Three poets who are contemporaneous to Śaṅkaradeva but free from the influence of Neo-Vaiśṇavism were Mankar, Durgavara and Pītāmvara. These three poets together with another poet who belonged to a slightly later period from that of Śaṅkaradeva, Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva were known as Pāñcalī poets. This is because their poetry was composed in the Pāñcalī form suitable for the performance of Ojā-pāli chorus and composed in the payāra and tripadī metres. These songs could be sung in various rāgas and tālas. Some scholars opine that because of possible connection of such songs with Pāñcalikā (puppet dance), the term Pāñcalī originated.¹ In the works of the Pāñcalī poets we find depiction of pictures of contemporary Assamese life.

A. Social Life : People and the Social Conditions:

The caste system is there in India right from the Vedic age. That the Brāhmaṇas chanted the Veda is mentioned in Durgāvara's Gītī-Rāmāyana and Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva's

¹ M. Neog, Asamīyā Sahityar Rūprekhā, p. 113
The Brāhmaṇas might have accepted gifts from others but not from childless women. At the time of offering piṇḍa (oblation offered to the manes) to Daśāratha, along with Candra and Sūrya (Moon and Sun), Sītā also treated the Brāhmaṇa as god. From this it can be understood that the Brāhmaṇas were treated reverentially. Durgāvara describes the Brāhmaṇas as follows: he has karani (a kind of flower basket) and Kusa grass in hand, reddish hair, lagunā (sacred thread) on the shoulder and tilaka (a mark made with sandal paste) on the forehead. By taking Tulasī, Durvā and Aksata (basil, grass, unboiled rice) the Brāhmaṇa did the work of a priest. Like the Brāhmaṇas, the astrologer also had a special position in the society. Before starting a new work or before commencing a journey to some place, astrologers through astrological reading used to determine the auspicious moment, day, etc.

1. G-Rā, v. 838; S-Pa, p. 879
2. D-Ma, p. 87
3. G-Rā, v. 835
5. S-Pa, p. 578
6. D-Ma, pp. 92, 93
In society Bej (physician), Ojah (a man who pretends to cure by incantations), Mahanta (religious person), etc. had high status. In Gītī-Rāmāyana there are references to Naṭa, Naṭī and Bhāṭa more than once. Generally, living in the city they entertained the king by singing, dancing and playing instruments or they presented songs and dances in festivals. Besides there are references to Kaivarta (fisherman), Nāpit (barbar), Dhobā (washerman), etc., the business-based communities. For the Kaivartas, net is the primary tool for catching the fish. Kaivarta or Keotāni (fisherman’s wife) sells fish. Beulā was abused as the 'daughter of Dom' (daughter of fisherman). So it can be understood that this community was treated as inferior at that time. Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva also refers to Dom and Dumuni. The barber used razor and the washerman khār

1. S-Pa, pp. 30, 259
2. D-Ma, pp. 87-88
3. D-Ma, p. 86
4. G-Rā, vv. 48-55; S-Pa, p. 528
5. G-Rā, v. 976
6. M-Ma, p. 6
7. D-Ma, p. 95
8. D-Ma, p. 124
9. S-Pa, pp. 113-14
(substance possessing alkaline properties).\textsuperscript{1} Besides there are instances of professional caste like Duwarī,\textsuperscript{2} Mālinī,\textsuperscript{3} Mariyā,\textsuperscript{4} Baniyā,\textsuperscript{5} Kuṇḍuk\textsuperscript{6} (carpenter), Nāwariyā,\textsuperscript{7} Kāndāri,\textsuperscript{8} etc.

One community, which has grown on the basis of profession is Gowāl (milk-man). Their job is to milk the cows and to make them graze. It was assumed that the milk-men did not have much of education and knowledge.\textsuperscript{9} Therefore, they were treated as inferior people in the society.\textsuperscript{10}

Naṭa and Naṭīs had low position in society. Often they were treated like lower animals.\textsuperscript{11} In the society, besides the dancing girls, there were prostitutes and man-

\textsuperscript{1} M-Ma, p. 50
\textsuperscript{2} M-Ma, p. 28
\textsuperscript{3} M-Ma, p. 37; D-Ma, p. 106
\textsuperscript{4} M-Ma, p. 3
\textsuperscript{5} D-Ma, p. 123
\textsuperscript{6} D-Ma, p. 93
\textsuperscript{7} D-Ma, p. 124
\textsuperscript{8} M-Ma, p. 39; S-Pa, p. 316
\textsuperscript{9} U-Pa, v. 682
\textsuperscript{10} U-Pa, vv. 680, 1074
\textsuperscript{11} G-Rā, v. 908
folk could go freely to them. To serve the members of the royal family besides servants and maid-servants, there were arrangements for mid-wife also. In Usā Parināya there was a mid-wife by named Kaukīlā and another one by Rati in Sukavi Nārāyanadeva's Padmāvatī. There are references to servants called Lafar (Laphar, Naphar = Nafar). Women were also kept to serve in household purpose (dāsī or sevakinī). Guards (duwarī) were kept in royal palace or rich man's houses. In the same way there were the messengers (Cantari). The Candālas had their own Brāhmaṇas or priests (Candāla Brāhmaṇa).

System of Marriage:

There are eight forms of marriage systems in Hindu society like Daiva, Ārṣa, Gandharva, etc. In society only Prājāpatya marriage system is specially prevalent and

1. U-Pa, v. 838
2. U-Pa, vv. 31, 59, 491; S-Pa, p. 578
3. U-Pa, vv. 97, 318
4. G-Rā, v. 269; S-Pa, pp. 9, 461
5. M-Ma, p. 28; G-Rā, v. 567
6. U-Pa, vv. 184, 937; G-Rā, v. 493; S-Pa, p. 38
7. S-Pa, p. 15
respected. As per this system in our society the astrological matching (rāśi-jorā) of bride-groom and bride is finalized after consulting horoscope (Soworoni, Koṣṭhi). Reference to it is found in the works of Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva.1 While relating the marriage of a pair of birds (Paksyā-Paksyinī) which are Mahādeva's first creation. Accordingly by showering Durbāksyata (combination of grass and rice) Siva solemnizes the marriage after decorating the two birds with golden Guḷiā (bracelet) for the arms and silver Mūrīals (cornet) and arranging the male bird to sit on the right side and female to the left.2 This Nāṇdīmukh Śrāddha ceremony is solemnized during day time on the occasion of marriage. In this ceremony a pot is placed on white rice powder, and mango foliage is put in the pot and a lamp is lighted; things like Tīla, Yavadhānya, Madhuparka, etc. are offered to the men. This śrāddha is performed as per rituals prescribed in the Vajurveda. The worshipper facing westward and the Brāhmaṇa facing the east perform the Śrāddha. During the ritual dhūpa (incense), dipa (lamp) are lighted. Arghya (a small vessel used for offering water to a god) is offered and according to customs, after giving Pinda (a lump of rice mixed with milk, sugar etc.

1. S-Pa, p. 510
2. M-Ma, p. 8
3. S-Pa, p. 527
offered to the manes) the Brāhmaṇas are offered sacrificial fees (dakṣiṇā). ¹

Marriage within the same caste only is allowed. So while searching for bridegroom and bride, the caste is looked into and if they do not belong to the same caste marriage is not possible. However, inspite of being from the same caste, everybody desires to establish relation with people of higher social position. We have hints about it in Mankar's Manasā-Kāvyā. There Śiva tells the father of Pārvatī that his birth is in a high family and his parents also never violate the norms of their own castes. ² Similarly it is found in Durgāvara's works that prior to marriage the guardian is on the look out for suitable bride for the boy. ³ Details of the system of giving Joraṇ (the presentation of vermilion, ornaments and clothes, etc. from the bridegroom to the bride) are found in Mankar's works as follows: In the Joraṇ of Hara-Pārvatī's marriage items like clothes and ornaments presented. Oil, vermilion and eatables like sweets (lāḍu), butter, curd, milk, ghee, honey, fruits, betelnuts and betel leaves, etc. were carried in fifty loads (Bhāra). People used to wear decent clothes during marriages and festivals.

1. S-Pa, pp. 528-29
2. M-Ma, p. 43
3. D-Ma, p. 106
The bride's house formally received the bridegroom's party.

According to descriptions obtained in *Manasa-Kāvyya*, Nārada while coming to present joran in Śiva's marriage wore dhuti, silk clothes and took an umbrella in his hand and came with a team of servants. On arrival at the bride's house, Hemanta (Himavat) the bride's father after formally receiving Nārada with water, pot, cup, etc. offered him a Pīrā (a kind of low decorated stool). After this the bride was dressed and decorated, vermilion put on her head and the whole pandal then reverberated with the Uruli sound and songs sung by the singers to the accompaniment of musical instruments.¹ Lucid description is given about the formal receiving Telar Bhār (the load of oil) and the items given in Joran. Menakā the bride's mother with the accompaniment of uruli and songs of the ladies (āyatī) went out to welcome the Joran by taking a pitcher full of water in one hand and a fan on the other.² Mention of such bhār are also found in the *Padmāvatī* of Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva.³

At the auspicious hour after Joraṇ, the rituals of gandha-adhivāsa (a purificatory rite performed on the eve of

---

¹ *M-Ma*, pp. 45-47
² *M-Ma*, p. 47
³ *S-Pa*, p. 57
marriage) is performed. The place where gandha-adhivāsa is performed is first purified, then an ālipana (decorated floor) of sandalwood paste is drawn and there after keeping on it pot, bowl, etc., Rāmkala (a type of banana tree) is planted. Erecting a shed a nice Maral (a circular diagram marked on the earth upon which is placed the water-pot in the bathing ceremony at a marriage) is made. A Candrātop (canopy) is hung over this maral. Water from the Gaṅgā is brought and kept in the maral in a golden pot and in that pot a branch of a mango tree is placed and on top a fruit (cocoanut) is kept. Besides flower, incense, lamp, etc., are also given. After that the bridegroom is made to sit in a particular place and with the chanting of Veda and songs by the āyatī (singing lady) the adhivāsa is completed. 1  Nārāyaṇadeva also gives descriptions of such gandha-adhivāsa. 2

After completion of adhivāsa Siva comes out in the attire of bridegroom and he is welcome by bride's mother in the company of pañca-āyatī (five lady singers) accompanied with the playing of pañca vādya (five instruments), singing the songs of prosperity with pañca puspa (five flowers) and dhūpa, dipa, etc. The mother escorts the bride again by completing the rituals of adhivāsa and throwing durvāksata

1. M-Ma, p. 49
2. S-Pa, pp. 57-59, 526
(durvā grass and rice) on the head, while the āyatīs dress her up with new clothes, jewelleries, flower garlands and groom with Candana-sendura (sandāl, vermilion) singing uruligīta make her sit on a high seat facing east and giving betel-nuts and betel-leaves in her hand.¹ Such descriptions are also found in the Padmāvatī of Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva.² Unlike the adhivāsa as described by Mankar, the adhivāsa in the present Assamese society is performed separately in the houses of the bride and groom.

After the adhivāsa, the main ritual of the marriage is performed. Pītāmvara Kavi says that Thursday and the Sarvasiddhiyoga are the most auspicious moments for the marriage.³ In the writings of Durgāvara⁴ and Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva⁵ there are references to ceremonial collection of water from the ghāta (bathing place on a river side) bathe the bride and the groom with it. Besides dress materials and ornaments, foodstuff, Lāṇu (ball of confection), Lavanu (butter), Dadhi (curd), Dugdha (milk), Gṛta (clarified butter), banana, betel-nut and betel-leaf, etc. were carried

¹. M-Ma, pp. 48-49
². S-Pa, p. 79
³. U-Pa, v. 1390
⁴. D-Ma, p. 107
⁵. S-Pa, p. 81
on the Bhāra (formal load of presents). 1 We have the
description of the custom of dressing the hair and menicuring
by the barber in Mankar's 2 and Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva's 3 works.

Before being decorated as the groom Śiva took his
bath. After that he wore the Mūrīl (a special type of head-
gear put on the head by the bride or the groom in the marriage),
of Dhaturā (thornapple stramouium). 4 He was decorated with
necklaces of human bones on his neck, the tiger-skin on the
loins and both the ears and matted hair being adorned with
snakes. Ashes from funeral pyres are rubbed over the body,
Dambaru (a small drum of the shape like an hour-glass),
Trisūla (trident) and a stick with human skull were given in
his hands with a beggar's walet under his armpit. He
performed his journey to the bride's house on his usual mount,
the bull, taking poisonous narcotics, playing the Dambaru and
blowing Sīnḡā (horn) on the way. The accompanying Moon-god
(Candra) held the umbrella. Lord Brahmā held the Hom-Śāri
(Sacrificial-ladle) in hand and Lord Viṣṇu set out on the back
Garuḍa. Along with them, thirty crores of gods, Asuras
(demons), Gandharvas, Bidyāḍharas, sages, all decorated nicely

1. M-Ma, p. 51
2. M-Ma, p. 51
3. S-Pa, pp. 81-82
4. M-Ma, pp. 51-52
and with joyful heart came out as bridegroom party. They played musical instruments and sang songs in joy. This picture of the marriage procession consisting of gods and demons is surely a reflection of the large marriage parties of Mankar's days. While the party arrived at the gate of the bride's house, the father of the bride asked Menakā to receive the bridegroom and accordingly along with the āyatis (the ladies having living husbands), taking resin, earthen lamp, holy pitcher, etc., in hand she went to receive the bridegroom.1 At the time of receiving the groom, Menakā threw durvā and aksata three times over the head and wave the fan thrice wishing to remove all bad omens. Playing different musical instruments, the married women sang holy songs and escorted the bridegroom by breaking the heṅgār (ceremonial fence).2 In Paṁmāvatī of Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva pictures of such marriage processions are found.3 From Durgāvara's descriptions, it can be realised that, while Laksindar was escorted as the bridegroom, the Brāhmaṇas were reciting the Vedas.4 It is to be noted that the custom of receiving the bridegroom (darā ādarā) at the main entrance of the bride's house still

1. M-Ma, pp. 51-52
2. M-Ma, p. 58
3. S-Pa, pp. 82-83
4. D-Ma, p. 108
prevails. Though in certain places of Assam, the father of the bride receives the bridegroom but in most of the places, it is the mother-in-law who officiates in this ritual. From the writings of Mankar it may be presumed that at least from the early sixteenth century A.D. the custom of receiving the bridegroom by the mother-in-law prevailed.

In one place, Mankar states that Śiva came on the back of the bull to get married, leaving aside Dolā-ghōrā (sedan chairs and horses).¹ This means that during the days of Mankar there was the custom of the groom travelling in a sedan chair or on the back of a horse. In Durgāvara's Manasā poem there is specific mention of Laksindāra's going to Beulā in a Dolā (palanquin) to marry her.² Nārāyaṇadeva describes how Laksindāra returns from his father-in-law's house after the marriage ceremony on the back of an elephant, with the bride being carried in a Dolā (palanquin).³

The excellent description of Hara and Pārvatī's marriage, provided by Mankar, gives a clear picture of a marriage in contemporary Assamese society. In the marriage house, the gods, like Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Indra, etc. took their

1. M-Ma, p. 55
2. D-Ma, p. 108
3. S-Pa, p. 582
seats in proper places. In their presence, and at the
mahendra yoga (auspicious moment) the bride was brought out
to the marriage pandal. The bride had Murīyāli on her head,
Kunda (jasmine) flower and āmdāli (chain of mango leaves).
The first auspicious sight at an auspicious moment between
Śiva and Gaurī was exchanged by making them sit on a khāta
(bedstead). The married women (āyatī) were singing mangala
songs by holding filled pitchers and lamps in their hands.

The bride and the bridegroom were placed on the
maṇḍapa (dais) by tying up the holy thread (lagun gāṭhī). The
father of the bride offered the bridegroom various articles
and the son-in-law accepted the presentations, keeping a
sīlikhā (terminalia citrina) with him. Brahmā recites the
Veda and after this offered Gaurī by giving dhan (rice) and
durva and aksata (grass and rice) and sprinkling water from
the ghaṭa (holy pitcher) on Gaurī's head. In Nārāyaṇadeva's
Padmāvatī it is described how the bride is offered huge
amounts of presentations after tying of the holy thread
(lagun gāṭhī) at the auspicious moment. In the marriage of
Hara and Gaurī, as described by Mankar, Brahmā gives āhuti
(burnt offering) over the Homa, Nārāyaṇa worships by offering
Khai (Skt. Lāja, rice fried with the husk) and Hara and Gaurī

1. M-Ma, p. 61
2. S-Fa, p. 150
walk around the khai or ākhai for seven times. It is to be noted that the poet calls this small ritual Khai pūjā (worship of khai). Later on, Brahmā concludes the marriage ceremony by offering Kusāndi oblations (a Vedic ceremony performed in the marriages, etc.). Nārāyanadeva also describes the rituals performed in the marriages, viz., Homa-yajña and Mukhacandrikā. At the end of the homa, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva take marks (tilaka) on the forehead with the ashes of the homa. At the end of the yajña (the ceremony where oblations are given), pāyasa (rice boiled with milk and sugar) is prepared and Hara and Gauri took five mouthfuls of pāyasa each. The gods also bid farewell after taking pāyasa, betelnut and betel leaf. After this Gauri is taken to the house of Śiva, and gods and goddesses, Nandī, Bhṛṅgī and others were making merry by way of singing songs, playing upon instruments and performing dances. Two attending maids escort Hara and Gauri with lamps and make them sit. At the end of the marriage the bride and the groom play some sort of fun filled game, called Ghātan-Ghoṭan, and being defeated in the game,

1. M-Ma, p. 62
2. M-Ma, p. 62
3. S-Pa, pp. 80-81, 189
4. M-Ma, p. 62
5. M-Ma, p. 62
6. M-Ma, pp. 63-64
as per agreement Siva proposes to go into exile and at last Gaurī brings him back by holding at the end of his garments. With such merry-makings the marriage ceremony of Hara and Gaurī comes to an end. Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva, in his writings terms this game as gambling (Juā-khelā) and this whole ceremony is called Bāsi Biyā (lit. stale marriage). The picture of grief at the time of bringing the bride out to send her to her husband's place, after the marriage has been detailed in the writings of Nārāyaṇadeva. A picture like that of the marriage of Hara and Gaurī could be found in the Pīṭāmvara Kavi's descriptions of Uṣā and Aniruddha's marriage and also in the marriage of Beulā and Lakṣindāra of Durgāvara and Nārāyaṇadeva. Even till today, the customs of offering Ucargā or Yautuka (dowry or presents) in the marriage prevails. Such examples are also found in Padmāvatī of Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva. With such customs and traditions, some customs and traditions prevailing in the contemporary Assamses society, such as offering oblation of ākhai into homa (sacred fire), walking around the marriage dais for seven times by the couple, taking a mark on the forehead with the ashes of the Homa fire, playing of witty games like concealing of a ring

1. M-Ma, p. 65; S-Pa, pp. 578-79
2. D-Ma, p. 108; S-Pa, pp. 508-81
3. U-Pa, vv. 1341-54; D-Ma, p. 107; S-Pa, pp. 577-78
4. S-Pa, p. 579
by the couple, etc. have similarities, which is a matter to be noted.

In Mankar's Manasa Kavya it is found that before starting for the husband's house as a sign of prosperity, Menaka plastered a small spot with cow-dung, considered to be purificatory, and designed Alpana over it and placed an unblemished pot (pūrṇa ghaṭa), flowers, etc. on the same. After this, at the auspicious moment Durga pays obeisance pranāma to her parents as a mark of respect and starts for her father-in-law's house.

From Mankar's descriptions, it can be understood that besides Parvati, Siva had another wife whose name was Gangā. After the marriage of Parvati, Gangā considered herself as a superseded wife. From this it can be presumed that, in the days of Mankar the society had a form of polygamy and in case of such marriages, the older wife used to consider herself as the superseded wife. No woman was willing to become a satinī (co-wife).

It was the custom in the society to offer rice (anna dāna) to the relatives before offering the daughter as bride.

1. M-Ma, p. 26
2. M-Ma, p. 64
3. S-Pa, p. 11
Nārāyaṇadeva states that if the relatives do not accept the food offered in connection with a marriage, the marriage is not valid.¹

A girl promised to some groom (Vākdattā) is as good as a married girl. Others would hesitate to marry such a girl. The girl also dislikes to dishonour the father's vow and from her heart she accepts the proposed husband as her real husband. Examples of this could be found in the writings of Nārāyaṇadeva.²

Sacramental Rites:

In the writings of the poets of the period, viz., Mankar, Durgāvara and others the detail descriptions of dasākarma (sacramental rites) prevailing in the Hindu society are found. The offspring is given birth for the expansion of the clan and due to that the woman's having children was viewed with high opinion by the society. On the other hand, the woman without any child or the barren woman was treated low in the society or was regarded as the sign of ill-luck. Examples of this are seen in Durgāvara's Manasā-kāvyā as, even the rich and the honourable barren woman was hated by all.

1. S-Pa, p. 61
2. S-Pa, p. 80
Even the relatives would not take rice from her hand and the Brāhmaṇas also did not accept any gift. Hence, the parent used to attach high importance to being blessed with a son and for this religious rituals are performed. Mention of the worship of gods and goddesses for getting sons is found in Durgāvara’s Manasā Kāvyā. It may be learnt from the descriptions given in connection with Lakṣindāra’s jātakarma that gold, silver and rice were ceremonially offered to people, and the women ground coriander for three days. Most probably, this coriander paste was distributed from house to house as is the custom prevailing even today in some parts of Assam. On the fifth day of Lakṣindāra’s birth the Pacati festival was celebrated.

On the birth of Lakṣindāra, Cānd Sadāgar got the horoscope of the child prepared by the astrologer by making calculations with Kharikā (thin bamboo sticks) spreading over the ground. This is referred to in Durgāvara’s Manasā Kāvyā. Mentions of Cudakaraṇa (shaving of the head), Upanayana (sacred thread giving ceremony) have been made in the

1. D-Ma, pp. 87, 89
2. D-Ma, pp. 96-97
3. D-Ma, p. 104
4. D-Ma, p. 104
5. D-Ma, p. 105
writings of Nārāyaṇadeva. In Nārāyaṇadeva's Padmāvatī, jātakarma is mentioned centering around the birth of Pārvatī. By consulting the paṇjikā (almanac) Nārada ascertained that in the horoscope of Pārvatī, Guru Brhaspati was placed in the lagna (the astral place of birth) and that in the Rāgis (zodical signs) Dhanu (Sagittarius), Makara (capricorn), Kumbha (Aquarius), and other Grahas (planets) are taking their seats in a fortune-giving way.

System of Education:

In the writings of the Pāṇcālī poets much information pertaining to education is not furnished. Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva has it that Pārvatī had the ritual of initiation to education (Khaḍīḍā) when she was five years old. Besides this he also refers to different classics and sixty four faculties of education. In Nārāyaṇadeva the descriptions of sending of boys of tender age to the house of the guru for studying the Veda after Cūḍākarana, Upanayana, etc., are found. Mention of the chanting of Vedas is to be found in the poem of Mankar.

1. S-Pa, p. 159
2. S-Pa, p. 48
3. S-Pa, p. 49
4. S-Pa, p. 159
5. M-Ma, pp. 49, 61, 69
There was the study of astrology as mentioned in Durgāvara's Manasā kāvyā and Nārāyaṇadeva's Padmāvatī. Čānd Sadāgar cut trees and built the boat after ascertaining the auspicious moment; and at another auspicious moment that boat was set on sail towards the sea. The astrologer advised the merchant that one was blessed with fortune if he started his journey at dawn before sunrise and before the crows caw.

Besides astrology hints of the practice of tantras and mantras are found in Usā-Pariṇaya. Citralekha took Nārada as her guru and learnt a specific kind of tantric vidyā called tāmasī. One who is adept in tāmasī could see others, he himself remaining invisible to others. By virtue of this knowledge only Citralekha could steal the person of Anirudda. The society had high opinion of the people who were scholars in different disciplines. Nārāyaṇadeva ascribes the power of tantra and mantra to Dhanvantarī (divine doctor) and Takṣaka (the doctor of the Nāgas).

1. D-Ma, p. 105
2. S-Pa, p. 48
3. D-Ma, pp. 92-93
4. D-Ma, pp. 92, 94
5. U-Pa, vv. 362-97
6. U-Pa, v. 746
7. S-Pa, p. 259
The Last Rites of the Dead:

A snake-bitten man is not put into flames of the pyre. Generally, the dead body is kept on a raft, which is set sailing in the river anticipating that if luckily some bej (one who practices occult science to cure people of snake bite) finds the dead body he might revive it with the power of his science. In Manasā-kāvyā Beulā carried the dead body of her husband on a raft and sailed upstreams with the anticipation of reviving his life.\(^1\) When the husband dies, the wife performs suttee by throwing herself into the flames of the pyre made of scented wood (candan kāṭh), etc.\(^2\) In the Durgāvara’s Gītī-Rāmāyaṇa it is found that the great bird Jatāyu, killed by Rāvana was cremated on the pyre and for the eternal peace of the deceased, fish and birds were sacrificed.\(^3\) When the deceased is burnt into ashes and the last rite is performed, the soul is lifted to a blessed world; such a view is expressed by Kabandha in his words to Rāma. At the request of Kabandha, Rāma prepared the pyre and cremated Kabandha on it. After the cremation Kabandha assumed deva-mūrti (the form of a god) and left for Gandharva-Loka (the heaven of the gandharvas).\(^4\)

---

1. D-Ma, p. 122
2. D-Ma, p. 122
3. G-Rā, v. 451
4. G-Rā, vv. 469-73
A great importance was attached to the ritual of offering food (Pinda to the manes). That is why, those who were not having their sons suffered from frustration with the idea of not getting pinda after death.\(^1\) It is believed that the soul of the deceased goes to heaven if pinda is offered to it in the holy place Gaȳa.\(^2\)

Social Customs and Other Aspects of Social Life:

- Women were regarded as fickle by nature.\(^3\) ‘Tiri haiya beṭīra je etimāna gaha’ (Even being a woman, she has so much pride) from this observation by Mankar, it can be presumed that women had no high position in the society.\(^4\) Mankar comments on women in the same strain in another place.\(^5\)

Staying of an unmarried blonde in the company of some man was cause for scandal; this scandal also touched the prestige of the parents and the clan. Seeing virgin Uṣā, along with Aniruddha the maid Kokilā commented like this.\(^6\)

\(^1\) S-Pa, p. 142
\(^2\) G-Rā, vv. 3–4
\(^3\) G-Rā, v. 298 (sahaje caṇḍāla tiri-jāti)
\(^4\) M-Ma, p. 28
\(^5\) M-Ma, p. 40 (tiri hayā beṭī etamāna sāha); U-Pa, v. 494
\(^6\) U-Pa, vv. 494–503
The married women regarded it as their duty to maintain their chastity, and they took it for granted that without the husband a woman had no salvation.¹

The chaste woman always followed the path of religion.² A wife was compelled to abide by the will of her husband.³ In Durgāvara's Manasā-kāvyā it is described how at the call of Laksindāra, Beulā cooked meals for her husband in the first night of their union.⁴ Out of the four types of women, padmini, citrini, śāṅkhini and hastini, described in the rati-sāstra, the best type, namely, padmini is mentioned by Durgāvara.⁵

The position of the chaste women was very high and they were placed in the same rank of ancient ladies like Lopāmudrā, Arundhati, Sāvitrī, and others.⁶ Sometimes, the chastity of the woman was examined and in such ordeals the sati or chaste woman was tested by passing through a fire or by walking along the edge of razor or on a thread.⁷

¹ D-Ma, p. 115
² S-Pa, p. 151
³ G-Rā, vv. 177-78, 203
⁴ D-Ma, p. 109
⁵ D-Ma, p. 108
⁶ U-Pa, v. 407
⁷ M-Ma, p. 41
The words of a chaste woman was considered infallible. In the Gītī Rāmāyana the curse of Bāli's wife Tārā on Rāma that the latter would lose the company of Sītā became fully effective.¹ From the activities of Uṣā it is demonstrated that on the husband's death the satis were willing to sacrifice their lives voluntarily by jumping into the burning pyre.² Nārāyaṇadeva also refers to great satis (chaste women) of ancient India.³ The saying in the Sanskrit - pathe nāri bivarjvita (woman is forbidden in journey) has been observed to be echoed in Mankar's Manasā-kāvyā.⁴

Cow-worship was in vogue and still is. So riding on the back of a cow was in a way reprobatory. Example of this is found in Uṣā-Parinaya. Kṛṣṇa criticizes Śiva for riding on a bullock.⁵ Example of this is found in Carita Puthi. Once while a sannyāsi called Khargesvara came riding on a bullock to debate with Śaṅkaradeva, he was taught a good lesson by Śaṅkaradeva.⁶

¹ G-Rā, vv. 782-84
² U-Pa, vv. 328-30
³ S-Pa, p. 52
⁴ M-Ma, p. 67
⁵ U-Pa, v. 1072
⁶ KGC, p. 207
Areca-nut and betel-leaf has a special place in Assamese society. Besides the purpose of worshipping gods and goddesses the use of betel-nut and leaf is indispensable at the time of reception or entertaining people on festive occasions. References to areca-nut preparation are found in the works of the poets like Mankar, Pitāmvara, Durgāvara, etc. in connection with marriage ceremony. In Pitāmvara's Usā-parināya Pārvati calls Kāmasena the yakṣinī and offers her betel-nut preparation. In Durgāvara's Manasā-kāvya there are references to Sonekā offering betel-nut to Ojah Dhanvantari before talking to him anything else on business. People use to give garlands of flowers, cowrie shells and betel-nut preparations to a medicine man or invited guest at the time of bidding him good-bye with betel-nut.

The killing of a Brāhmaṇa, taking alcoholic drinks, sleeping with the master's wife, stealing of gold, killing of the king, woman, master, parent and friend were regarded as great sins (mahā pāpa) and those who committed such crimes were believed to be destined for hell.

1. M-Ma, p. 64
2. U-Pa, v. 126
3. D-Ma, p. 88
4. D-Ma, p. 88
5. G-Rā, vv. 657-58; D-Ma, p. 89
It was considered a sin to marry the younger brother's wife. In Gītī Rāmāyana, Rāma reproaches Bāli on this ground.¹

Sports and Games, Recreation:

In the books under our discussion, there could be found different sketches of games, sports and means of recreation. Amongst the games, the game of dice (pāsā) has been mentioned in all the works. There are descriptions of playing of dice (pāsā), by Śiva with Durgā² and Gangā³ in Manasā-kāvyā, Aniruddha with Usā⁴ in Usā-parināyā and Rāma with Sītā⁵ in Gītī-Rāmāyana. There is mention of playing at dice by the bride and the groom in Usā-parināyā,⁶ and in Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva's Paḍmāvati.⁷ In Gītī-Rāmāyana, Sītā plays like a child with balls of sand.⁸ During the Caitrāvalī Caturdaśī festival, Sītā creates an illusion of the city of Ayodhyā and on the occasion of Caitrāvali

¹. G-RĀ, v. 741
². M-Ma, pp. 22, 67
³. M-Ma, p. 67
⁴. U-Pa, v. 492
⁵. G-RĀ, v. 45
⁶. U-Pa, v. 1352
⁷. S-Pa, p. 578
⁸. G-RĀ, vv. 7-8
Kāmaparva, Rāma, Laksmana, Sītā and the ministers and the other competent men played the game of colours (mote; container of colour water). In the Gitī-Rāmāyaṇa, the mention of Dhop (ball of cloth) game is made. Generally this Dhop game is played by a group of people over head. In Gitī-Rāmāyaṇa, in reference to the valour of Bāli, it is said that he played dhop with a mountain, uprooted by him.

B. Political matters:

Regarding political matters there is not much information available in the books under study. There are references only to the kings and ministers and other such officers with whose help the king used to run the state-affairs. Over and above the king, there was also a prince to rule the country. And to install a king a coronation ceremony was performed. In Gitī-Rāmāyaṇa, there are references to Rāma performing the ceremony to coronet Vibhīṣana. There are references to smaller officers like messengers of king, guards, etc. In Gitī-Rāmāyaṇa, Hanumān

1. G-Rā, vv. 45-51, 60-61
2. G-Rā, v. 560
3. G-Rā, v. 803
4. G-Rā, v. 865
was sent as messenger to Laṅkā.\textsuperscript{1} There are other descriptions available about the wars, arms and ammunitions and other hardwares used by the kings. Generally just before the battle started, the adversary was called to engage in war\textsuperscript{2} by blowing conch shell or other such instruments. Similarly, again, after the victory in the war conch shells were blown or other instruments were played upon.\textsuperscript{3} Similarly on returning to one's own kingdom after the victory conch shells were blown\textsuperscript{4} as a mark of victory. Besides conch shells, there are trumpets (bheru), bells (ghanṭā) and kettle-drums (dundubhi).\textsuperscript{5} In the war, besides infantry, elephants, horses, chariots, etc. were used.\textsuperscript{6} In Usā-parināya Pitāmvara mentions of Pāik or foot soldiers.\textsuperscript{7}

C. Economic Condition:

From the books of the period under study very little is known about the economic condition. There are descriptions

\textsuperscript{1} G-Rā, v. 812-13
\textsuperscript{2} U-Pa, v. 1089
\textsuperscript{3} U-Pa, v. 1237
\textsuperscript{4} U-Pa, v. 1380
\textsuperscript{5} U-Pa, vv. 610, 632
\textsuperscript{6} U-Pa, v. 564
\textsuperscript{7} U-Pa, v. 564
of Śiva doing the ploughing\(^1\) in Manasā-kāvyā of Mankar and Cand Sadāgara going for trading by boats\(^2\) in Manasā-kāvyā of Durgāvara. Ploughing was done for agriculture.\(^3\) There is the mention of Śiva ploughing the land twelve times and harrowing thirteen times with bullocks using a golden plough and a silver tiller. There are also narrations about using manure in the ploughed land, to feed the cows with water after completion of ploughing, etc.\(^4\) For ploughing, the bullocks were to be trained first. In Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva's Padmāvatī there are descriptions of agricultural equipments like plough, yoke, tiller, etc., and of those getting damaged for ploughing with untrained bullocks.\(^5\) Again there are the name of a variety of paddy called Mālati-dhān,\(^6\) Durvā-dhān\(^7\) in Manasā-kāvyā. Auspicious moments are found out from astrological calculation for the construction of vessels for commercial purposes.\(^8\) Timber obtained from the trees of Śāl (Shorea robusta), tāl (palm), bel (wood-apple), śalakh

---

1. M-Ma, p. 12
2. D-Ma, p. 92
3. M-Ma, p. 12; S-Pa, p. 132
4. M-Ma, p. 20
5. S-Pa, p. 609
6. D-Ma, p. 121
7. M-Ma, p. 20
8. M-Ma, p. 20
(terminelia nyrocarpa), kaisāl, jām (engenia jambolana),
devadāru (pinus deodara), hizal (barringtonia acutangula),
saral (pine), campak (michelia champaca), gamāri (gomelina
arborea), etc., are noteworthy.\(^1\) On the auspicious tithi
(lunar day), the logs of timber were sawed and the carpenters
(sūtār) constructed boats with the sawed planks. At the time
of construction of boats religious ceremonies like animal
sacrifice and pūjās were performed.\(^2\) In Durgāvara’s Manasa-
kāvya it is described how Cānd Sadāgara utilized silk or other
cloth for sails. Inside the ship there were seats made of
gold, studded with pearls. At the time of starting the
journey a canopy was flung, nicely decorated as it was.\(^3\)

For trading, various commodities like betel-nut,
cocoanut, turmeric, lac, iron, oranges (sontarā), chilli,
pipali, giner, śuṭhi (dried gourd and dried thekerā - a kind
of acid fruit much used for seasoning food), cumin, sōkotā
(dried jute leave), mustard, jāṭiphala (nut meg), pickle,
sundi, coriander, dhunā (a kind of resin which when burnt
sends forth a pleasant smell), etc., were taken in the vessels.\(^4\)

In Mankar’s Manasa-kāvya several commodities are mentioned,
namely, chilli, salt, etc., which were sold in a market place called Srikonār hāṭ. In this book there are references to the purchase of lāḍu (a ball of confection), butter, guā-pan (betel-nut ready for use), etc., on the occasion of marriage ceremony. Cowrie shells were used as a form of currency. From the descriptions about Cānd Sadāgāra’s business voyage as obtained in Durgāvara’s Manasā-kāvya it is easily discernable that the barter system was in vogue in Durgāvara’s time. Narrations are also found about weaving of cloths on looms (Tāt-sāl) and accessories for weaving cloth, pāji (a roll of cotton from which thread is spun), tākuri (reel), etc. In Mankar’s Manasā-kāvya there are references to Kamār sāl (smithy) and different types of allied apparatus. By observing the use of the word ‘Kumārar cāk’ (potter’s wheel) by Nārāyaṇadeva in his poem, it can be imagined that at that time the potters of Assam made and sold their potteries.

Descriptive pictures of beggars begging with a staff in hand

1. M-Ma, p. 13
2. M-Ma, p. 45
3. M-Ma, p. 45; D-Ma, p. 117; S-Pa, p. 114
4. D-Ma, p. 102
5. M-Ma, p. 41
6. M-Ma, p. 18
7. S-Pa, p. 468
and an umbrella hanging from the shoulder are found in Mankar's Manasā-kāvyā. Similarly in Nārāyaṇadeva's poetic work there are mentions of begging. From the word dāsi as obtained in Manasā-kāvyā, it can be imagined that even at that time the slavery system was in vogue. There are also references to guards, door-keepers, etc. It is found that just as there were poor people or beggars, similarly very rich men were also there. From the descriptions of affluency of Cānd Sadāgara it can be understood that gold, silver, diamond, pearls, emeralds, etc., were plentifully available with such persons. Tax system has been referred to in Durgāvara's Manasā-kāvyā.

Food and Drink:

Of the different kinds of food-stuff that are mentioned in the books under study, anna byañjana (rice and curry), pāñcāmṛta consisting of dadhi-dūgḍha (curd and milk),

1. M-Ma, p. 42; S-Pa, p. 74
2. M-Ma, p. 13
3. M-Ma, p. 22
4. M-Ma, p. 22
5. D-Ma, p. 87
6. D-Ma, p. 117
7. G-Rā, vv. 98, 183, 327; S-Pa, pp. 61, 466
8. D-Ma, pp. 101, 106; M-Ma, p. 45; U-Pa, v. 484; S-Pa, pp. 59, 89
ghṛta-madhū (ghee and honey) and sarkara (sugar); laūrū (balls of confection), lawanu¹ (butter) are the primary ones. Among the fruits there are mentions of cocoanut,² śrīphala³ (wood-apple), tāl⁴ (fruit of palmyra palm), banana,⁵ papaya,⁶ āmlakhi⁷ (myrobalam), jātiphai⁸ (nut meg), etc. Betel-nut is very popular among the Assamese and very often mentioned in these books. Besides betel-nut there are references to camphor also.⁹ In addition there are mentions of ākhai,¹⁰ pīthā,¹¹ pāyasa,¹² sweetened and flavoured rice,¹³ salt, chilli,¹⁴ even kāsundī¹⁵ (a chutney of mustard) and dhekliā (eatable fern).¹⁶ Among the intoxicants the names of bhāṅg

1. M-Ma, pp. 45, 46; S-Pa, p. 57
2. M-Ma, p. 18; S-Pa, p. 59
3. M-Ma, p. 11
4. M-Ma, p. 6
5. M-Ma, p. 46; S-Pa, pp. 57, 59
6. G-Rā, vv. 818, 19
7. D-Ma, pp. 90, 102
8. D-Ma, p. 102
9. M-Ma, pp. 14, 18, 22, 23, 27, 46, 47, 62; U-Pa, vv. 111, 126, 139, 483; S-Pa, pp. 59, 467
10. M-Ma, p. 62
11. D-Ma, p. 101; S-Pa, p. 89
12. M-Ma, p. 62; D-Ma, p. 101; S-Pa, p. 89
13. G-Rā, v. 218
14. M-Ma, p. 13
15. D-Ma, p. 102
16. D-Ma, p. 103
(gāñjā, hemp) and dhaturā (thorn apple) are found.

Dresses, Ornaments and Other Articles of Luxury:

Very concise descriptions of the dresses put on by the characters like Śiva, Durgā, Gaṇeśa, Uṣā, Aniruddha, Kṛṣṇa, etc., are found. Śiva wore tiger skin, had jhuli-kanthā (beggar's bag) by his side and the skull and damaru in his hand. Normally he smeared ashes on his body and wore ornaments of snakes and garland of bones. However, description of dresses and ornaments of Śiva's marriage and his beauty has been given by the poet as follows: He has worn white silk cloth instead of tiger skin, his body bears the paste of sandalwood instead of ash. His head is adorned by a crescent moon and hand by triśula (trident). In the poem of Nārāyaṇadeva it is found that while Śiva is dressed as bride-groom he wears crown in his head, ear-rings in ears, armlets in hands, paste of sandalwood on forehead and other various ornaments. In the description of Gaṇeśa it is stated that he wears tiger-skin, sacred thread in his shoulder,

1. M-Ma, p. 55; S-Pa, p. 60
2. M-Ma, p. 20
3. M-Ma, pp. 20, 68; S-Pa, p. 33
4. M-Ma, pp. 56, 68
5. S-Pa, p. 71
sindur (vermilion) on his forehead and his feet are adorned with Nūpura (jingling anklet). It may be noted that Kṛṣṇa's beauty and dresses as described by the Neo-Vaiṣṇava poets have almost the same identity in the pen-pictures of Kṛṣṇa painted by the Pāṇḍīḷi poets.

Mankar's description of Durgā's dress and ornaments reflects the costume and apparel of royal and noble families of those days. On her coiffure she put on flowers like Bakula, Mālati; she took Sendura (vermilion) on her Sētō (parting of hair right across the head) and kājal (collyrium) on her eyes. She has jewel studded kāncali (breast cover) on her breasts, mekhalā (golden waist band made of many small bells), ghāgar and kusuma-vastra (flower-decked garments) on her waist, Makara-kundala (an ear-ring shaped like a crocodile) in her ears, valuable gajamati (a large and superior pearl supposed to be found in the tusk of an elephant) in her neck, Ujhanti (ring) in fingers of the feet, bracelets in fore-arms, etc.

1. S-Pā, p. 2
2. U-Pā, vv. 2-3
3. G-Rā, v. 173
4. U-Pā, v. 540
5. U-Pā, pp. 189-90
6. G-Rā, vv. 6, 63, 97
7. G-Rā, vv. 834-35
and many such types of ornaments. In the description of Padmā's marriage Nārāyaṇadeva brings in pictures of such dress and ornaments. Pārvatī holds a mirror in her hand when she is in bride's dress. Both the bride and the bridegroom wear silver muriāl (crown) decked with flowers on their foreheads. For combing hair, kākai (comb) and mirror were used. Pārvatī combs her hair with the kākai to form a Kamalmatī khopā (coiffure made up like a lotus bud). Nārāyaṇadeva's and Mankar's Durgā and Durgāvara's Soneka wear the same type of dress on festive occasions.

\[\text{\checkmark In describing Manasā's dresses Mankar wrote about vermilion in sēotā, collyrium in eyes, nūpura (jingling anklets) in feet, Ujhántī (ring for the feet), necklace, bāju (ornament for the arms), kīṅkini (a tinkling ornament) in the waist, etc. However, various types of serpents like senduriā, Kājaliā, Saṅkhiniyā, Manirāj, etc., are substituted for these dress and make-up in the case of Manasā, the serpent goddess.}\]

1. M-Ma, pp. 25, 26, 35, 48, 59
2. S-Pa, pp. 147-49
3. M-Ma, p. 59
4. M-Ma, p. 8
5. M-Ma, pp. 36, 42, 59; D-Ma, p. 107
6. M-Ma, p. 59
7. M-Ma, pp. 42-43; S-Pa, p. 3
8. D-Ma, p. 107
9. M-Ma, p. 80
Pitamvara gives an account of Usa's bridal dress in Usa-parinaya, in which we get a bright and dazzling picture of Usa comparable to the heroines of the Pāṇcāli poets. Usa puts a net of pearls after tying her heavy hair and wears a garland of Mālati flowers, she has vermillion on her forehead, collyrium in her eyes, golden ear-rings in ears, necklace of pearls on the neck and her hands are adorned with khāru (gold or silver bangle) and sākhā (a bangle of small conch-shells). She uses a paste of scented sandalwood on her body and has kāncali (breast cover) on her breasts. On top of this she wears a garland of lotus. As her dress, she has silk cloth, kinkini on her waist and golden nūpura on her feet.¹

Usa's costume as described in Usa-parinaya and dress of Surpanakhā in the guise of a charming lady as described in Giti-Rāmāyana have striking resemblance.² All ladies used to take veil.³

To participate in marriage ceremony, elephant, horse, cow, etc. were utilized and those were decorated with variegated cloths. As painted by Mankar, Śiva's bull was decorated with colourful fastoons and ornaments at his marriage ceremony. It is there in Mankar's narratives that the Brāhba

1. U-Pa, vv. 67-77; 486-87
2. G-Rā, vv. 70-72
3. S-Pa, p. 75
is invested with scented goods, victory-bell hung from his neck, golden bangles on the two horns, jewels in parts of body, bells on all four legs, white silk cloth on the body and a mirror stuck in his forehead.¹

Furniture, Utensils and Other things of Utility:

From the writings of the poets we can gather some informations about the goods in use. Among the goods utilized during pūjā and marriage celebrations, mentions about earthen, golden or silvery pots are found in many places.² Generally the lamp is first lighted, then after the pot being filled with water is placed on the sanctum.³ Besides references are there to Karāṇi⁴ (flower-basket), kamandalu⁵ (wooden water pot), Cōwar⁶ (a fan made of yaks tail), mat of kuśā (a kind of grass),⁷ mat made of the skin of kṛṣṇasār pahu⁸ (a kind of deer), Jhārī, Bhrngār or loṭā⁹ (metallic pitcher), Durvākṣata,¹⁰

¹ M-Ma, p. 68
² M-Ma, pp. 3, 8, 11, 26, 48, 55; D-Ma, p. 96; U-Pa, v. 1341; S-Pa, p. 78
³ M-Ma, p. 14
⁴ M-Ma, pp. 24, 26, 68, 76, 81; G-Rā, v. 834
⁵ M-Ma, p. 24; S-Pa, p. 30
⁶ M-Ma, p. 27; D-Ma, p. 100; G-Rā, v. 569; U-Pa, v. 1352
⁷ M-Ma, p. 24
⁸ U-Pa, v. 872
⁹ M-Ma, p. 47; D-Ma, p. 983; G-Rā, v. 483; S-Pa, p. 74
¹⁰ M-Ma, p. 49
banana, flower, lamp, kuśa, Gandhataila (scented oil), Candrātapa (canopy) of white silk and mat or carpet.

Generally in a pūjā ceremony five elements, viz., Gandha or Dhunā (resin with pleasant smell), Puspa (flower), Dhūpa (incense), Dīpa (earthen lamp) and Naivedya (offerings to god) are used.

For agricultural purposes plough was used. Among the household goods there is mention about Canduka (iron chest or box) in Mankar's Manasā-kāvyā. Besides items like golden plate, Hari or Bhanda (vessel), Sāphura (a box for betel-
nut), cup, golden sickle, golden bata (a tray with a foot on which offerings are made to the gods or to a respectable person), golden knife, silver needle are said to be utilized. For sleeping purpose Khāt (cot), Pālenq (bedstead), mat and mosquito-net were used. To rub the body there are references to using Gāmocā (Assamese towels). Boat and Dolā (palanquin) were used as vehicles.

From the items described above it can be realized that during the period of the poets of sixteenth and seventeenth century A.D. these goods were used in Assamese society and there were at least a class of well-to-do Assamese people.

1. M-Ma, p. 47
2. M-Ma, p. 20
3. M-Ma, p. 13
4. M-Ma, p. 13
5. M-Ma, p. 13
6. U-Pa, v. 133
7. M-Ma, p. 33; U-Pa, v. 164
8. M-Ma, p. 68
9. M-Ma, pp. 33, 68; D-Ma, pp. 103, 119
10. S-Pa, p. 47
11. M-Ma, p. 37
12. G-Rā, vv. 891-92
D. Religion and Philosophy:

The poets under study belong to the period of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century A.D. Even though Saktism was very influential in Assam at that time, Saivism and Vaiṣṇavism were also in vogue. Especially there was a strong current of Neo-Vaiṣṇava cult as propounded by Śaṅkaradeva flowing throughout Assam. Even though Mankar, Durgāvara, Pitāmvāra and Nārāyaṇadeva were free from the monistic philosophy propounded by Śaṅkaradeva, praises of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa are found in some of their works. As the composition of Manasā-kāvyā has been centred around Manasā Devi, something can be known about the glories of Śiva and Durgā Devi or Gaurī, they being the primary characters related to Manasā Devi, Saivism and Saktism. Besides references to gods and goddesses like Manasā, Gangā, Gaṇeśa, Kārtika, etc., are found in different places.

Saivism:

In the works of Mankar, out of the three principal deities, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva are signified as the superior ones. In one instance the poet says - "harara Ⴏdeśe brahmā sraḷilā sakala",¹ that is, that Śiva is superior to Brahmā

1. M-Ma, p. 10
can be understood from this phrase. In another instance the poet has shown Dharma-Devata and Mahādeva as one and the same, "ardha anga mahādeva ardha anga dharma". From the prologue of Creation in Śūnya Purāṇa written by Rāmāi Paṇḍit, it is known that prior to creation vacuum prevailed all around and basing on this vacuum Almighty Lord desired for creation and accordingly the physical Dharma Niraṅjana evolved. This Dharma Niraṅjana is the first creator. Mankar mentions Mahādeva as the other half of Dharma-devatā. In this respect the introduction of Manasa-kāvyā suggests that Dharma and Śiva is almost an extinct form of Nāthism.

Perhaps Mankar was a devotee of Śiva and Pārvatī, because on one occasion he worships Hara and Gaurī. About the form of Śiva Mankar says that he has matted hair, bag on his back, garland of bone in neck, torn-cloth in the body, snakes in the limbs, Trisūla and Damaru in hand. Brṣabha (bullock) is his vehicle and ghosts and spirits his companions. Ptāmvara also gives the same description of the form of Śiva.

1. M-Ma, p. 10
3. Manasa-kāvyā, ed. by B.K. Barua and S.N. Sarma, intro., p. 22
4. M-Ma, p. 20
5. M-Ma, p. 30
6. U-Pa, v. 1347
In Mankar's works, Śiva is more prominent than Brahmā and Viṣṇu. On the other hand his character finds an expression as commoner also. As he is addicted to bhāṅg or gānjā (hemp) he is called 'Bhāṅgrā Jagannātha'.

In the description of form and activity of Śiva as bridegroom, even there too Śiva's personality as a commoner has been reflected. In the same way Śiva changes his dress when he goes to marry Pārvatī. In short his beauty is even more than the other gods (Devas) and the poet has addressed him as 'Kāmini-Mohana' (debonair personality).

Mankar has stated Brahmā, Hara and Nārāyaṇa basically as one God. Generally Śiva has been treated as 'Anāthara Nātha' (protector of weak and helpless men) and the Lord of the Universe. Pītāmvara also says that there is no difference between Hari and Hara. Through the character of Cānd Sadāgara, Durgāvara also shows that Śiva is the Supreme one and the other god and goddesses are of no significance.

1. M-Ma, p. 5
2. M-Ma, p. 51
3. M-Ma, p. 56
4. M-Ma, p. 58
5. M-Ma, pp. 55-56
6. U-Pa, v. 1100
7. D-Ma, p. 87
Sukavi Nārāyaṇadēva also says that Śiva is the cause of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Sun, Moon, creation and destruction.¹

In Usā Pariṇaya Pīṭāmvara Kavi has shown the superiority of Hara through Bāṇāsura.² Only by Śiva's boon Bāṇāsura could become the master of the three world and through his boon even Citralekhā also could draw the portraits of different gods and goddesses.³

It is worthmentioning that even today memory of famous paūrāṇic King Bāṇāsura has been associated with Mahābhairava and Mahābhairavi temples at Tezpur.

---

1. tāhā dekhi daivyagaṇa cintita haila mana karayore śivara pāwe karilā stavana tumī brahmā tumī viṣṇu tumise kāraṇa tumī candra tumī śurya tumī mahājana tumī svarga tumī marttya tumise pātāla tumī divā tumī rātri tumī kāla bikāla samsārara sāra tumī jīvera jīvana sṛṣṭi pālaṇa gosāi tomāra kāraṇa.

   - S-Pa, p. 31

2. U-Pa, vv. 16-26

3. U-Pa, vv. 296-99
Saktism:

Very little is known about various characteristics of Saktism as well as Sakti from the works of Mankar and Fitāmvara. In the writings of both the poets references to other forms of Sakti such as Mangalacandi, Durga, Mahamaya, Gauri, Candi, Katyayanī, Parvati, Bhavāni, Śiva-trinayani, Mahesvari, Iṣṭasiddhi-pradāyini, Jagat-janani, Bhagavati, etc., are found.

Mankar and Durgāvara have mentioned one particular name of Sakti or Candi as Bahuda, more than once. Perhaps this name is the derivative of Bāsuli-devī worshipped in Bengal and from that, Bahudi or Bahudā is originated.

According to Mankar, the sage Hemanta found Durgā inside an iron box on the sea-shore after observing penance. He reared her as his own daughter and later got her married to Śiva. However, Mankar instead of assuming Durgā as an

1. M-Ma, p. 2
2. M-Ma, p. 4; U-Pa, v. 799
3. U-Pa, v. 799
4. U-Pa, vv. 799-800
5. M-Ma, pp. 7, 10, 11, 63, 79, 80; D-Ma, pp. 85, 87, 123
6. M-Ma, word Index, p. 8
7. M-Ma, pp. 11-65
ordinary woman, addressed her as 'Tribhubana Devi'.\(^1\) Through 
Usā Pitāmvarā says that woman who worships Durğā-devī offering 
flower of gold is blessed.\(^2\) On another occasion Pitāmvarā 
says that it is because of Gaurī's Māyā (divine illusion) 
Usā and Aniruddha had their dream-union.\(^3\) When King Bāṇa 
arrested Aniruddha with nāgapāśa, then Usā and Aniruddha 
worshipped Jagat-janani trinayanī Durğā as per advice of sage 
Nārada due to which Aniruddha got free from the snake venom.\(^4\) 
Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva worshipped Durğā in the form of Ambikā, 
Tārā Bhairavl, Śīlasūtā and Bighna-nāśinī. She has nūpura 
on her feet, red-clothes as dress, kiṅkini in the waist and 
lion under her feet.\(^5\) In another place the poet says that 
she herself is Yogamāyā and assuming the form of Caṇḍikā she 
manifests herself as the devī of destruction. She herself is 
śānti (peace), tuṣṭi (contentment), kṣudhā (hunger), trṣnā 
(thirst), nidrā (sleep), kānti (beauty) and omnipresent devī.\(^6\)
In the writings of the poets under study, very little can be found about Vaisnavism. However, Mankar has significantly described the activities of Śiva, Pārvatī and Padmā in the Manasā-kāvya. He offered his obeisance to Nārāyaṇa, while referring to the gods and goddesses. According to the poet, in the beginning of the creation Brahmā and Viṣṇu incarnate together and they are of equal power. Incarnations are as described in Bhāgavata, Purāṇas or in the bhakti kāvyas like Kirtana-ghoṣā, Nāma-ghoṣā, etc. Mankar does not call the matsya and kūrma as incarnations of Viṣṇu, instead he says that they appear from 'Gosāi' or 'Ādi Devatā' (Supreme being). Kaliram Medhi showed that this has got similarity with the Śunya Purāṇa of Rāmāi Paṇḍit.

In the beginning of the kāvya, poet Pltāmvara offers obeisance to Kṛṣṇa, son of Daivākī or Viṣṇu and draws the epilogues of many chapters by offering obeisance to Hari or

1. M-Ma, p. 17
2. M-Ma, p. 6
3. K-Q, vv. 2-14; N-Q, v. 3
4. M-Ma, p. 6
5. Manasā-kāvya, intro., p. 21
6. U-Pa, v. 1
Visṇu. Like the Vaiṣṇava poets, about Visṇu the poet remarks that for the welfare of all, the person who incarnates in the form of cowherd Kṛṣṇa, is none but the Supreme Lord. He has neither beginning nor end and even the wise also cannot easily comprehend him in meditation. The gods like Brahmā, Indra, Candra, Sūrya, Yama, Baruṇa and others are all his humble subordinates. With the incarnation of Rāma he himself bridged the sea and killed Rāvaṇa. Everything in this universe is his creation and he is the Supreme Lord of this universe. Mādhavadeva also sings in the same tune - "ananta kuṭi brahmāndara hari adhikāri" (Hari is the Lord of eternal universe). To relieve the

1. U-Pa, vv. 33, 59, 64, 291, 565, 1393
2. yāka yōgī napāoi dhyānata
   hena hari palānta bhayata. - K-g, v. 694
   nāhi ādi anta pūrvāparā
   pūrṇa brahma jagata Īśvara. - K-g, v. 698
   ye carācara guru nārāyaṇa sarvaloka hita kārane nandaka
   mandire bekata huyā kahu kapaṭa gopaveśe parama
   mangala rūpa nānāna rasa khelanā kayakahu yaśowāka
   mana santosiye krīḍā kayala ...
   - Arjuna-n, p. 290
3. U-Pa, vv. 556-57
4. U-Pa, vv. 875-79
5. N-g, v. 854
world, Viṣṇu incarnates on earth as Avatāra. One who listens to His glory derives worldly benefits and proceeds to Viṣṇuloka (heaven) after his death. In the end after describing Viṣṇu's Daśa Avatāra, Pitāmvara Kavi says that he sometimes takes saguna (with guṇa or quality) form but in reality he is nirguṇa (beyond quality) Brahma only.

The poet of Gītī-Rāmāyana also sometime addresses Rāma as Nārāyaṇa, sometimes as Cakrapāṇi and sometimes as 'Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Tripurāri' or even Maheśvara. The poet sometime says that Rāma is Caturbhūja Nārāyaṇa with Saṅkha, Cakra, Gāda, Padma in four hands or sometime as Avatāra (incarnation) in human form. Hence Rāma or Kṛṣṇa is believed to be one and the same God.

The poet advocates the glories of Vaiṣṇavas as they are religious, simple, mild by nature and they never deceive

1. U-Pa, vv. 2-7
2. U-Pa, vv. 1243
3. U-Pa, vv. 1314-17
4. G-Rā, vv. 27, 290, 328
5. G-Rā, vv. 354, 369
6. G-Rā, vv. 403, 526
7. G-Rā, v. 933
8. G-Rā, vv. 112, 461, 522, 935
anybody. God in the form of Avatāra destroys the wicked and protects the Vaiṣṇavas. Along with Viṣṇu the poet gives equal importance to Vaiṣṇava; because he has expressed through death bound Jaṭāyu about his anticipation of getting the company of Vaiṣṇavas in subsequent births.

Even though the glory of Padmā or Manasādevi has been primarily sung in Padmāvatī of Nārāyaṇadeva, there are mentions of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa in the kāvyā in different places. Especially even though in several Dīhā (the burden of a song) there are glimpses of activities of Rāma or Kṛṣṇa, but there seems to be no relevance of the Padas (verses) attached with the Dīhā.

Other Gods and Goddesses:

In the book under discussion, the poet besides the principal trio of Śiva, Śakti and Viṣṇu also mentions about other god and goddesses like Gaṇeśa, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Gangā, etc. In another instance even though Mankar mentions about

1. G-Rā, v. 384
2. G-Rā, v. 404
3. G-Rā, v. 442
4. S-Pa, pp. 22-23
5. S-Pa, pp. 91, 191, 198
worshipping thirty eight gods and goddesses, he did not specify their names. Since Mankar, Durgāvara and Nārāyaṇadeva composed the kāvyās centering around the glory of Manasā Devi, so in those kāvyas some information is found about the nature and glory of Manasā Devi. Almost every name of Manasā that is referred to in the works of the two poets is noteworthy. Out of these names some are at present obsolete. Different names of Manasā as are obtained in the works of the poet are Bisahari, Padumāi, Padmā, Brahmanī or Bāhuḍā Brahmanī, Totolā, etc.

Manasā Devi is regarded as the goddess of the snakes. She was first worshipped by the non-Aryans and later on the Aryans accepted her as the presiding deity of the snakes. Though it is not clear since when the worshipping of Manasā Devi has started in Assam, but from the works of Mankar and Durgāvara it can be presumed that at least during the early part of the sixteenth century A.D. or even prior to that, worshipping of Manasā was widely prevalent in Assam. This

1. M-Ma, p. 17
2. M-Ma, p. 15; S-Pa, p. 162
3. M-Ma, pp. 17, 58; D-Ma, pp. 95-96
4. S-Pa, p. 163
5. M-Ma, pp. 36, 63; D-Ma, p. 85
6. M-Ma, p. 80
is because Mankar, Durgāvara and Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva composed the Manasā Kāvyā for reciting on the occasion of Manasā pūjā. Mankar has described the dreadful image of Manasā Devī saying that snakes of different colours spread over the entire body of Devī Manasā, which gave the effect of clothes and ornaments.¹

According to Mankar, Śiva gave birth to 'Poṇā' or padmā in the stem of lotus,² and the day of her incarnation is 'Śuklā dvādaśi tithi' of Caitra month.³ At first the devī was being worshipped by the snakes at the lower region or pātāla. After that the splendour and glory of the devī spread over the entire heaven, earth and the nadir.⁴ The right time of the worship of Manasā is the four months of the summer season (caumāsa bāriṣa māsa rāṭr dinā manche layā pujāmāna).⁵ During that period the devī is installed on the dais and the worship continues day and night. Nāga is the clothing and the seat for the devī. Manasā devī is worshipped with lotus and in the pūjā siju stem (a kind of Euphorbia) and earthen pitcher (Ghaṭa) are specially required.⁶

1. M-Ma, pp. 73-80
2. M-Ma, p. 72
3. M-Ma, p. 11
4. M-Ma, p. 3
5. M-Ma, p. 11
6. M-Ma, p. 11
On another occasion Mankar has stated that Śrāvaṇa month is the ideal time for Manasā pūjā. Likewise, Durgāvara also said that the four days of Śrāvana, i.e., śuklā and kṛṣṇā pañcamī of that month, saṃkrānti of Āhāra-Śrāvaṇa and Śrāvaṇa-Bhādras are the ideal days for Manasā pūjā. Even now Manasā pūjā is performed in places like Kārī, Śuālkuchi, Pacariā, etc., during the 'Saṃkrānti' of Śrāvaṇa and Bhādra only. During such time, the women get busy with the works of Manasā pūjā and give victory slogan with uruli (a thrilling sound uttered by women in connection with some joyful or other occasion).

In Manasā pūjā dais (maṇḍapa) is made, colourful designs are drawn on the floor of dais (ālpanā) and Pūrṇa ghaṭa (an earthen pot used in the pūjās filled with water) is installed ceremoniously. This ghaṭa is titled as 'Dharmaghaṭa'. Earthen lamps are lighted before the ghaṭa and during the pūjā five or seven people used to recite the religious stories. It is important that, even now Manasā pūjā is performed in Lower Assam and sacrifice is also offered.

1. M-Ma, p. 14
2. D-Ma, p. 96; S-Pa, p. 134
3. M-Ma, p. 14; D-Ma, p. 97
In Durgavara's Manasa-kavya it is stated that Soneka offered flower of gold and sacrificed goat before the goddess, while performing her pūjā. In Nārāyaṇadeva's Padmāvatī also reference to this sacrifice is found.\(^1\) In Manasa-kavya, Durgavara has expressed that by worshipping Manasa Devī, the blind get back their eye sight, the poor become rich, the childless get sons, the imprisoned get free and the devotee's sorrows vanish.\(^2\) Describing the grace and quality of Padmā in more than one place Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva has told that those who listen to the glories of Padmā or chant, get happiness in this world or in the eternal world.\(^3\) The customary requirements of Manasa worshiping like campākal (a specific kind of banana), tila (sesamum), rice, milk, etc., are offered in lotus leaf besides sacrifice of goats, buffaloes, etc.\(^4\) It may be noted that the water of the Dharmamghaṭa as mentioned above, is collected from some river or pond and this is to worship Nārāyaṇa in the form of water (jalarūpī Nārāyaṇa).\(^5\)

Manasa is bathed with water of the Dharma pūjā and on the occasion of Manasa pūjā, along with the other gods

---

1. D-Ma, p. 88; S-Pa, p. 134
2. D-Ma, pp. 96, 100
3. S-Pa, pp. 125, 129, 133, 748
4. S-Pa, p. 134
5. Manasa-kavya, Intro., p. 14
and goddesses, Dharma is also worshipped.\textsuperscript{1} In the writings of Mankar and Durgāvāra, there are references to Dharma devatā along with hymns.\textsuperscript{2} Mankar has expressed Dharma as half a part of Mahādeva.\textsuperscript{3}

Besides the gods and goddesses, in some places, the effect of planets are also referred to. In the \textit{Giti-Rāmāyana}, Durgāvāra has stated that every one fears the name of sāni (Saturn) but no one fear Candra (Moon).\textsuperscript{4} Besides those gods and goddesses, the pāncālī poets have also referred to certain classes of purānic characters, viz., Kāmasena,\textsuperscript{5} Apesvarā,\textsuperscript{6} Gandharva-Vidyādhara,\textsuperscript{7} Yaksinī,\textsuperscript{8} etc. Some of those characters have popular touch. For instance before disclosing some confidential matters to Kāmasena Yaksinī, Fārvatī is offering arecanut preparation. It is, as if, two Assamese women have met together. Likewise, Mankar has also

\begin{itemize}
\item[1.] \textit{Manasā-kāvyā}, intro., p. 14
\item[2.] \textit{M-Ma}, pp. 14, 17; \textit{D-Ma}, p. 49
\item[3.] \textit{M-Ma}, p. 10
\item[4.] \textit{G-Rā}, v. 400
\item[5.] \textit{U-Pa}, v. 126
\item[6.] \textit{U-Pa}, v. 95
\item[7.] \textit{D-Ma}, p. 85; \textit{S-Pa}, p. 57
\item[8.] \textit{U-Pa}, v. 22
\item[9.] \textit{U-Pa}, v. 126
\end{itemize}
referred to taking of betel-nut preparations by the gc on more than one occasion in his Manasa-kavya.1

From the discussions made above, it can be concluded that many gods and goddesses of the Hindu religion are also found in the writings of the poets under study. In the Vaisnava literature, though many gods and goddesses are being referred to yet Viṣṇu has been regarded as the Supreme one; also amongst the poets under discussion, Mankar has stressed upon Śiva and Pitāmvara upon Viṣṇu.

Durgāvara has termed Rāmacandra as 'the master of the whole Universe' and 'Patita Pāvana' (Saviour of the fallen).2 Sometimes, Rāma has been called Viṣṇu's incarnation 'Caṇḍrapāṇi'3 and sometimes as 'Mahādeva'.4 By worshipping one's own god, one can gain worldly happiness and salvation after death.5 This trend of thinking is found in the works of all the poets.

Poet Mankar has conceived of an almighty God, as Anādi Brahma (eternal Supreme being) who is more powerful

1. M-Ma, pp. 22, 23, 27
2. G-Rā, v. 1
3. G-Rā, v. 354
4. G-Rā, v. 935
5. U-Pa, vv. 5, 7, 8
than Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śaṅkara and is worshipped by all those three gods.¹

In the writings of the Pāncall poets, we have some inklings of auspicious acts like the Tapa-Vrata (meditation and religious fast), etc., Durgāvara has mentioned that Cānd Sadāgara's wife Sonekā make religious fast with a vow on 'ekādaśī tithi' and by the grace of this act she has been blessed with six virtuous and handsome sons. There was also the custom of donating cows along with the religious fast as and when it was necessary. After being blessed with six sons, Sonekā has gifted a cow of gold.² Ekādaśī vrata has also been mentioned in the Gītī-Rāmāyana.³ The desired god can be satisfied by meditation. In the Usā-parinaya Śiva and Pārvatī were pleased by Bāṇāsura through meditation.⁴ It is believed that the fruit of meditation of the previous life is enjoyed in the next life.⁵ Sukavi Nārāyaṇādeva has told that meditation for the sages and yajñas (a ceremony in which oblations are offered) for the Munis (holy sages) were the primary acts.⁶

¹. M-Ma, p. 8
². D-Ma. p. 90
³. G-Rā, v. 837
⁴. U-Pa, vv. 17-18
⁵. D-Ma, p. 108; U-Pa, v. 119
⁶. S-Pa, p. 4
Popular Beliefs and Superstitions:

In the writings of the Pāñcāli poets, some indications of the popular beliefs and superstitions are found. Like today the common people had blind faith in incantations and astrology in the days of the 15th-17th century A.D. also. For instance, Sukavi Nārāyaṇadeva has mentioned that by virtue of incantation the Ojā Dhanvantari could revive the tree, which was turned into ashes by the snake Takṣaka through biting. It was believed that good results could be obtained by setting out for a journey by choosing an auspicious moment. Likewise, auspicious functions like marriage, etc., were celebrated during the auspicious moments and till now that belief prevails in the Assamese society.

In the astrological scriptures, regarding journey, Māhindri yoga, Amṛta yoga, Kāla velā, Vāravelā, etc., have been mentioned, and till now those are very much followed in Assamese society. Mankar and Nārāyaṇadeva have pointed to Māhindri yoga for marriage.

1. S-Pa, p. 259
2. M-Ma, p. 26
3. M-Ma, pp. 48, 49, 55; U-Pa, v. 753; S-Pa, p. 78
4. M-Ma, p. 60; S-Pa, p. 79
According to Usā-parinaya the bride and the groom should have their first meeting at the auspicious moment.¹ Durgāvara has mentioned about the time of 'bonvoyage' as one should set out early in the morning, before the crows caw. Then all the acts are fulfilled. One can be successful if a journey towards the west is undertaken on Saturday.² In another place, Durgāvara has written down that Cānd Sadāgara started ship building only after ascertaining the auspicious moment.³ And he worshipped the ship by putting different articles on board.⁴ Sugrīva set out for war against Bāli, only after ascertaining the auspicious moment.⁵

It is believed that if some unfortunate signs are seen at the time of journey the purpose will not be served or some dangers may come. Pītāmvara has described some such evil signs. Those are - not seeing one's own shadow at the time of journey, flying of vultures over the crown or head, falling down of the pennant of a warrior's chariot, sudden rain from the cloud, trembling of the left eye and the left arm of the male,⁶ fighting of the cats at the front.

1. U-Pa, v. 457
2. D-Ma, p. 92
3. D-Ma, p. 93
4. D-Ma, pp. 94, 95
5. G-Rā, vv. 624, 675
6. U-Pa, vv. 948-50
crossing of fox, snake from the right to the left, breaking of a filled pitcher at the time of journey, extinguishing of light without storm,\textsuperscript{1} to see a jackal at the right side and snake at the left side at the time of journey,\textsuperscript{2} pouncing down on the head by a crow,\textsuperscript{3} etc. In the \textit{Gīti-Rāmāyana}, Kavi Durgāvara has mentioned that such ominous signs were expressed, when King Bāli set out for war.\textsuperscript{4} At the time of husband's journey, trembling of the right eye of the wife was taken as an evil sign.\textsuperscript{5} On the other hand, at the time of journey, chanting of the Veda by the Brāhmaṇa with sounds of good wishes, voices of owl in the front and three sounds of a lizard were considered as good signs.\textsuperscript{6}

In the \textit{Gītā} it is said that the soul is immortal.\textsuperscript{7}

As per popular belief also, the soul has its previous birth and next birth. In \textit{Usā-parināya} the eternal birth has been mentioned.\textsuperscript{8} By doing good deeds in the previous birth,

\begin{enumerate}
  \item \textit{U-Pa}, vv. 1154-55
  \item \textit{U-Pa}, v. 1166
  \item \textit{D-Ma}, p. 102
  \item \textit{G-Rā}, vv. 725-26
  \item \textit{G-Rā}, v. 706
  \item \textit{M-Ma}, p. 69
  \item \textit{Gītā}, II, vv. 12, 20, 22
  \item \textit{U-Pa}, v. 119
\end{enumerate}
good results could be obtained in the next birth.

Indications of such beliefs are also found in case of Haragauri Vivaha. According to the Hindus Ganga is a very sacred river and its water is also very pure. Likewise Gayā is a holy place and by offering Pinda at the river Phalgu near to this place, the soul gets its place in heaven. The people had faith in destiny, incantations and dreams.

People also had faith in vows. It was also believed that the act of going against a friend was a great sin. Folk beliefs like good and bad symptoms of the males and females according to habits and physical structures, available in the Rati-sāstra, etc., are also found in the writings of the Pāncāli poets. As per Rati-sāstra Padminī women are superior and Pītāmvara and Durgāvara has referred to such women. In the Gīti-Rāmāyana references to beliefs

1. D-Ma, p. 108
2. M-Ma, p. 48
3. G-Rā, vv. 6, 14, 30
4. D-Ma, p. 124; G-Rā, vv. 691-99
5. M-Ma, p. 44
6. G-Rā, v. 646
7. Rati-sāstra, p. 8
8. U-Pa, v. 406; D-Ma, p. 108
From the above discussions, one can come to the conclusion that popular beliefs prevailing during the times of those poets have not disappeared from the contemporary Assamese society.

E. Fine Arts:

Musical Instruments, Songs and Dances:

In the writings of the poets under study, some indications regarding fine arts, music, sculpture and architecture of those days could be found. The poetic works of the poets under study are called Pāncālī or Pācālī. Besides those, no other Assamese poetic work is termed as 'Pācālī'. According to Dr. Neog, the origin of the word Pācālī is Sanskrit Pāncālī or Pāncālikā. Its meaning is puppet. Dr. Neog guesses that such works had links with the puppet theatre and it was connected with the Śakti cult. Secondly, there are mentions of rāgas Ahira, Baḍārī, Cālanī, Dhanaśrī, Basanta, etc., in the Pāncālīs. From this it can be presumed that besides dances, during the days of those poets, songs with

1. G-Rā, v. 520
2. Usā-parinaya, Intro., pp. 34-35
such rāgas were also sung. Amongst the instruments, accompanied with the songs, Tāl-Mondirā, 1 Dundubhi, 2 Benā, 3 Damaru, Bāñī, 4 Śīṅgā, 5 Śāṅkha (conch shell), 6 Gomonā, 7 Dhol, 8 Dhāk, 9 Tōkāri, 10 Mrādāṅga, 11 Kartāl, 12 etc., are notable. Another point to be noted is that the verses of the poetic works of those poets are sung by the Ojapali with melody which is accompanied with dances and musical instruments and till today it is prevailing. Hence, one can come to the conclusion that during the period of those poets, i.e., 16th-17th century A.D. songs and dances were widely prevalent in Assam. The Bārgītās composed by their contemporary Vaiṣṇava poets Śāṅkarādeva and Mādhavādeva also confirm the same.

1. M-Ma, p. 1; S-Pa, p. 528
2. M-Ma, p. 11; G-Rā, v. 612; S-Pa, p. 21
3. M-Ma, p. 22; S-Pa, p. 59
4. M-Ma, pp. 42, 55, 69, 76; G-Rā, v. 329; U-Pa, v. 1347
5. M-Ma, pp. 47, 55; S-Pa, pp. 74, 315
6. M-Ma, pp. 47, 63; S-Pa, pp. 21, 59, 315; U-Pa, v. 971
7. M-Ma, p. 74
8. S-Pa, pp. 197, 315
9. S-Pa, pp. 197, 528
10. S-Pa, p. 68
11. S-Pa, pp. 59, 528
12. S-Pa, p. 528
It is mentioned in the writings of the poets that generally in the marriage festivals musical instruments like Śāṅkha, Śīngā, Phāk, Dhol, Muruj, Kāhāli, etc., were played. Besides songs and music, dance performance were also arranged in the marriage ceremony. Furthermore, in the functions of marriages, etc. 'Pañca-Śavda' i.e., concert of harmonic orchestra of five musical instruments were also arranged.

Instruments which were used during the war are Bherī, Dundubhi Dāmā, Phāk, Śāṅkha, Muruj, Ghaṅṭā, etc. In the jubilees, etc., besides songs sung by Gāyana and dances performed by dancers, musical instruments like Dhāk, Dum-dumi, Kaḍa, Bheura, Mrṛḍāṅga, Mandirā, Dampa, Kāṁsa, Kartāl were also played.

---

1. U-Pa, v. 1354; D-Ma, p. 87
2. M-Ma, p. 63
3. G-Rā, v. 55; M-Ma, pp. 49, 58; G-Rā, v. 55
4. U-Pa, vv. 610, 613, 1152
5. U-Pa, v. 612
6. U-Pa, v. 613
7. U-Pa, v. 632
8. S-Pa, p. 8
Painting, Sculpture, Architecture:

From the books discussed, some information regarding paintings, sculptures and architectures could be gathered. It is to be noted here that, like the other places of India, in Assam plenty of temples of stones and images are not found. Due to the non-availability of the stones required for construction of temples and sculpting of images and secondly due to the plentiful availability of bamboos, canes, reeds, etc., in Assam, generally thatched temples, maṇḍapa, Nāmgharā, etc., were constructed. Though at present brick has replaced stone, but in Assam the adoration of bamboo and thatch still prevails. In case of sculpture and architecture also this matter is to be noted.

In Manasā-kāvyā of Mankar the description of making the dais (Maṇḍapa) for Padmā-pūjā is as follows - the roof of the dais was made of polished ribs of bamboos. That roof was made with rafters and long poles of bamboos to support the roof (Mārāli). It had four shields. Crystal or quartz pillars were erected and decorated with yak’s tail (Cōwar). The dais (maṇḍapa) was set up with earth filling and covered with glasses and walls were painted with Hengul (cinnabar) and Häitāl (yellow or pigment) in artistic designs. The whole arena was covered with white silk clothes and candrātapa (canopy) decorated the top. The dais was polished with holy
cow dung and Ālpanā (decorative designs) were drawn over it.¹

These decorative designs are considered to be the sign of good fortune for the Hindus. In the society, the custom of designing Ālpanā right from the door-step of the house to the place of pūjā still persists. In Mankar's writings it is found that while Devī Durgā had been to her husband's place from her mother's house, Ālpanā (decorative designs) was drawn at home.²

Ālpanā is also drawn on the floor and wall. In Durgāvara's Manasā-kāvyā Ālpana made of sandalwood paste,³ is clearly mentioned.

Mankar also, on another occasion has referred to Ālpanā along with the decoration of the marriage dais.⁴ In Durgāvara's Manasā-kāvyā it is found that the temple, which was erected for Sonekā had four roofs and it was decorated with gold, silver, diamond, etc.⁵ There are also mentions of roof, ribs of the dwelling house of Rāma-Sītā or Mer Mandir.⁶

¹. M-Ma, pp. 3, 14
². M-Ma. p. 26
³. E-Ma, p. 97
⁴. M-Ma, p. 48
⁵. D-Ma, p. 104
⁶. G-Rā, v. 44
Besides the dais, in case of boat building also the artistic talents of the artisans of those days is significant. In Durgāvara's Manasā-kāvyā it is found that in the galley boat of Cānd Sadāgara, the Kādiā (noose) was fastened with golden pitcher. The golden chair on the deck decorated with pearls, canopy at the top, diamonds, silk clothes and golden oars were adding beauty to the boat.¹

In Usā-parinaya informations of drawing of paintings are found. It is learnt that with various colours, Citralekhhā drew the portraits of gods on the canvas with her brush.²

In the poetic works the mention of the golden throne could be found,³ but nothing has been mentioned about the process of its construction. For sitting purposes stools with four legs, made of Gamāri timber (Gomelinarborea) were used.⁴ In reference to fine arts, construction of the banks of the ponds as referred to in Mankar's works could be cited. All the four banks of a pond are built with gold, setting precious stones therein and the sides are decorated with dolls. All the four banks were beautified with flowers of different

---

1. D-Ma, pp. 93-94
2. U-Pa, vv. 292-310
3. M-Ma, p. 48
4. D-Ma, p. 104
In the olden days, the kings used to fortify their palaces with thick walls all around. Reference to such fortification is found in Usā-parinaya. In this context the agnigāda of Usā-parinaya can be referred to. Regarding the fortification of the agnigāda, it is gathered that on all the four sides of the walls there were wide trenches and the stockade being encircled with burning flames.

From these available sources it can be presumed that during the days of the Pāncālī poets, special culture of fine arts prevailed in Assam.

1. M-Ma, p. 71
2. U-Pa, v. 366
3. U-Pa, vv. 420, 924-25