CHAPTER- V
CONCLUSION

The society of the Brahmaputra Valley as depicted in the *Kalikāpurāṇa* and *Yogini-tantra* has significant differences as the texts were composed in two different periods, *Kalikāpurāṇa* was composed in the pre-Ahom era i.e 11th century when the Valley was about to face the incursions of two new groups i.e the Turko-Afghans from the west and the Ahoms from the east. On the other hand the *Yogini-tantra* was composed in 16th century when the state was in a transition stage due to the Neo-Vaishnavite movement led by Sri Sankardeva in the latter part of the 15th century. This indicates that, a vast gap of time period exist in their composition. Though composed in two different period of time, few common aspects are noticed in both the treatise.

*Kalikāpurāṇa* and *Yogini-tantra* contains the five characteristics of the Puranas which is termed as the *Purānam Pañcalaksanam*, i.e; svarga(the creation), *pratisvarga*(the recreation), *vaṁśa*(the order of the generation), *manvantaram*(the manu period), *vaṁśānu-carita*(the history of the generation). It has been found during the study that both the texts were composed to popularize the cult of Sakti. The goddess Kāmākhyā was regarded as the supreme deity, who resides at Kamarupa. The *Yogini-tantra* mentions Kamarupa as the holiest place compared to the rest of the holy places situated in the Indian sub-continent. Both the treatise also refer to the other forms of the Devi such as *Kāli, Tripurā, Cāmundā, Durgā* etc who were treated equal as the goddess Kāmākhyā.
Though they concentrate on the worship of the goddess Sakti in her various forms, they also placed Sambhu(Siva) and Visnu on an equal footing with the Devi. It appears from the Kalikāpurāṇa that the popularity of Siva exceeded that of the goddess Kāmākhya as Sambhu in his linga form was worshipped and there were millions of linga scattered in the region. Besides it was also mentioned by the Kalikāpurāṇa that Pragjyotisha had been the land of Siva’s līlā bhūmi before Vishnu and Goddess Earth came to place Naraka in Pragjyotisha1.

Both the tantric scriptures mention the name of Visnu a number of times, as a god worthy of worship. The Yoginītantra states that in Kamarupa, Visnu like the Devi, was the worthiest of all gods to be worshipped. Kalikāpurāṇa also refers to the Hayagriva-Vasudeva forms of Visnu. The different religious aspects that had find mention in the foregoing chapters of the study indicate that prior to the emergence of Neo-Vaishnavism, the three major cults of Brahmanical faith i.e, Saktism, Saivism and Vaishnavism followed the Tantrik mode of worship. Besides, the worship of stars and planets were also popular among the people as mentioned by both the texts.

The topography and the geography of the region are well defined by both the treatises. The early migration of the Vedic-brahmans can be traced through the Naraka myth mentioned in the Kalikāpurāṇa, which states that Visnu by evicting the Kirātas, placed the twice-born in the region. Naraka is said to have defeated the Kirāta ruler Ghataka. The friendship of Naraka and Banasura of Sonitpura(modern Tezpur)also finds mention in the Kalikāpurāṇa. In the inscriptions of Kamarupa rulers viz the Varmans, Salastambhas and the Palas all traces their descendent to

Bhauma-Naraka (son of earth). They generally issued their inscriptions to grant rent-free land to the brahmans. This process was continued by the Koch-Ahom rulers whereby the course of Vedic-brahman migration sustained into the region.

The same text tends to believe that the Kirātas were the primitive inhabitants of the region, which also found mention in the Yoginītantra. They were regarded as mlecchas in the Yoginītantra. This term was probably used to mean the non-brahmanical people who speak the Tibeto-Burman group of languages. Yoginītantra again refers to the Saumārs, Yavanas and Kuvācas, who can be identified as the Ahoms, Turko-Afghans and the Koches respectively. They were the most important political contenders, which have always been in conflict to maintain their supremacy over the Brahmaputra Valley from the beginning of the thirteenth century. The most important aspect of the Yoginītantra is its reference to the Yavanas or the Turko-Afghans. The Yavanas entered the Valley from the west, to expand their imperial supremacy through military expeditions. Though they came to the Valley as invaders, they gradually became an integral part of the mainstream population of the region.

The texts also give an account on the geography of the region. The Kalikāpurāṇa demarcates the territorial limit of Kamarupa from Karatoya in the west to Dikkaravasini in the east. While the Yoginītantra exhibits the north and southern limits of the region, which extends from mountain Kanchana in the north to Brahmaputra in the south. Again they also refers to the Manikuta Hills(modern Hajo), Nilachala Hills( Nilachal hills of Guwahati), Citrasaila( the Navagraha
hills at Guwahati)\(^7\) and Dikkaravasini (Sadiya).\(^8\), which are still present in the Valley today.

At the same time both the texts also contain information about the food habits, dresses, ornaments and means of livelihood obtained by the people living in the Valley. Although being religious in nature, both texts have reflected these aspects of the society as the fundamental offerings of the deities. However the possibility of acquiring them in the daily life of the inhabitants cannot be ruled out.

Though, in the above mentioned contexts both the texts contain information on similar subjects but the society depicted in the both treatise were dissimilar. By the time of Kalikāpurāṇa, the Vedic-brahmanical elements were already brought into the existing society by the Vedic-brahmans, who were settled by the rulers of Kamarupa. These brahmans initiated the Vedic culture in the society of the Brahmaputra Valley. It was perhaps to fulfill the aspirations of the local rulers they provided them respectable Kshatriya status by generating many myths and stories, where their origin were linked to the Hindu mythological characters whereby the new status was legitimized. This is evident through the brahmanical names adopted by the rulers and the high sounding epithets like Paramēśvara Paramabhattāraka Mahārājādhiraja of the rulers of Kamarupa. Again the brahmanical influence was best exemplified by the terms such as ‘Kamarupa’ and ‘Kāmākhya’. According to the myth mentioned in the Kalikāpurāṇa, Kama, the Indian cupid who was destroyed by the fire emitted from the third eye of Siva regained his original form in this region; therefore the land came to be known as Kamarupa. Regarding the genesis of the word Kāmākhya, the same Purana states that the goddess came to

\(^7\) Ibid, Ch-51,v-76-77,p-725.
Mahagiri to satisfy her physical desire with Siva, so the Devi was named as Kāmākhyā. The legend of Naraka, whom Vishnu had placed into the throne of Pragjyotisha, the visit of Arjuna to the north-east, the love affair of Usha with Aniruddha, the grandson of Krishna, were some of the attempts made by the Vedic-brahmans to assimilate the Kiratas into the Brahmanical society. The study also reveals that by the time of Yoginītantra the Neo-Vaishnavite movement initiated by Sankardeva made its appearance into the society, which aimed at the eradication of growing ritual complexities, which were enunciated by the Vedic-brahmans. Due to the simplicity and liberal approach in the religious practices of the Neo-Vaishnavite cult, most of the indigenous tribal communities became its follower. The Saumars (Ahoms) and the Kuvacas (Koches), who were earlier the follower and patronizers of the Siva and Sakti cult, also came under the influence of this new faith and adopted an amiable policy towards the same. A large section of the tribal populace of the region like the Chutias, the Morans, the Kacharis, and the Kaivarttas also became ardent follower of the Neo-Vaishnavite cult. The concept of Bhakti played an important role in bringing social synthesis. Moreover the foundation of namghars also paved the way in creating a social hub where people from all the communities assembled together. Besides religious and cultural contributions generated by the neo-Vaishnavite movement resulted in the growth of awareness among the people in respect of literature, dance drama, music and painting. Thus by the time of Yoginītantra the society of the Valley entered into a new phase, where not only the rulers but the common people were bonded together to form a new society which denies expensive-rituals.
The traditional *Varna* classification of the ancient Indian society was not the rule of caste division in the Brahmaputra valley rather it was a society where caste classification was based on profession as in many sources we find references to various professional caste groups. It was only the brahmans among the *Varna* categories who performed the traditional duty of performing *yajña* and other such ceremony. But the references in the inscription show that besides performing such roles the brahmans also performs the role of administrative officials, which denotes that the traditional caste rigidity was flexible to certain extent. In the Doobi plates the brahmans were noticed performing the dhruva (coronation) ceremony of the king Supratisthitavarman and at the same time they obtained some administrative post. It is evident in the Nidhanpur copper plates the post of *Nyāyakaranaṇika* (dispute settler) was held by a brahman named Janārdansvāmin. The later inscriptions also exemplify the brahmans acquiring other profession such as *rāthika* (charioteer) having being efficient in Vedas. For instance Himanga, the beneficiary of the Subhankarpataka plates was a charioteer besides being a brahman and efficient in martial arts like piercing through the target (pada). Thus the brahmans in the valley despite performing their traditional professional practices, were also engaged in other skilled occupations. 

The reference to the ‘Sudra’ in the Deopani Vishnu image inscription implies that by the time of *Kalikāpurāṇa* caste hierarchy became an important feature of the society of the Brahmaputra valley. Nayanjot Lahiri is of the opinion that the existence of caste system in the valley is signified by the reference to the ‘Sudras’

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9 Doobi copper Plates, K.S, p-152ff.
10 Nidhanpur copper Plates, v-25, K.S, p-164-166.
in the Deopani Vishnu image inscription. The inscription states that the goddess Devi and Siva can be worshipped by ‘the Sudras the twice-born classes and women’. But one of the notable aspects of the society of the Valley was that the Kaivarta, who were being included into the Sudra caste according to the Dharmaśāstras acquired the right of holding land in the Valley, which signifies their societal position and their transition to a jāti. This feature of the society had its impact on the social order of the region. The tangible function of the caste system i.e ‘the hierarchical order’ was less rigid in the Valley. The only category of people referred to in terms of the supposedly immutable varna system were the Vedic brahmans. This varna system did not stick to its traditional duties. The study shows that the Tantuvayas were the professionals cloth makers, who gradually transformed into a jāti but later in the Ahom era it has been observed that not only they, the women of every household were engaged in weaving irrespective of caste. Different professional groups mentioned by the Darrang Rajvamsavali such as the jola(weaver), Muchi(cobbler), Silakuti(stone cutter), Mali(gardener), Ranjaka(dyer), Silpakar(artisan), Cuneri(workers in lime)and Salai(sweet meat dealer) are hardly found in their original professions. It is evident from the above mentioned references that the traditional hereditary occupational association of the Brahmanical society was loosely followed in the valley.

Varnashramadharma, which was the most important aspects of Brahmanism, was hardly followed in the Valley. It is mentioned in the inscription of Bhaskarvarman that he was created by the creator to re-establish the Varnashramadharma.

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11 Nayanjot Lahiri, *The Pre-Ahom Roots of Medieval Assam*, Social Scientist, V-12, no.133, 1984, p-64.
13 Nidhanpur Copper plate, v-25, K.S, p-164.
Though this reference was earlier than the composition of *Kalikāpurāṇa* and *Yoginītantra* but it denotes that such institutions in the society of the Valley did not have much hold and therefore the ruler was assigned the duty to re-establish the same. Very often inscriptions and texts used the term ‘re-establish’ instead of ‘establish’ to imply the antiquity of a particular tradition or practice. Moreover the *Yoginītantra* 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, which signifies the absence of traditional caste rules. It implies that the tribal customs and traditions were still prevalent in the region.

The land of Brahmaputra Valley from the remote past witnessed the assimilation 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 13th century) were the worshippers of Siva and also patronized this cult. But during the reign of the Palas, the gradual growth of Sakta religion resulted in the development of Sakti worship among the people. A number of the treatises were also composed to glorify the cult of Saktism. According to *Kālikapurāṇa* Saktism replaced Saivism when the cult of Mother-goddess Kāmākhyā was introduced by Naraka. With its advent, Kamarupa became one of the four principal centres of Tantricism and the latter developed centering round the temple of the Mother goddess Kāmākhyā. Tantrik cult, prescribes the use of wine, meat etc in religious functions and it naturally, attracted people to its fold. The predominance of the goddess Kāmākhyā was evident from the composition *Yoginitantra*, which also aimed at the glorification of the goddess Kāmākhyā. It
was again the royal patronage of the Koch ruler Naranarayana towards the temple of Kāmākhyā in 1565, implies the presence and popularity of the cult. The Kālikapurāṇa makes an attempt at conciliation between Saivism and Saktism by making Kāmākhyā a consort of Siva and by assigning the latter the role of Bhairava. Sivanath Barman\textsuperscript{14} was of the view that as both the cult arose amongst the tribes but in societies having different social structures. Saktism has its genesis in the primitive agricultural societies while Saivism in cattle rearing societies, which was one of their means of livelihood. The gradual fusion of both the societies resulted in the merge of these two ideologies and formation of Saiva-Saktism, where the Devi became the consort of Siva. As agriculture predominated over cattle-rearing, the Devi came to be depicting as a docile wife, but as a dominant one. Moreover the popular image of Kali standing over the prostrated body of Siva with a garland of human skulls indicates not only her dominance over husband, but also her primitive nature.\textsuperscript{15} Besides the worship of Surya and the planets (graha) also got prominence in the religious system of the region. The different sculptures recovered from the Sri Surya Pahar and the Navagraha hills at Guwahati bear testimony to this.

Another significant aspect identified during the study is the attitude 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 13\textsuperscript{th} century, the erection of a mosque


\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, p-62.
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 indicates that Islam was slowly making inroads among the people living in the Valley. Later on the royal patronage from the reign of Rudra Singha onwards gave momentum to this new faith. The influence of Islamic culture was evident in the dresses. The use of the *Mughalai Topi, Chapkan, Fatuwai* by the Assamese dancers and stage performers and theatrical performances reveals that the popularity of the Muslim types of dresses was not confined to the Ahom court or among the high officials but was gradually accepted by the common people as well. It may be because of its unique style or comfort that made the people accept it and therefore these were still in vogue among the people of the region.

However with the beginning of the Neo-Vaishnavite movement a close relation among the followers of Islam and Vaishnavism developed. It helped in the growth of mutual respect and tolerance among the adherents of the different sects.

Thus, the *Kalikāpurāṇa* and *Yoginiṭantra* provide so much of information related to the society of the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam. The society portrayed in both the treatises is a composite society that was framed by the contribution of the various racial groups.