswar Neog, p-218.

\(^{104}\) Sri Sri Madhanadeva, *Bakyamantra*, p-355
custom is still followed, where the Hindus and the Muslims of the village assemble together in the village Namghar once in a year to pray for common welfare.\textsuperscript{105} Moreover the Vaishnava elements influenced the Muslim to such an extent that Azan Fakir composed his Zikirs in the same line.

Another important aspect of the faith lies in the fact that the Guru or preceptor was always placed in the highest position, Madhavadeva himself in his \textit{Guru Bhatima} said that without the grace of the Guru no one can attain devotion or \textit{bhakti}.\textsuperscript{106} Sankardeva in his \textit{Bhakti Ratnakara} also wrote about the Guru’s eminence by asserting that the Guru should be regarded as Hari and one could free himself from the cycle of re-birth by offering prayer at the Gurus feet.\textsuperscript{107}

Antagonism towards idol worship was a special aspect of \textit{Ekasarana dharma}. This new faith did not give prominence to idol worship. According to Sankardeva, "the Bhagvata Purana itself is like the sun and quintessence of the Vedanta lies in it". Therefore, a devotee of Vishnu could attain the fourfold ends of life; \textit{Dharma}, \textit{Artha}, \textit{Kama} and \textit{Moksa}.So, in \textit{Eksarana} Vaisnavism, while performing most of the religious ceremonies a sacred book especially the 'Bhagavata' (in Sankardeva’s translation) is placed upon the alter and offerings and homage are paid to it as the supreme lord.

Moreover, the royal patronage provided by the Koch rulers created the favourable conditions for forming a base for the new movement. Sankaradeva continued the movement by organising the Vaisnavite society with its three components viz. - \textit{Nama-Kirtana}, \textit{Satra} and \textit{Namghar}. The \textit{Nama-Kirtana} was the community

\textsuperscript{105} S.L.Baruah, \textit{A Comprehensive History of Assam}, p-447.
\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{107} M. Neog, \textit{Sankaradeva and His Times}, p-229
prayer, where singing of devotional songs was observed collectively and it fostered community feeling. The Satra was the religious headquarters of a Vaishnava teacher and became the place for disseminating spiritual knowledge as well as for providing training in various crafts. On the other hand the village Namghar acts as the prayer hall of the village community and thereby formed the hub of its cultural life. All these new elements introduced by the new movement brought a new orientation and spirit to the society.

The religion preached by Sankardeva is the synthesis of religion and philosophy, which lays emphasis on the need for ethical life as an essential condition of spiritual realization and bhakti leads to that path. Sankardeva with message of devotion to one supreme God, love and compassion towards fellow men galvanized the people of different social strata. Sankardeva's philosophy of love was positive and dynamic. Sankaradeva made an appeal to every human being to follow the path of love. Sankardeva believed that through love and devotion, one can develop a comprehensive method of realizing the infinite through a disinterested feeling and of programme of selfless service for mankind. Sankardeva wanted his religion of bhakti to lead to the service of mankind.

**SAKTISM:** Saktism is a cult where a female goddess is worshipped as the supreme deity. She is popular among the people by various names like Devi, Durgā, Kāli, Kālikā, Umā, Kāmākhyā etc. Therefore H.K. Barpujari opines that “Sakti may be taken to be the common name for all the various forms of this female deity”. 108 She is worshipped in various iconic representations and also in an iconic Yoni form.

It is believed that Sakti had non-Vedic origins and her different forms like Umā or Kāli, are believed to be female mountain ghosts, who were later identified with the wife of Rudra and thus brought into the brahmanical fold. B. K. Kakati also believes in the ‘Austric’ origin of the ‘Kāmākhya’ form of Sakti in the Brahmaputra Valley. On philological ground he asserts that “the Kama goddess might have been originally a spirit of the graveyard and represented ancestor spirit in the form of ancestral mother”. It might be possible that the yoni goddess migrated to Assam with the migration of Austrics or matrilineal tribes like the Khasis and the Garos, who worshipped the Devi according to their own rituals and later on many of their deities and rituals, were incorporated into the brahmanical fold. The phallic megalithic remains of the Austrics and the regular use of Tantras in worshipping the goddess also imply its non-brahmanical origin. Tantricism was deeply associated with Kamarupa-Kāmākhya from early ages. Some scholars hold that Tantricism first originated in Orissa and Bengal and then migrated to Assam. N.L. Dey writes that as an offshoot of later Buddhism, Tantric faith developed during the reign of the Palas of Gauda in the 9th century C.E. and then spread to Kamarupa. Besides, the Tantras themselves prove that Assam was a great centre of Tantricism and the non-Brahmanical practices prevalent in the land, contributed to its growth and popularity. Thus it can be ascertained that Sakti in the land of Brahmaputra valley was a non-Vedic goddess and was popularly worshipped under the tantric rites, which included the mantra: bija, mudra, nyasa, bali. The Kālikapurāṇa and Yoginītantra contain a number of chapters where the worship of the goddess in her different forms under tantric rites has been described in detail.

Regarding the existence of Saktism, it is believed that Kamarupa, the land that covers most of the areas of the Brahmaputra valley of the study period has been a place of Sakti worship since early days. It became a leading religion in the medieval period too. However the earlier copper plate inscriptions do not have any reference to Sakti worship except in two inscriptions of Vanamala and Indrapala respectively as most of the early rulers of the region were the worshippers of Siva. The inscription of Vanamala and Indrapala refers to the temple of Kamesvara Mahagauri. King Indrapala is mentioned as well versed in the tantric lores (Guwahati Grant). The Tezpur grant also states that Mount Kamakuta was inhabited by Kamesvara and Mahagauri and the same inscription mentions Mahagauri in a separate form called Parvati. So Saktism or Sakti worship probably found royal patronage only from the reign of Vanamala. On the other hand Kālikapurāṇa explains that the goddess Kāmākhya (a form of Sakti) was already there in Kamarupa even when the Kiratas resided here and before Naraka started to live here.

Verse 119:  
\[atra devī mahābhāgā yoganidrā jagatpratāh/\]  
\[Kāmākhya rupamāsya ya sadā tiṣṭhati Šobhanā//119//\]  

In this connection Dr. B.K. Kakati observes that, it might be somewhere between 200-500 C.E that Naraka of Mithila established himself in the political firmament of Kamarupa and introduced the Sakti cult under Brahmanic practices. So it is possible that prior to the reign of Vanamala Saktism as a religion had prevailed along with Saivism but it was only from the reign of Vanamala that it gained royal

110 Tezpur Grant, v-29, Guwakuchi Grant, v-49,52, K.S, pp-176,205.  
111 Ibid, Guwahati Grant, v-16, p-200,201.  
112 Tezpur grant, Op cit.  
113 K.P. Ch.38, v-119, p-489.
patronage which is exemplified in the copper plate inscription of the rulers of the Salastambha and Pala dynasty.

However prior to the popularity of Neo-Vaisnavism, Saktism as a religion had a significant place among the people of Assam. M. Neog, in his book Purani Assamīyā Samāj Āru Saṃskṛti states that the goddess was worshipped in Sankaradeva’s home; there the goddess Chandi (a form of Sakti) was worshipped. Sankaradeva’s forefathers were the followers of Saktism. Sankardeva’s great grandfather Chandivara was an ardent devotee of the Devi and the King Durlabhanarayan, conferred on him the title of Devidasa. Although, under the influence of Neo-Vaishnavism, the people recited the name of Hari, they continued to install a ghata (earthen pot), as the symbol of the Devi during autumn. Hence, it is evident from these references that Saktism as a faith had a great dominance over the religious sentiments of the people under the study period.

Both the Kālikapurāṇa and Yoginītantra refers to four manifestations of Devi viz- Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā, Spouse of Siva i.e. Parvati, Tripura-Sundari and Tamresvari. According to the Kālikapurāṇa, in Kamarupa, Devi had been established as the presiding deity and it is believed that Devi came to Nilachala hills to satisfy her amour (Kama) with Siva, so this place was called Kāmākhyā and till today the temple of Kāmākhyā at Nilachala is famous as the seat of Sakti worship. Again she resides with Siva as his spouse in the form of Parvati, with delightful dalliance. In this context the Kālikapurāṇa enumerates six holy places, which were located in different directions. They are Vāyavāya (north-west), nairṛta (South-west), aśānya (north-east), āgneya (south-east) madhye (the middle), pārsve (side).

---

114 Ramcharana Thakuria, Gurucarita, v-55, p-11
115 M. Neog, Sankaradeva and His Times, p-86.
Among these the sacred place is to be the *madhye*, where the temple was situated on the Nilachal and this is said to be the most holy places, where the goddess resides with Siva.\(^{116}\)

Verse 79-81:

\[
tasya pūthasya vāyavyā nairṛtyāṁ madhyabhāgataḥ/
aiśāṇyāṁ ca tathagneyyāṁ maddye pārśve ca Śaṅkaraḥ//79//
svamāsrmapadaṁ kṛtvā satsu sthāneṣu śobhanam/
nityāṁ vasati tatrāpi pārvatāḥ saha narmabhīḥ//80//
madhye devīgrhaṁ tatra tadvadhītaṁ tu Śaṅkaraḥ/
nīlākhya parvataśreṣṭhe Pārvatī tatra tiṣṭhati//81//
\]

The goddess was also identified with Tripura, *i.e.* Tripurabālā, with a bow and arrows of flowers in her hand and she stood as the symbol of eternal beauty and desire (kama). She was worshipped both in *Daksinācāra* (right-hand) and *Vāmacara* (left-hand) method. In left-hand method, the goddess requires the worship of an actual living girl. Virgin worship was also practiced and this cult of virgin goddess worship can be traced from the cult of Tripura Sundari.

Another noted form of the Devi is the Tiksnakāntā or Ugratārā and the Lalitā Kāntā. The Tiksnakanta reveals the fearful appearance of the Devi and the Lalita Kanta the graceful appearance. The Tiksnakanta form was Ekajata (single lock of matted hair) and was also famous as Ugratara among the devotees. In the temple of Ugratra in Guwahati, the goddess Ugratara (Tiksnakanta) was placed during the time of Pala rulers.\(^{117}\) It is believed that the Ugratara form originated from the Buddhist pantheon and was assimilated into the fold of Tantricism. R.P. Chanda remarks that the modern cult of *Tārā* appeared to be a Brahmanic Sakta adaptation of the

---

\(^{116}\) K.P.Ch-51, v-79-81, p-726.

Mahayāna Buddhist cult of Tārā and she was admitted to the Mahayana pantheon from the older Sākta pantheon. Besides, there are ten other forms of the Devi which is termed as the daśa-mahāvidyā. They are Kāli, Tārā, Sodasi, Bhuvaneśvari, Bhairavi, Chinnamastā, Dhūmavati, Vagalāmukhi, Mātangi and Kamalā. But the study reveals that the concept of daśa-mahāvidyā finds mention neither in the Kālikapurāṇa nor in Yoginītantra. It might be a later development that was happened due to the popularity of the Sakti cult.

However the composition of Kālikapurāṇa in 10-11th century and the Yoginītantra 16th century C.E indicates that the worship of the goddess gained much popularity than the other deities. Use of the Tantric mode of rituals among which some appear terrible and conforming to Vāmacāra ways made it more alluring to its devotees. The Yoginītantra, the Hara-Gauri Samvada and other Tantras give detailed accounts of Devi worship. The existing ruins of the temples and the literary records indicate the widespread prevalence of the faith even after the Vaishnava reformation movement.

Among the various forms of the goddess, the most popular form is the ‘Kāmakhyā’. In connection to the origin of Kāmakhyā both, the texts give divergent opinions. According to the Kālikapurāṇa the genital organ of Sati fell at the hillock on the Nilachal, when her dead body was carried hither and thither in frantic sorrow by her husband lord Siva. Here the goddess called herself Kāmakhyā, because she

---

118 Indo-Aryan Races, pp-138,142.
119 daśa-mahāvidyā find mention in the Cāmundā-tantra as cited in the Kāmakhyā-tīrtha, p-56.
came to that place to satisfy her Kama with Siva and the mountain symbolised the body of Siva. The mountain turned blue when Sati’s genital organ fell on it.  

Verse1, 2:  

\[
\text{kāmārdhamāgatā yasmānmayā Sārdhaim mahāgirau/} \\
\text{Kāmākhyā prochyte devī nilakute rahogatā/1//} \\
\text{kāmadā Kāminī Kāmā Kāntā Kāmaṅgadāyinī/} \\
\text{kāmāṅgaṅāśinī yasmāt Kāmākhyā tena cocyate/2//}
\]

From then onwards she was worshipped in the form of Yoni and the goddess as the symbol of the creative power occupied taken her seat at the Kāmākhyā temple. Most of the temples that have been found on the Nilachala hills do not possess any images but some split stones were found at the places of worship. In some of the temples water is found to flow out of such cleavages of stones. This represents the Yoni of the goddess as is generally accepted as the symbol or sign of creative power and is called as a Pitha.

On the other hand the Yogiṇītantra gives a divergent description about the origin of the yoni-goddess. Here the Devi herself asked Siva as who was Kāmākhyā and Siva reply that Kāmākhyā is the same as Kali, the eternal form of Brahma. Then Siva tells the story about the origin of Kāmākhyā. According to the story, in primeval times Brahma after having created the universe became arrogant as he was the supreme creative force. The goddess created out of her own body a demon named Kesi because she had been noticing the arrogance of Brahma and was not happy. Immediately after birth the demon rushed towards Brahma to swallow him up. Brahma then left his place and fled towards Vishnu. The demon then occupied the city and called it Kesipura and began to harass the people of the three worlds. There

---

121 K.P.Ch-62, v-1-2,p-905.  
122 B.K.Kakoty, Mother Goddess Kamakhya, p-35.
was all around the echo of a sound – “Kill Brahma”. In such a situation, in the company of Vishnu, Brahma uttered a hymn of propitiation to Kali for the relief of the world from the tyranny of Kesi. The goddess was satisfied and confessed to Brahma that the demon was her own creation and through this she wanted to punish Brahma for his ignorant arrogance. She then uttered the syllable of destruction and burnt the demon to ashes. Then she instructed Brahma to create a mountain from the ashes of the demon and the mountain should be covered over with edible grasses for cattle. Thus, Brahma’s sin would be diminished gradually with the proportion to the quantity of grasses consumed by the cattle. She further said that the place from where they had offered her prayer, there, a yoni-circle would spring up out her own creative energy and it should be regarded as the source and origin of all creatures. According to the Yogini-tantra the goddess had created the yoni-circle for the betterment of the world and placed it in Kamarupa. From then onwards the Devi was worshipped in the form of Yoni.\textsuperscript{123} It can be observed here that, both the treatises give two different versions about the origin of Kāmākhyā. Moreover Kāmākhyā was unknown to Devi herself and both the accounts interpreted the symbol of yoni in a different way. The Kālikapurāṇa depicts the yoni-circle as a symbol of lust and desire and the Yogini-tantra symbolize it as a sign of creation. As the two accounts were the construct of two different periods, these divergent accounts represent two different sets of people who worshipped the cult of Sakti in two different periods of time.

The above discussion clearly proves that Saktism as a contemporary religion of Saivism and Vaisnavism, was quite popular among the people of the Brahmaputra

\textsuperscript{123} Y.T, P-I, P-15, v-5ff, p-105ff.
Valley. Regular increase in the number of its followers resulted in the emergence of a variety of practices. The first kind of practice includes diksa or initiation from a guru, than purascarana or muttering of mantras along with prescribed rituals, homa or sacrifices, asana or physical postures, Prānayama or breath control, dhyāna or meditation and concentration of the mind.\textsuperscript{124}

Verse-3-4: \begin{verbatim}
yadayanantraṁ Sādhanaṁca pūjanasya puraśkriyāṁ/
mudrāṁ valim tathā humāṁ bhāvaṁ Sthānaṁ thaiva ca//3//
dhyānaṁ strotranca kavacaṁ asyāḥ śrutaṁ purā mayā/
idānāṁ śrotumichchāṁ sthānaṁ bhedāṁ maheśvara//4//
\end{verbatim}

Sayya-sadhana or practice of worshipping a dead body taken to the bed at night, bilva-mula-sadhana or practice beneath a bilva-tree etc.\textsuperscript{125} These practices have been considered as the primary practices under Saktism.

Verse-15: \begin{verbatim}
Saṅprocya vatukaṁ devi kṣamasveti visasrjayet/
evamuktaṁ mahādevi Śyāśādhanamuttamam//15//
\end{verbatim}

The second principal practice was the Paṅca-ma-kāras or Paṅca-tattva. In both Kālikapurāṇa and Yoginītantra this form of practice finds prime mention. Paṅca-ma-kāras indicates five objects having ‘m’ as the initial letter in their names. They were also termed as tattvas and they are – the madya or wine, maṁsa or meat, mātsya or fish, mudrā or hand gestures and maithuna or sexual union. In ma-kāra practices, the spiritual aspirants have been classified into three sections i.e. – pasu or animistic, vira or heroic and divya or divine. It was believed that the practice

\textsuperscript{124} Y.T, P-I, P-11, v-3-4, p-74.
\textsuperscript{125} Y.T, P-I, P-5, v-15, p-32.
with the five gross ma-kāras was not meant for the pasu-sadhakas but for the vira and divya-sadhakas.\footnote{Ibid., P-I, P-6, v-13, p-40.}

Verse:13: \[ \text{madyaṁ māsaṁ tathā matsyaṁ mudrā maithunamaiva ca/ idamācaraṇāṁ devi paśorna divyavīrayoh//13//} \]

The spiritual fundamentals behind these practices have been discussed in the Kālikapurāṇa and Yoginītantra. According to the spiritual interpretation, matsya-sadhana means controlling senses, i.e. to redirect the senses towards the self, madya-sadhana means drinking the nectar oozing from shahasrara at the time of the union between kundalini and Siva, mansa-sadhana means destroying merits and demerits by the sword of knowledge and maithuna-sadhana means uniting kundalini with Siva.\footnote{Y.T., P-I, P-6, v-70, p-45.}

Verse70: \[ \text{Kuṇḍalīyā milaṇādindoḥ stravate yat parāṁtanam/ pived yogīmaheśāni satyaṁ satyaṁ śivaḥ svayam//70//} \]

Some other practices were also popular in Saktism, which found mention in the Kālikapurāṇa and Yoginītantra. Sua-gatra-rudhira-mansa-sadhana was a practice or offering blood and flesh out of one’s own body. Citta-sadhana was practiced with a dead body; Sava-sadhana was the practices of meditation by sitting on a dead body in a secret place. munda-sadhana was the practice to be performed by sitting on three or five heads of men or of different animals. Though these practices are prescribed in the treatise but there is no record, which definitely refers to the existence of such practices being prevalent.

The third kind of practice mainly consists of the Sat-Karmans or six kinds of occult practices known as abhicāras. These were Śānti, Vasikarana, Stambhana,
Vidvesana, Ucatana and Mārana. These practices were widely practiced among the Sakta worshippers.\textsuperscript{128}

Verse 28-29: \textit{mādhvī śāntikarī proktā vaiśye ca spharikī śubhā/
stambhane ḍākinī jñeyā vidveṣe paustikī matā//28//
uccārane tathā mauḍī māraṇe bhairavī matā/
etāśāṁ lakṣaṇam devi kathitaṁ kulamohane//29//}

Kālikapurāṇa mentions about the mantras, which were primarily pronounced while worshipping the goddess. A devotee while performing any ritual for the goddess was required to begin by uttering \textit{naibedyava-lokana-mantra}.\textsuperscript{129}

Verse 14: \textit{yasmin karmani yoḥṣito mantrapūjāsu bhairava/
nai vedhyālokamatreṇa tat tat karma samācares//14//}

At the end of the worship the \textit{mandala} is to be blotted out and the devotee should put a tilaka pronouncing the \textit{Sarva-vaśya-mantra} (the mantra which is capable of subjugating one and all), which will grant him \textit{dharma}, \textit{artha} and \textit{kāma}\textsuperscript{130}.

Verse 16: \textit{pūjante maṇḍaṁ liptvā tilakaṁ tena kārayet/
sarvaśyenā mantraṁ dharmacārmārthadāyīnā//16//}

Further it explains that the goddess is superior among all gods and Kamarupa is sacred place to the goddess and there was no land equal to it. So she was present in every household of Kamarupa. The merit that could be acquired from the worship of Kāmākhyā is said to be hundred times more then done on the top of the mount Nilachala\textsuperscript{131}.

Verse 41-42: \textit{devīpūjā tathā śastā Kāmarupe surālaye/}

The Sixty seventh chapter of the Kālikapurāṇa entitled The Rudhiradhyaya: description of offering bali explains the merits or benefits of offering ‘bali’ or sacrifice. Both the Kālikapurāṇa and Yoganītantra give a long list of articles and different animals that could be sacrificed to the goddess.

According to the Kālikapurāṇa birds, tortoises, alligators, fish, nine species of wild animals, buffaloes, bulls, he-goats, wild boars, rhinoceros, sarabha(a mythical animal), lion, tiger and blood drawn from the adepts own body are considered as the most significant objects for offering to Chandika, Bhairava and other forms of the goddess.132.

Verse 3-4:  

\[
\text{pākṣīṇaḥ kacchāpāgrāhā matsyā navavidhā mṛgāḥ/}
\]

\[
\text{maḥśo godhikā gāvaścāgo ruruśca śūkaraḥ/3/}
\]

\[
\text{Khaḍgaśca Kṛṇasāraśca godhikā śarabho hariḥ/}
\]

\[
\text{Śārdulaśca naracaiva Svagātrarudhiraṁ tathā/4/}
\]

\[
\text{Caṇḍkābhairavāddināṁ balayaḥ pariśīrtāhāḥ/}
\]

The Yoganītantra too mentions a list of animals which if sacrificed; the goddess would be satisfied and would fulfill all the wishes of the adept or devotee. Buffalo, boar, pair of goat, deer, and even one’s own body are taken as the objects of sacrifice. Human sacrifice was practiced in three temples of Assam, i.e. in Kāmākhyā, in the temple of goddess Tamreswari, near Sadiya and in Jayanteswari temple of Jayantiapur now in Meghalaya.133 The historical reference of such practice

132 Ibid, Ch-67-v-3-4, p-1001.
133 S. N. Sarma, A Socio-Economic History of Medieval Assam, p-197.
was also witnessed in the medieval period. It was evident in the incident of decapitation of the son of Satrajit, the Mughal Thanedar of Hajo, in the Kāmākhyā temple. It was ordered by King Pratap Singha because the victim was captured in a battle with the Mughals.\(^{134}\)

The reference of such practice was again found in the *Katha Guru Charit*, where it has been said that by offerings of cow, buffalo, copper, bell metal, servants and maids *Govinda Garmani* became a pauper and when he offered his own blood in a conch shell, it was drunk by the Devi in the form of a snake, coiling around it.\(^{135}\)

The practice of human sacrifice was also prevalent at the temple of Tamreswari, which was also popularly known as Kechaikhati Gosani, situated in the eastern most region of the valley near, Sadiya. The goddess Tamreswari became the royal deity of the Chutiya Kings, who ruled in that area from about 14\(^{th}\) to early 16\(^{th}\) century C.E. In this context, E.A.Gait in his book *A History of Assam* states that human sacrifices were also formally offered by the Tipperas, Kacharis, Koches, Jayantias and other tribes and it is thus easy to see how they came to be regarded favourably by the tantric sect of Hinduism which is believed to have had its genesis in this corner of India.\(^{136}\) Human sacrifice was also practiced at the Jayanteswari temple. The Jayantia kings also annually offered human sacrifices to their deity Jayanteswari on the occasion of the autumnal worship of Devi Durga.\(^{137}\)

The other offerings to the goddess were the flowers, perfumes, leaves, lamps and incenses. In the 69\(^{th}\) chapter of *Kālikapurāṇa* it is stated that one should always worship the goddess *Vaisnavi, Kāmākhyā and Tripura* by offering flowers like

---


\(^{135}\) *Kathagurucharit*, p-93.


bakula, madāra, Kunda, Kurṇṭaka, Karavira, arkapuspa, śālmala, aparājitā, damana, sindhuvāra, sweet smelling kuruvaka and also with flowers of creepers, trees, green dūrvā (dubari) grass, soft cluster of Kusa grass and fresh leaves of bilva trees.\textsuperscript{138}

Verse 57-59: \textit{bakulaiścaiva mandāraiḥ Kundapuspaiḥ Kurṇṭakaiḥ/ karavīrārkapuspaiśca Śālmalaścāparājitāḥ//57// damanaiḥ Sindhu vāraśca Surabhi Kuruvakaistathā/ latābhībrāhmaṁvṛksasya dūrvāṅkuraiśca komalaiḥ//58// maṇjarībhīḥ kuśāṁ ca bilvapaiḥ Susobhanaĭḥ/ pūjaye Vaiśṇavīṁ devīṁ Kāmākhyaṁ tripurāṁ tathā//59}

Besides the goddess was also worshipped with the leaves of Vajidantaka, a huge collection of flowers. If the devotee wants to have more and more prosperity then he had to worship her with flowers and leaves of \textit{Tulasi} (tulsi).\textsuperscript{139}

Verse 80: \textit{Vājidantakapataiśca puṣpaudhairapi pujayet//80// tulasikusumaiḥ patraircaryecchrīvivṛdhaye/}

About the \textit{pradīpah} lamps the \textit{Kālikapurāṇa} in the verses of the same chapter states that there were seven kinds of lamps, which could be offered to the goddess. The first is the lamp that burns with ghee followed by other lamps that burns with the sesame oil mustard oil, juice of fruits, juice of lotus, products of curd and that of food.\textsuperscript{140}

Verse 110-111: \textit{grtapradīpah prathamastilatailodbhavastataḥ//110// sārṣapaphalaniryāsajīto vā rājikodbhavah/}

\textsuperscript{138} K.P. Ch-69, v- 57-59, p-1054..
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid, Ch-69, v-80, p-1057.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid, Ch-69, v-110-111, p-1062.
The containers that carry the oil of the lamp could be made of metals, wood, iron, shells of coconut and the lamps made of brass are stated to be the best one. The lamps should be always put on the *dipavrksas* (a tree like structure of metal) and never on the ground.\(^1\)

Verse 113-114:

\[
\text{tejasam daravam loham martikyam narikelajam//}
\]
\[
\text{trinadhvajodbhavam vapi dipapatram prascyaste//113//}
\]
\[
\text{dipavrkshasca kartvyastejasadestu bhairava.}
\]

Besides these the goddess should also be worshipped by offering incense, this could be made of trees such as *śrīcandana, saralā, śāla, kṛṣṇāguru, udaya, suratha, kanda, raktavidruma namera, devadāru and bilva tree*.\(^2\)

Verse 137-139:

\[
\text{sricandanam ca saralah schalah krsagurustatha//}
\]
\[
\text{udayasurathaskando raktavidrumeva ca//137//}
\]
\[
\text{pitsalah parimalo vimirdi kascalastatha//}
\]
\[
\text{namerudervadarusca vilvasarotathah khadirah//138//}
\]
\[
\text{santanah parijatasca hari candanvallabho//}
\]
\[
\text{vrkshesu dhapah sarvesam pritikirtita//139/}
\]

Thus, it can be observed from the above explanation that, the Devi was worshipped by the devotees by offering a number of objects. Perhaps the forests of the valley made it easy for a Sakta devotee to obtain such objects without any hardship. Some of the objects are still used during worship at the present time.

\(^1\) K.P, Ch-69, v-113-114, p-1063.
The goddess was also identified with the goddess of beauty and desire called Tripura. In the *Tripura Rahasya*, the concept of Tripura and her various forms in different manifestations has been vividly elaborated. The worship of Tripura Devi was also concentrated around the *Yoni mandala*. *Kālikapurāṇa* states that the goddess Tripura is worshipped in the pitha i.e. *Kamarupa Pitha*, where the goddess Kāmākhyā resides.\(^{143}\)

Verse 27:  
\[\text{etā nadyati Kāmarupe naiṛtyāmuttarastravāḥ/} \]
\[\text{pīthasya pūrvatastatra tripurā yatra pājyate//27//} \]

*Yoginītantra* also furnishes some information in this regard. In this tantra a Sakta devotee is enjoined to contemplate the mental image of a girl of sixteen shining like the newly risen sun, all naked. The devotee is to concentrate his mind on every part of her body and then think of his own body as being fully assimilated with this mental picture. The objective of every follower of this Devi is to become one with *Tripura Sundari* and the religious exercises are aimed to habituate himself (i.e the devotee) to think that he is a woman\(^{144}\).

Verse 7-12:  
\[\text{vīryogayāṁ srnuśuemaṁ sarvadevanamaskṛtamb//} \]
\[\text{vindutrayayāṁ kālākrantaṁ prathamaṁ paricintayet//7//} \]
\[\text{tattasmadabhavayejjataṁ strīrupaṁ soḍaśādikāṁ//} \]
\[\text{vālākaṇṭisaṁjyotiḥ prakāśitadigambaram//8//} \]
\[\text{mūrdhādistanaparyantamurdhva ndoḥ samudbhavam//} \]
\[\text{vinduyāvanmadhyadeham kānthādikāṭisīrṣakam//9//} \]
\[\text{stanadvayena bhāsantam trivatiparimāṇāntam//} \]
\[\text{yo’ anyādikaṇca pādāntaṁ kāmāntaṁ paricintayet//10//} \]

---

\(^{143}\) K.P, Ch-78, v-27, p-1189.

\(^{144}\) Y.T, P-I, P-6, v-7-12, p-39-40.
This female goddess exhibited herself as a virgin i.e. Kumari, then classified herself into three aspects called Tripura and thereafter into Gauri, Kāli, Chandika, Durgā, Bhāgavati, Katyayanī, Para, and Lalitā etc.¹⁴⁵

Due to her independent nature the goddess was called a virgin. According to the Tripura Rahasya the goddess was independent and she created the universe according to her own desire. This state of independence leads us to believe that the goddess Kāmākhyā was identical with goddess Tripura, because Kāmākhyā is worshipped in the symbol of a yoni and the goddess presides over the circle of feminine triangles that depicts her own complete self in the form of a Yantra.

It is generally believed that the cult of worshipping goddess Tripurafirst originated in South India.¹⁴⁶ It is noteworthy that the Tripura Rahasya itself was composed in South India. Yoginītantra referred to Kancipura as the place where the virgin goddess was first worshipped. Kancipura is located in South India and there the Devi was worshipped there in Kumari and Kamaksi manifestation. Moreover the references of certain practices related to the Tripura goddess, which are still followed in south Indian states tend credence to her origin in South India. At Travancore in Kerala, in the temples of Bhagawati (a deity whose identity is recognized as a village goddess, Velicappadu) she was worshipped in the same ways as Kāmākhyā. The Brahmans performed the role of the priest; the

¹⁴⁵ B.K.Kakati, Mother Goddess Kamakhyā, p-50
¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p-54.
Velicappadu is either a woman or a man dressed in the garments of a woman. More often to get the blessing for conjugal life, young man about to be married are dressed in woman’s apparel and taken in procession to the temple of the village deity bedecked with flowers and with a pot of water on their heads. In *Kālikapurāṇa* the goddess Tripura has been adored in her three forms i.e. *Tripurabala, Tripura sundari and Tripura bhairavi*.148

Verse 86: 

*eśā tu Tripūrā bālā Madhya proktā puraivatri/

śeśā tejasvinī proktā yeyam tripurābhairavi//86//

The mention of ‘Madhya Tripura’ denotes the *Tripura sundari* form. Different *mantras* were also uttered while worshipping these three forms of the goddess. The *Kālikapurāṇa* speaks about thirty three thousand such *mantras* for *Tripura*, out of them the *Vāgbhava bīja* is the first one, *Kāmabīja* is the second and the third is the *mohana*, and thrice repeated *Vāgbhavabīja* is the fourth mantra.149

Verse 71-72: 

*tasyāstu sarvanmantrāṇi trayodasayutāṇi vai/

viṁsati tu sahastrāṇāṁ tatradhauṁ vāgīvaṁ smṛtam//71//

*dvitiyāṁ kāmarājākyāṁ mohanaṁ ca tṛtiyākam/

āmrehiṁ bāgbhavaṁ tu caturthāṁ parīkṛtitaṁ//72//

Among the three forms of the goddess Tripura, the first form, *Tripurabala* wears flowery arrows, a noose and a bow of flowers and stands on a corpse.150

Verse 99: 

*puspabāṇastu pāśaṁ ca dhatte pauśpaṁ śarāsaṇam/

pāśaṁ ca kuṇapāruḍhā sā bālā Tripūrā smṛtā//99//

---

148 *K.P.Ch*-74, v-86, p-1119.
The other form i.e. Tripura sundari has three poses. In all three forms which she contemplated, the middle pose is the focus of concentration. The form is of a well endowed female, with all good bodily signs, adorned with varied ornaments. She is seated on a couch of lotus flowers with fully developed breasts bejeweled, with three folding wrinkles of flesh round the belly, slightly intoxicated with drink, pleasing to the eye and causing heaving undulation of passions in the world.

The third form i.e. the goddess Triuprabhairavi is of red complexion and she wears garments having red colour, she has four arms, holding a rosary in her upper right hand, and the book in the lower one, her left hands are in abhaya (providing safety) and varada mudra (granting boons). She is bright as the rays of a thousand suns, she has three eyes and her gait is like that of an elephant (gajagamini), she has a pair of well developed breasts, her eyes are rolling due to taking intoxicating drinks and she wears a three-fold garland of human heads (mundamala) on her neck.  

Verse 93-97:  

\[ caturbhujāṁ raktavarṇāṁ raktavastravibhūṣitāṁ//93// \\
\[ dakṣiṇodharve strajāṁ cādho bibratāṁ pustakottamām/ \\
\[ abhayaṁ vāmahaṭābhyaṁ varaṁ ca dadhatīṁ tathā//94// \\
\[ shastrasūryasamkāśāṁ vinetrāṁ gajagāminīṁ/ \\
\[ pīnatungastanayugāṁ sitapretāsanasthitām//95// \\
\[ smitaprasannavadanaṁ sarvalaṁkarasaṁyutāṁ/ \\
\[ tīṣrīḥbhūṅḍamālābhīḥ śīrovakṣaḥ kariṣu ca//96// \\
\[ triguṇāṁ triguṇī bhutaiḥ pratyekāṁ paribhūṣitāṁ/ \\
\[ madirāḍhuraṇanayanāṁ raktadantachaddvayāṁ//97// \\
\[ cintayed varadāṁ devī meva tripurabhairavīṁ/ \\

\[ 151 K.P, Ch-74, v-93-97, p-1120. \]
This description of the different forms of the Goddess Tripura denotes that like Kāmākhya, Goddess Tripura was also worshipped in both right hand and left hand method in the region. Offering of human sacrifice and madya (intoxicating drink) were the most popular practices followed to satisfy the goddess. One of the distinctive features can be noticed here, that while worshipping the goddess caste distinction was not a factor. Kālikapurāṇa mentions that both brahman and the Sudras have the right to worship the different forms of the Goddess Tripura.\textsuperscript{152}

Verse 122-124: \textit{tatsyāḥ pūjopakaraṇapātrādi nānyapūjane//112}
\begin{quote}
āsvādyaṁ ca satataṁ nipayojya kadācana/
sakṛtu dāpayednaṁdirāṁ kadācana//123//
śūdṛādayastu satataṁ dadayurāśavamuttamam/
evaṁ tu vāmabhāvera yajet tripurabhīravīm/
\end{quote}
\textit{bālāṁ tu vāmadakṣṭṣyamārgābhīṃ api pūjayet//124//}

Thus, the Kālikapurāṇa provides a detailed description of the goddess Tripura with her three forms and the ways of worshipping her along with the benefits of worship. Though the iconographic representations found in different places of the Valley till date do not throw any light on existence of the first two forms of the goddess, but an icon discovered at Jogijan in Nagaon district and now preserved in the Assam State Museum, resembles the last form i.e. Tripura Bhairavi form of goddess Tripura.\textsuperscript{153} However the probability of getting iconic representations of the other two forms in future excavations cannot be ruled out.

The Tripura Bhairavi discovered at Jogijan Nagaon is seated in \textit{padmasana} posture on double petalled \textit{padmapitha} and wears \textit{ratnamukutā}, with a third eye on her

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid, Ch-74, v-122-124, p-1125.
\textsuperscript{153} N.D.Choudhury, \textit{Saktism and Sakta Goddesses in Assam, JARS, V-XXXI}, p-161.
forehead and a crescent on her hair and a *mundamālā* around her neck flowing down to her knees. The four handed deity holds in her upper right hand *aksamālā*, in the upper left hand *pustaka* and the front right and left hands are in *varada* and *abahya mudra* respectively. This image is well modeled with developed breasts, slim waist and a slight bulge in the lower abdomen. It is in the Pala style, so it may be placed in 11th -12th century C.E. This image is a concrete example of the worship of goddess *Tripura* among the people of the Brahmaputra Valley.

Besides, the goddess Tripura, Tamreswari was also a popular form of Sakti. She is called Ugratara and Dikkaravasini with two forms i.e. Tikshna-Kanta and Lalita-Kanta. Lalita-Kanta was gracefully attractive while Tikshna-Kanta was dreadful with her dark complexion and single matted lock of hair i.e. ‘ekajata’. The process of her worship is similar with that of goddess Kāmākhya. Moreover, the *Kālikapurāṇa* itself mentions these two forms of the goddess. Tikshna-kanta is named as the goddess Ugratara and the other Lalita-kanta is *Mangala Candika* herself. These two forms were required to be worshipped with their six yoginis, i.e *Chāmundā, Karalā, Subhāga, Bhīṣana Bhāga and Vīkata*.154

Verse 45-46: 

```
sarvamuttaratantroktaṁ guhya rupadvaye'pi ca/
cāmuṇḍā ca karālā ca subhagā bhīṣanā bhāgya/45//
vikateti ca yoginyah proktā yasyāstavaiva ṣata/
he bhagavatyekajare vihyahe padamantataḥ/46//
vikata daśtre dhīmaihi tannastāre pracao dayāt//
```

---

154 *K.P. Ch-80, v-45-46, p-1239.*
The goddess Tikshna-kanta is worshipped by offering intoxicating drinks, human sacrifice, coconut, meat, curry and sugarcane.\(^{155}\)

Verse 50-51:

\[
\text{sarva tu purvavad gāhyam kāmākhyaḥpūjane yathā/}
\]
\[
pāneṣu madirā śastā naro valiṣu pārthiva//50//
\]
\[
modaka nārikalāṁ ca māṃsavyaṅjanamaṅkṣavam/
\]
\[
naiyedēṣu priyakarāstiṇāyāḥ parikirtitāḥ//51//
\]

The goddess in her Lalita-kanta form is known as the Mangala Chandika and is worshipped by offering sacrifices and even blood from one’s own body for the devotee’s welfare.\(^{156}\)

Verse 60-61:

\[
\text{upacāro baliścāyāvihito yaḥ kramah purā//60//}
\]
\[
svaṅgāṭrārudhiraṁ dadhādātmansāśca hitāya vai//61//
\]

This goddess is patronised by the Chutia royal family and brought her into prominence. She was installed at a Copper temple and came to be known as Tamreswari Devi (Tamra meaning copper). According to the Gazetteer the temple is a small stone building nearly square, built without cement, the stones joined by iron pins not clamped and the roof was of copper. The interior of the temple is of eight feet square. The entire temple was enclosed within a brick wall of 130ft x 200ft. near the grand entrance in the western wall is a small stone tripod. Here human sacrifices were annually offered to the goddess.\(^{157}\) Today, only the ruins of the temple were left. This goddess of the Copper temple was also known as the Eka-jata or Ugratara. They were considered to be of Buddhist origin, which later absorbed into the Hindu pantheon and identified as the manifestations of Durga and

\(^{155}\) Ibid, Ch-80, v-50-51, p-1240.
\(^{156}\) Ibid, Ch-80, v-60-61, p-1242.
\(^{157}\) Gazetteer: Lakhimpur, 1905, p-111.
Kali. Yoginītantra also considers Tāra the same as Kālī, the embodiment of supreme lore so also is Kāmakhyā.158

Verse-2: \[ yā Kālī paramā vidhā brahmarupā sanātanī/ \]

\[ Kāmakhyā Saiva deveśī sarvasiddhipradāyini//2// \]

Images made of terracotta and bronze of the goddess Tara in her Ugra form, have also been found in abundance at various places. Terracotta plaques depicting the goddess Tara in Ugra (fierce) dancing posture is found at Bhaitbari (Vadagokugiri) near the foothills of the Garo hills, now in Meghalaya but also a part of the Brahmaputra Valley and Pratapgar Tea Estate now at Biswanath Chariali. The image found at Bhaitbari is of Ugra form. Her face has broad cheekbones, flat long nose, big eyes and she holds a human head in her left hand. She also wears mukuta, hara, mundamala, kanganas, and valayas etc.

In the other images found at the Pratapgar Tea Estate, the goddess is seated on a double-petalled padmapitha in lalitāsana posture. She is adorned with karanda mukuta, kunḍala, haras, malas, valayas, kankanas and nupuras and wears kativastra and kati mekhala as paridhana. A similar image made of bronze was also collected from Narakasura hills, and is now preserved at Assam State Museum. The deity is seated on padmapitha in lalitasana posture and adorned with the same objects as were found in the image of Pratapgar Tea Estate.

Thus, these four forms were the most popular forms of the goddess with dreadful manifestations, which were worshipped with some orthodox practices like animal sacrifices, offerings of modaka, flesh curry, coconuts and sugar cane - panesu madira sastanaro balisu parthiya.159

---

159 K.P, Ch-80, v-50-51, p-1240.
Verse 50-51:  

\[ \text{pāneṣu madirā śastā naro valiṣu pārthiva} / 50 / \]
\[ \text{modaka nārikalaṁ ca mānsavyaṅjanamaikṣavam} / \]
\[ \text{naiyedeśhu priyakarāṅstīnāyāḥ parikīrtitāḥ} / 51 / \]

The Kālikapurāṇa and Yoginītantra have also referred to some other manifestations of the Devi, such as Durga, Kāli, Mahisamardini, Chamunda etc.

The origin of the form Durga has been stated in the chapter Fifty nine (Ceremony of Pavitṛāropana) of Kālikapurāṇa. According to the text, at the hermitage of the sage Katyayana, the goddess was created by the combined energy (Sakti) of all gods. In this form she was believed to be the protector of the world and the killer of the demon Mahisa.  

Verse 5-6:  

\[ \text{yadā kātyānamuneraśraneṣu divaukasāṁ} / \]
\[ \text{tejobhī̄ṛtakāyābhūd devo devaudhasastunā} / 5 / \]
\[ \text{tadā netratrayād devyā mūlamūrtirviniḥṣṭā} / \]
\[ \text{tejomayī jagaddhatī mahiśāsuradhātinī} / 6 / \]

With the accumulated energy of all the gods the goddess the Devi assumed an excellent body having various weapon in her hands and with the help of these weapons killed the demon. Because of this, since then this form the Devi is being worshipped by most of the people everywhere.  

Verse 7-9:  

\[ \text{tejobhīṣ sarvadevānāṁ sā dhṛtvā vapuruttamam} / \]
\[ \text{astrānyenakānyādāya devaiddattani bhagaśaḥ} / 7 / \]
\[ \text{sagasāṁ sānuvandham ca sāmātyabalavāhanam} / \]
\[ \text{brahmādhyaiḥ samastutā devī jaghāna mahiśāsuram} / 8 / \]
\[ \text{hate tu mahiṣe devī pujitā tridaśaistatab} / \]

\[ ^{160} \text{K.P., Ch-59, v-5-6, p-845.} \]
\[ ^{161} \text{Ibid, Ch-59, v-7-9, p-846.} \]
Further in the sixtieth chapter it has been mentioned that the Mahisa demon was cursed by sage Katyayana because of his unlawful activities. He cursed him that: a woman shall kill you; there is no doubt about it.\textsuperscript{162}

Verse 95: \begin{align*}
kātyāyanena muninā Šapto’haṁ Śisyakāraṇāt/\
simantī vināśan te karisyati na sāmaśyah//95//
\end{align*}

To kill the demon Mahamaya took the form of Ugracanda and Bhadrakali with sixteen arms along with two other arms holding a club in the right hand below and a drinking cup filled with intoxicating liquor in the left hand, wore a garland of human heads and a snake on her head and had a lion as her mount. The demon’s body was pierced through the heart by a trident, his head was severed and his hair grasped by the goddess. His entrails were coming out from his body along with blood. Mahisa was terrified and lost his senses. Thus Mahamaya became the popular form of Devi and till today she is worshipped by the people of the Brahmaputra Valley as the goddess Durga.

Images of Mahisamardini, carved on stone slab have been recovered from Sirajuli town. The goddess has ten arms, stands in atibhanga posture, with the right leg placed on the back of her vahana the lion, while the left leg is on the back of the beheaded Mahisa. The ayudhas held by her hand are trisula, cakra, tanka, arrow, khadga, kaitaba, bow, battle-axe, ankusa and kesbandha of asura. Similar images are also found at Hajo, Ulubari and in Siddheswari temple, Sualkuchi, all in Kamrup district. These images are assigned to 11\textsuperscript{th} - 12\textsuperscript{th} century C.E.

\textsuperscript{162} \textit{Ibid,} Ch-60, v-95, p-876.
An image of the same goddess with eighteen hands was recovered from Uzan bazaar in Guwahati on the bank of river Brahmaputra. Another rock-cut image of Mahisamardini in tribanga posture with ten hands can be seen in Hatimura Pahar at Kaliabar in Nagaon district. It is assigned to 16th-17th century C.E.

The goddess is also worshipped in the form of Kāli in the region. Kālikapurāṇa and Yoginītantra both recognise Kāli and goddess Kāmākhyā as identical. In the fifteenth Patala of Yoginītantra Parvati asks Siva who is Kāmākhyā and Siva replied that Brahmarupa Sanatani Kāli was none other than the Kāmākhyā.163

Verse 1-2:

\[
guptena tvāmahāṁ Kāmākhyā kā vadasya me//1//  
yā Kāli paramā vidhā brahmarupā sanātani//  
Kāmākhyā Saiva deveśī sarvasiddhipradāyinī//2//
\]

Therefore there is no doubt that the goddess Kāli is one of the forms of Kāmākhyā. She is worshipped in the Valley according to the same rituals which were followed in case of the other forms of the goddess. Devotional songs were also sung by the womenfolk during Kali puja, which are still in vogue:

“kāli kāli mahā kāli, bhadra kali nāmoh  
Sadasibai padatale kori ase dhyān”\textsuperscript{164}

Different iconic representations of Kāli are also found in the valley, thus denoting the worship of this form of Devi. An image of Kāli has been found in the Panchanan temple, at North Lakhimpur. Here the Devi is shown seated on a prostrate human figure which is lying over a double petalled padmapitha. The four-handed deity holds indistinct objects in upper right and left hands, while the front

\textsuperscript{163} Y.T, P-I, P-15, v-1,2, p-105.  
right hand is in *bhujisparsa mudra* and front left hand is in *varadamudra*. The top of the Silapatta is occupied by *Kirttimukha* flanked by *vidyadharas*. This may be assigned to 11th-12th century C.E.

Another image of Mahakali has been noticed in Kalyani Than, Gahpur in the Sonitpur district. The four-handed deity stands on a prostrate human body and holds a *kapala* in the right hand. While the right upper hand is in *abhaya mudra*, a *khadga* in her left upper hand and a human head in the front left hand. She is adorned with *jatamakuta*, *kundala*, *haravalaya*, *kankana* and *nupura* and wears a short Saree like garment *kativastra*.

Again an image of *Kāli* carved on a black stone of 10th-11th century C.E was collected from Bijulibari, Mangaldoi and is now in the Assam State Meuseum. Here the deity is shown standing in *alidha* posture on a prostrate human figure. The four-handed deity is holding a *kartari* in her front right hand, *khadga* in upper right hand, an indistinct object in the upper left hand and a *kapala* in front left hand. The hair of the goddess rise upward. She also wears a long *mundamala*. Thus the iconic figures found in different places resemble the form of *Kāli* that has been indicated in the *Kālikapurāṇa* and *Yoginītantra* It reflects that the worship of Devi in the form of *Kāli* was widely prevalent in the valley. She is still worshipped in Assam in the present time, thus depicting continuity from early time.

Among the different forms of the goddess, Chāmundais another one of the terrific aspects of the goddess. The *Matsyapurana*, *Agnipurana*, *Visnudharmottapurana*, *Purvakamikagama*, *Amsumadbhedagama* and *Kālikapurāṇa* all have described the features of Chāmanda.
A huge number of Chāmundaimages have also been recovered from different places of the Valley. An image of Chāmunda is noticed at Nabhangā, carved on a block of black schist. The four handed deity is seated on a pretāsana and holds a khadga in her right upper hand, sūla in upper left hand, kapāla in front right hand. She wears mundamala and human skulls are latched round the waist as katiwastra. A snake is also shown garlanding her neck. She is flanked by a jackel and vulture on either side.

Moreover, three more images of Chāmundacan be seen at Kāmākhya. Two of the images are displayed in terrific appearance and seated on pretānsana. The third one placed in the Natmandapa of Kāmākhya temple is depicted in Sthanka attitude. Kālikapurāṇa in its Sixty one chapter states that the Goddess Tāra is identical with Chāmunda. Here goddess Tāra is mentioned as one of the form of Kāli; therefore, there is no doubt that Chāmunda is also a form of Devi. She is described as dark as the hue of the petals of blue lotus, with four arms, wears khatvanga and candrahara in her two right hands and she holds a shield of hide and a noose in her two left hands respectively, she is adorned with a wreath of human heads and wears tiger skin as garment. She is of dark complexion, has long fangs, she is tall and look terrifying. She is with protruding tongue and red eyes, screams horribly sit upon a kabandha which is her mount,

she is with wide ears and mouth. This is the goddess Tāra, who is also called Chāmunda.\(^{165}\)

Verse 92-95:  

\[\text{nilotpaladalasyāmā caturbhāhusamanvitā/} \]

\[\text{khatvāṅgain candrahāsaṁ ca bibhraṁ ṛdhvitaṁ kare/92//}\]

\(^{165}\) K.P, Ch-61, v-92-95, p-900.
Manasa, the goddess was also considered as one of the different forms of the Devi. It is noticed by the different scholars that the goddess Manasa is a newly added deity to the list of Hindu faith. She is mostly worshipped in Western Assam from about 13th or 14th century C.E. Both the brahmanical and non-brahmanical people were the worshippers of the goddess. The pujavidhi is not unlike the brahmanical type of worship which includes dhyāna, mantra, offering naivedya and animal sacrifices. Sculptured images of Manasa belongs to 13th century have also been found in Assam. Manasa icons recovered from Silghat and Numaligarh and now preserved in State prove the existence of her worship. She is called by various names such as Padmāvatī, Brāhmanī, Visahārī, Nāgamātā etc.

SOLAR-CULT: In the history of the religion, the Solar-cult occupies a prominent place as the religion practiced by the people from West to East since second millennium B.C. Surya, one among the Solar deity is a prominent Vedic god, who finds an equally important place in the Zen-Avesta of Persia (Iran). From the different literature, epigraphic and archaeological remains it is known that the solar-cult had entered the Brahmaputra Valley along with the Aryan speakers. In the Grhya Sūtras, the earliest reference to Pragjyotisha as the center of Sun-worship
finds mention. The Puranas also corroborate the evidence as supplied by the \textit{Grhya Sūtras}. The \textit{Kālikapurāṇa} also refers to Sun-worship while describing about Solar-cult. In \textit{Kālikapurāṇa Tattva-śaila} is mentioned as one of the place where Surya resides as the prominent deity of that area. \textit{Tattva-śaila} is now identified with Sri Surya Pahara of the present day.

Verse 41b:
\begin{verbatim}
tadā tatvāhvaye Śaile Śrī Sūryo’pi vyayasthitah/
\end{verbatim}

Sri Surya Pahar is at a distance of about fourteen km from Goalpara town and contains quite a number of images and ruins of the Sun god Surya along with a circular stone slab depicting the twelve Ādityas. The stone slab has an outer circle containing a small inner circle. Within the inner circle is the figure of four-face deity exists who may be identified as Prajāpati, the father of the Āditya. Aditi is the consort of Prajāpati. The outer circle contains the same figures arranged around the figure of Prajāpati in the form of lotus petals. The \textit{Kālikapurāṇa} also prescribes the ritual procedure of worshipping the Sun. It enumerates different mantras of for paying obeisance such as thebrahma-bīja, aṅga-bīja and the Oṃ ssahasra-raśmaye svāhā, which grants all desire.

Verse 45b-47:
\begin{verbatim}
ityanena tu mantreṇa snātvā kapotapuṣkare//45b//
Karaṇāṁ Samupaspṛśya tatvaśaile raviṁ yajet/
trividham brahmabījaṁ tu Sahastrapadamantataḥ//46//
raśmaye’pe caturthyāṁ tu devijāyā tu cesthitah/
angabījamidaṁ proktamādityasyātikādamadu//47//
\end{verbatim}

\begin{flushright}
\underline{\text{References:}}
\end{flushright}

\begin{itemize}
\item P.C.Choudhry, \textit{THCPA}, p-434.
\item K.P. Ch-78, v-41b, p-1191
\item K.P. \textit{op. cit.}, Ch-78, v-45b-47, p-1192.
\end{itemize}
The work also describes the physical appearance of the sun and instructs the devotee to draw a circle (manḍala) with petals of lotus for worshipping the sun. Besides it also refers to Kapota and Karana Kunda where a devotee could take bath with the intention of worshipping Sri Surya.\footnote{Ibid, Ch-78, v-v-43, p-1192.}

Verse 43: \textit{Kapotakunḍe vidhivat snātvā Karanakunḍake//43//

tatvācalaṁ samāruhya sāmapūja ca divākaram/
sakrādeva naro yāti bhāskarasya grhaṁ prati/}

Further the Kālikapurāṇa refers to Citra-śaila where the nine-planets were worshiped.\footnote{K.P, Ch-79, v-142, p-1224.}

Verse 142: \textit{evāṁ citra Śailavare pūjayitvā navagrahān/

Abhīstāllaṅbhate Kāmānnaṁ Śāntiṁ tathottmāṁ//142//}

The Citra-śaila is identified with the hill in which the present temple of Navagraha constructed by the Ahom ruler Rajeswar Singha at Guwahati stands. But the study reveals that prior to the construction of the temple, worship of the nine-planets was in practice, probably later the Ahom ruler patronised this cult and constructed the temple at the site of an earlier shrine.

The prevalence of the solar cult is also evident by the mention of \textit{tathāgata-kārita-adityabhaṭṭāraka-satka-śāsanabhaviṣabhūmi} in the Gauhati grant of Indrapala.\footnote{Gauhati Grant, K.S, p-202.} The Ambari Stone Slab Inscription of Samudrapala refers to him as Adityasena or as powerful as the Sun god.\footnote{Ambari stone Inscription of Samudrapala, K.S, p-227.}
Apart from the literary sources, the images and ruins of Sun temple found amongst the Tezpur remains, ruins of Goalpara, especially those at Sri Surya Pahar, Dah Parvatiya, Gahpur, Sualkuchi, Mangaldoi, Pandu, Sadiya, Sukresvara etc carry the evidence of Sun-worship in the region. Specimens or remains of Sun images are found in the sites of Sri Surya Pahar, Narakasura Hills, and Sualkuchiand at Guwahati.174 Another beautiful sun image in a panel has been found in Tezpur and in Bhogbari Mangaldoi (9th-10th century)175 Moreover a seated image of Surya on one of the Chaitya is also recovered at Dah Parvatiya. The Kālikapurāṇa also gives a detailed description about the procedure of worshipping the sun god. In Kālikapurāṇa god Surya was known by different names such as (Aditya, Ravi and Bhaskara).176

Verse 39-41: 

\[
pūrve tā madaṇāyāsta brahmaṇaṇaṣṭa paricame//39// \\
ravikṣetramaṇaḥ yatra deva ādityah satataṁ sthitāḥ/ \\
bhairavasya hitārthāya yatra sarveśvarāḥ sthitāḥ//40// \\
Kāmarupe mahāpīthe brahmendravaruṇādayah/ \\
\]

Kālikapurāṇa states that the god Surya is as bright as the bosom of the lotus. He has two hands and is seated on a lotus; he holds a lotus in his hand. Here ratha is mentioned as his ‘vahana’, which is drawn by a chariot drawn by seven horses.177

Verse 48:

\[
padmāsanaḥ padmakaraḥ padmargarbhasamadyatiḥ/ \\
Saptāśvaḥ saptarajjuśca dvibhujo bhāskaraḥ sadā//48// \\
\]

174 N N Bhattacharyya, Religious Culture of North-Eastern India, New Delhi, 1995, p-63.
177 K.P, Ch-78, v-48, p-1193.
Thus it can be asserted that along with the other gods and goddesses, god Surya and the cult of worshipping the *grahas* (planets) also occupied an important place in the Brahmanical pantheon of early Assam.

**BUDDHISM:** *Kālikapurāṇa and Yoginītantra* do not give direct reference to the existence of Buddhism in the Brahmaputra Valley. However the other contemporary sources to some extent refer to its prevalence. The study of the different sources mainly indicates the prevalence of Tantric Buddhism i.e. Vajrāyāna form and on the other hand the nature of this later form of Buddhism resembles the *Vāmacara* practices, which was mainly followed while worshipping Sakti as mentioned in the *Kālikapurāṇa*. So it can be asserted that Buddhism in its Tantric form was prevalent in the region. But before going into further discussion it is important to have a look into the earliest form of Buddhism. As mentioned earlier most of the sources available for studying the history of religion in the Brahmaputra Valley are silent about the prevalence of Buddhism. Only a few referred to its presence. The account of Hiuen-Tsang states that Buddhists were a minority in Kamarupa and practiced their worship secretly. There were no Buddhist monasteries. The tolerance of Bhaskarvarman towards Buddhism, his active participation in the Buddhist assembly organized by Siladitya at Kanyakubja, his presence at Prayaga assembly conducted by Harashvardhana and lastly the invitation to Hiuen-Tsang as mentioned in the same account reveals that inspite of being a devotee of Siva, the King of Kamarupa did not maintain a hostile attitude towards Buddhism. Taranatha’s *History of Buddhism in India* also made references to the existence of Buddhism prior to the reign of Bhaskavarman. It states that when

---

Siddha, the Sun-worshipper realized the truth from Arya Dhitika, with great reverence he built a Vihāra called Mahācaitya. “He also lavishly entertained the samghas all around. Thus the law of Buddha was widely spread in Kamarupa” 179

Dhitika flourished between Ajatasatru and Asoka i.e 273 and 232 B.C. If we accept this the date of Dhitika’s existence than we can conclude that Buddhism was prevalent in the region as early as third century B.C.E. The numerous rock-cut elliptical Stupas at Sri Surya Pahar in Goalpara district indicate that Buddhism was well established in the western part of the Brahmaputra Valley.

Another reference cited in the same text can also be considered in this context. According to this reference Maṭriceta alias Aśvaghosa defeated the Buddhists in Oddisa, Gauda, Tirahuti, Kamarupa and other places and here Maṭriceta was identified as Aśvaghosa by Taranath.180 Moreover the generally accepted date of Asvaghosa is 100 C.E and this indicates that as early as the first century C.E. Buddhism entered into Kamarupa. On the same authority it is suggested that a Buddhist preacher name Asvabhava preached the Mahamaya doctrine in Kamarupa.181 Aśvabhāva flourished during the time of King Govichandra, almost contemporaneous with Dharmakirti around 600 C.E. 182 No doubt all the references drawn by Taranatha are based on authentic sources. But if we notice the account given by Hiuen-Tsang about the region there he mentioned that the people worshipped the devas and did not believe in Buddhism. So there had never been a Buddhist monastery in the land and whatever Buddhists there were in it performs their acts of devotion secretly; though the King was not a Buddhist but he treated

179 Taranatha. History of Buddhism in India, p.47.
181 B.K.Baruah, A Cultural History of Assam, p-183.
182 M.M.Sarma,(ed) H.K.Barpujari, TCHA, V-I, Ch-XII, p-334
accomplished Sramanas with respect.\textsuperscript{183} So if Dhitika, Aśvaghosha and Aśvabhāva really preached Buddhism in Kamarupa then, it should not have escaped the notice of Hiuen-Tsang who visited the kingdom in second quarter of the 7\textsuperscript{th} century C.E. Hence on the basis of this observation it can be said that the Brahmaputra Valley was the strong hold of the Brahmanical religion and ruled by monarchs who were the ardent followers of Siva and Vishnu. Hence Buddhism remained confined to a few secret followers. Kalhana’s *Rajatarangini* also refers to the existence of Buddhism. It mentions about a 5\textsuperscript{th} century ruler of Kamarupa, whose daughter Amṛītaprabhā was married to a Kashmiri ruler Meghavāhana, a Siva worshipper. She brought Stunpā a Buddhist monk from her father’s place. It suggests the growth of Buddhism in the region. It also indicates that Buddhism was able to make its place in a state like Kashmir, where Siva was the mast popular of all the deities. But gradually, popularity of the Siva-Sakti faith led to the transition of Buddhism into its tantric nature.

Thus up to 12\textsuperscript{th} century C.E. It can be said that Buddhism was there in the Valley as a minor cult having limited followers. It is probably with the growth of tantric mode of worship in Kamarupa that Vajrāyānā Buddhism became popular. It was “a queer mixture of monastic philosophy, magic and erotics, with a small admixture of Buddhist ideas”.\textsuperscript{184} The influence of Tantricism is easily witnessed in a biography of Sri Sankardeva, where he mentioned that he once encountered with some Buddhist magicians (*baudhamatiya takakiya*).\textsuperscript{185} Again in his ‘Kirtan Ghosā’ he writes that God was born as the Buddha only to destroy the way of Vedas and

\textsuperscript{183} Watters, *Op cit*, V-II, p-186.
\textsuperscript{185} *Katha Guru Charit*, v-45.
confound people with the left-hand scriptures. Sankardeva further writes that the Kalki form of God will descend on earth towards the end of the Kali age, massacre the Mlecchas, exterminate all the ‘Baudhas’ that there be, and establish the Truth.\textsuperscript{186}\textsuperscript{186}\textsuperscript{186} Maheswar Neog asserts that it probably refers to the excesses committed by the Tantric or Vajrāyāna Buddhist, mixed up with other tantric practices, as Sankara himself saw them.\textsuperscript{187}\textsuperscript{187}\textsuperscript{187} Here other tantric practices might be referred to as the Vāmacārā practices (mentioned in the Kālikapurāṇa) i.e the five ‘Ma’s Paīca-ma-kāras. Tantric Buddhism emerged in 7\textsuperscript{th} century C.E.\textsuperscript{188}\textsuperscript{188}\textsuperscript{188} At the same time in the Brahmanical sphere Sakta-tantricism developed in such a manner that there ceased to be any sharp distinction between Brahmanical and Buddhist deities and practices. While we cannot be sure of the prevalence of early form of Buddhism in the region except in the Goalpara district till the 7\textsuperscript{th} cen, there exist convincing evidences of the prevalence of the later form of Buddhism since that time. The prevalence of Buddhism is also indicated by the fact that Adi Sankaracharya in the beginning of the ninth century came to Kamarupa in order to defeat Abhīnava Gupta, the noted Buddhist Scholar, in a debate.\textsuperscript{189}\textsuperscript{189}\textsuperscript{189} The Tantric Buddhist literature also indicates the prevalence of Tantric Buddhism in the land. According to these texts there are some important centers of Tantric Buddhism in the valley of the Brahmaputra. The Sādhanāmālā mentions four sacred centres of Vajrāyāna and Kāmākhyā is also indentified as one of the centres. The other centres are Odḍīyana, Śrīhaṭṭa and Pūrṇagiri. According to Tibetan writers Odḍīyana was considered to have been located somewhere in the Kapili Valley of Assam. This indicates that there was a

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid v.14
\textsuperscript{187} M. Neog, Sankardeva and His Times, p.88.
\textsuperscript{188} M. Neog, Buddhism in Kamarupa, IHQ, V-XXVII, p.145.
strip of territory extending from Lanka area in the Kapili Valley to the Varendra area in North Bengal which was known as Oddiyana. Thus Oddiyana belonging to Assam at least partially reveals the prevalence of Tantric Buddhism in ancient Assam.

The other centre ‘Pūrṇagiri’, according to Bhattacharya is somewhere near Kāmākhyā and Srihatta. ‘Pūrṇagiri pitha also finds mention in the Kālikapurāṇa. where it has been said that when Siva was wandering with the dead body of Sati, her legs fell at Kamarupa, the breasts at Jalandhar, the shoulder and the neck upon the Pūrṇagiri and then the head at the farthest limit of Kamarupa. From this description it is clear that Siva wandered from the west to the east and all the Pithas fall within the limits of ancient Assam. Thus Pūrṇagiri falling within this belt should be in the neighbourhood of Oddiyana and Kāmākhyā. And it is noticed that the Pithas mentioned in the Tantric literature are similar to that of Sādhana-mālā. It suggests that Tantric Buddhism was there in early Assam. Moreover the various Buddhist Tantras refers to a number of Siddhas who were associated with Kamarupa and this leads evidence to the belief that of Vajrāyānā Buddhism existed in the region. In this regard Mātasyendra and Goraksa may be mentioned.190 Mātasyendra or Minanath is said to have composed a number of works in Kamarupa among which the Bahayantara-bodhicitta-banhopadesa is remarkable because the language of his work correspond to the old Kamarupi dialect.191

---

190 P.N.Bhattacharya, Buddhism in Assam, JARS, V-III, pp-115-118.
The 16th century Yoganītantra however depicts the religion of Kamarupa as the ‘Kairataja dharma’ where there are no restrictions on eating meat and fish and no compulsion over maintaining brahmacharya.192

Verse-15-17:  

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{sidha kṣhetre yoganīpītha dharmam kairātajamataṁ} & //15// \\
\text{Kāmarūpe na saṃnyāsatha dīrghavratam priye/} \\
\text{na tyajeta sāmiṣam devi brahmachāryamatam na ca/} \\
\text{saṁsargapātakeneva strīdharma dharmāśrayeta//16//} \\
\text{na śūkradarśanam strīṇā tāmbūlāśi sadā bhaveta/} \\
\text{haṁsaparāvatam bhakshyan kārmavarāhameva ca//17//}
\end{align*}
\]

No sin occurs from contact with different castes. If it is so, than there could be a vast differences in the Vedic-Brahmanical religion and the religion of Kamarupa. Therefore it can be considered that in the early stages Buddhism was free from the tantric rites and rituals but the growing influence of Kairataja dharma, the religion of the Kiratas by following tantric rites, resulted in the Buddhist of the Brahmaputra Valley following the same practices.

**ISLAM:** The Brahmaputra Valley for the first time came into contact with Islam after the invasions of the Muhammadans. Yoganītantra in its 11th patala mentions about the Yavanas, whom the historians identified with the Mughals. According to the text the region would have to face continuous expeditions from the Kuvaca i.e the Koches, Saumars i.e the Ahoms and the Yavanas i.e the Mughals. No doubt these expeditions and conflicts occurred in the area since the early years of the thirteenth century C.E and it continued till the later part of the 17th century. Besides the Yoganītantra other source like epigraphs and Islamic records also contains the

---

advent of the Muhammadans into the Valley. The Kānāibaraśī Rock Inscription\textsuperscript{193} of North Gauhati, refers to them as the Turushkas or Turks. The Sihabuddin Talish’s\textsuperscript{194} account also carry the evidence of Mughal invasion of Assam. At the initial stage the infiltration of the Muslims was small in number but later on it occurs in a continuous stream. This infiltration took place in several ways. They were sometime brought as prisoners of war by the Ahom rulers, some were brought by rulers as artisans, masons, engravers, etc and other entered the valley for the purpose of trade and commerce. Thus the gradual growth of the Muslim population brought certain changes in the social and cultural life of the land and a new religion \textit{Islam} was added to the list of faiths that prevailed in the Valley of the Brahmaputra. Islam was a religion with the sociological features of equality and brotherhood. In spite of being a simple religious faith, it was not able to attract the local inhabitants. Moreover the continuous attack of the Muslims since 1206 C.E till 17\textsuperscript{th} century perhaps resulted in the growth of an antagonistic attitude towards their professed religion i.e Islam.

Nevertheless the religion ‘Islam’ was successful in its process of expansion. Here a significant example can be mentioned in regard to Ali Mech, the then Chief of the Mech tribe. According to Minhajuddin’s account ‘the Koches and the Mech tribes of the territory to the east of Gauda displayed their appreciation of Islam so much that one of their chief even adopted the faith from Muhammad-ibn-Bakhtiyar as early as 1206 C.E.’\textsuperscript{195} Tughril Khan, who led an army against Assam in 1256-57 built the first mosque on the soil of Assam. The most important contributory factor

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{193} Kānāibaraśī rock inscription, \textit{KS}, p-226.
\textsuperscript{194} A.K.Ahmed Jakaria(ed and tr) \textit{Tabaqat-i-Nasiri}, p-66-71.
\textsuperscript{195} M.Saikia \textit{Assam-Muslim Relation and Its Cultural Significance}, p-177.
\end{footnotesize}
in the field of its expansion was perhaps the coming of the four Pirs, particularly Shah Milan, commonly known as Ajan Pir, who was initially punished by King Gadadhar Simha and then, after being convinced of his exceptional spiritual attainments, the same monarch duly patronized him in 1686.\textsuperscript{196} He was settled in the Saraguri Chapari of Sibsagar and continued to preach the message of Islam. He composed numerous devotional songs popularly known as the Zikirs in Assamese. At the same time the growing popularity of Azan Fakir became a cause of concern to the early Muslim settlers of Assam. Because through his writings and preachings the Pir bitterly attacked those native Muslims who delighted in practices that were against Islamic Shariat. Azan Fakir not only preached Islam but he has set an example of developing mutual harmony among the Hindus and Muslims by marrying an Assamese lady, by whom he had three sons. And their descendants are still found in Assam.

The Ahom monarchs also began to grant due patronage to places sanctified by Islamic holy men. It appears that the religion received royal patronage from the time of the liberal Ahom King Rudra Singha. Like the other Hindu religious centres, the Islamic organizations also began to receive attention. King Rajeswar Simha issued a copper plate in the name of one Ajana Khandakar granting land and eleven families of Paiks for offering regular services to an Islamic holy place called Bibir Mokam.\textsuperscript{197}

The Powa Mecca Dargah of Hajo is another evidence of the presence and popularity of Islam in the region. It is mentioned in the records of Hazrat Ghiyasuddin Auliya that he inlaid holy earth from Mecca in this dargah, named it as

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{196} J.N.Sarkar(ed) H.K.Barpujari, \textit{TCHA}, Vol-II, Ch-VIII, p-244.
  \item \textsuperscript{197} J. N. op.cit.
\end{itemize}
Powa Mecca, ‘a quarter of Mecca’. Some people in Assam, however, believe that the place was originally the abode of Chansai, the Muslim disciple of Sankardeva, and that it was during his stay in the place that God himself created a temple there.\(^{198}\)

The preachings of brotherhood and mutual understanding propagated by Sankardeva also enhanced the growth of a deeper sense of mutual respect and tolerance in the minds of their adherents. Sankardeva and Madhavadeva were considered as guru by several noted Muslims like Chandkhana or Chansai and Haridas. This encouraged the faith of Islam to establish harmonious relation between Islam and Vaishnava Bhakti which encompass the fields of fine arts and material culture of the people.

Thus the existence of Muslim religious institutions in the region shows that although the followers of Islam in the Brahmaputra Valley were small in number compared to the followers of the Brahmanical faith but were considered as an imperative part of country’s total population and able to enjoy privileges not lesser than their other brethren in social and cultural matters.

Thus it is noticed from the foregoing discussion that the land of Brahmaputra Valley from its early stages is an assimilating ground of different religious faiths, sects and cults, which have framed or shaped the present religion of the society. Saivism, i.e. worship of Siva as the supreme god, appears to be the earliest religious cult which gained considerable importance in the region. Most of the rulers (prior to the 13\(^{th}\) century) were the worshippers of Siva and also patronized Saivism. But during the reign of the Palas, the gradual expansion of Sakta religion resulted in the growth of

\(^{198}\) B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteer*, Kamrup, p-103.
Sakti worship among the people. A number of treatises were also composed to glorify the cult of Saktism. According to *Kālikapurāṇa*. Saktism replaced Saivism when the cult of Mother-goddess Kāmākhya was introduced by Naraka. With its introduction Kamarupa became one of the four principal centres of Tantricism and the latter developed centering round the temple of the Mother goddess Kāmākhya. Tantrik cult, prescribes the use of wine, meat etc in religious functions and it naturally, attracted people to its fold. The *Kālikapurāṇa* however makes an attempt at conciliation between Saivism and Saktism by making Kāmākhya a consort of Siva and by assigning the latter the role of Bhairava. It may incidentally be mentioned that according to the *Kālikapurāṇa*, the number of holy places in the region sacred to Siva is more numerous than those of Sakti. Many tantric practices also became regular customs or rituals in early Vaishnavism too.

One of the most important findings of the study is the assimilation of the non-Brahmanical people with the Brahmanicals. But on the other hand the followers of the Brahmanical religion also adopted the latter’s practices. Probably in order to adjust themselves to the new society they followed a liberal outlook, which made the process of integration much easier.

Another noticeable aspect of the research in context to religion is the growth of art and architecture in the region as a result of the patronisation provided by different rulers’ over time. It can be observed that rulers not patronize a single faith but maintained moderate approach to all religions. Not only the Ahoms even the early rulers of Salastambha and Pala dynasties, the Kacharis, the Koches all contributed to its growth. The Salastambha ruler constructed the temple of Hetukasulin which was later repaired by Vanamala at Haddpyaka i.e the modern Tezpur. The
monolithic sand-stone pillars, averaging about 12 feet in height and 5 feet in circumference found in the ruined Kachari capital of Dimapur probably representing linga or the phallic symbol of Siva is a relevant example of the development of the art and architecture.

Temples of Siva and Sakti erected by the Ahom rulers also signify its development. Mention may be made of Kameswara at Hajo, Umananda at the Peacock Island in river Brahmaputra, Sukleswar, Parihareswara at Dubi, Negheriting temple at Dergaon. The Ahom king Pratap Singha constructed the Siva temple at Negheriting. At the initiative of king Gadadhar Singha the Umananda temple was constructed in 1694. Moreover the temple of Kâmākhyā rebuilt by Naranarayana in 1565 may be mention in this context.

The Neo-Vaishnavite movement led by Sri Sankardeva with its tolerant approach unified the diverse population groups by offering a simple and easily practicable devotional faith where pedantries, aristocracy of birth and caste hierarchy were considered irrelevant. Therefore the socially backward communities which were generally deprived from religious privileges for long became followers of this new belief system. The religious and cultural contributions generated by the neo-Vaishnavite movement resulted in the growth of literature, dance, drama, music and painting. Thus the period of Neo-Vaishnavite movement presents a picture of harmonious blending of various ethnic and cultural patterns.

At the advent of the Ahoms Saivism and Saktism were the leading faiths in the society. The tantric procedure of worshipping was equally practiced in both the sects. It was seen that many a times the Ahom rulers tried to patronize these faiths by erecting temples, by donating lands not only to the Hindu temples but to the
Islamic institutions also. They also played an important role in propagating the Satra institutions which were founded as a result of Neo-Vaishnavite movement. According to Vaishnavite tradition King Rudra Singha gave recognition to several hundred Satras operating throughout his kingdom. Though the Ahoms worshipped different deities like Somdeo and practiced ancestor worship. Their secular outlook along with tolerance compelled them to assimilate into the Brahmanical fold. However, it might bee a part of their imperialistic policy to extend their empire in the Valley.

Another significant aspect identified during the study is the tolerance towards Islam by the rulers. In the early stages the rulers of the Valley maintained an indifferent attitude towards the Islamic faith. But this does not imply that the practice of Islamic faith was forbidden in the country. The construction of dargahs by Jalaluddin Tabrezi in the second half of the 13th century, the erection of a mosque by Sultan Malik Yuzbek in 1256-57C.E. and the prolonged stay of Hazarat Ghiyasuddin Auliya in Hajo, the contributions of Azan Pir through Zikirs proves the secular outlook of the people living in the Valley. Moreover with the beginning of the Neo-Vaishnavite movement a close relation among the followers of Islam and Bhakti developed. Neo-Vaishnavism helped in the growth of mutual respect and tolerance among the adherents of the different sects although at a much later period it would lead to civil war during the period of the Maomoria Rebellion in the eighteenth century.