CHAPTER - 3

ŚAKTI TEMPLES IN VARIOUS PLACES IN PRĀGJYOTISHA-KĀMARŪPA

Prāgjyotisha- Kāmarūpa was a sacred place and its land, water, mountain, trees etc. were said to be sacred. So it is called a land of holy sages, who gathered here, from all around, to meditate in this land. The Yōgini Tantra, the Kālikā Pūrāṇa and other Pūrāṇas mention hundreds of holy places of Prāgajyotisha Kāmarūpa. The remains of ancient civilization highlight the ancient culture of the land. There were temples on the mountains, in the jungles, in the plains and in the villages. The Yōgini Tantra mentions that an aspirant will attain equal fruits of desire whether it is worshipped in the water or in the ground.

Jale sthale kāmyṛūpełputepujānachcha saman phalaṅg.

Y.T, C-6, V-151, P-426

This indicates that the entire Kāmarūpa is like a temple. There was no variation between mountains, plains, rivers, rocks, caves and trees all are sacred in Kāmarūpa. From Šadiyā in the east to Goālpārā in the west there were innumerable pithas or temples, some of which are in living position and many were devastated. There are references to shrines or temples under the Kirāta rule. The non- Aryan Kirātas worshipped Mother Goddess according to their own customs, rites and rituals. Most of these temples were destroyed by natural calamities.

1 Y.T C-6 V-145 P-425
The Yōgini Tantra mentions that the original Kāmākhyā temple was destroyed by earthquake. Yet traces of the old Śakti temples are found in various places of Kāmarūpa. Of course, some of them are destroyed and some are standing even today bearing the ancient glory, which enriched the Assamese culture. There are many ancient temples living with the co-existence of nature till this day. The most important Śakti temples of Kāmarūpa are the Kāmākhyā, Dasa- Mahāvidyā, Úgratārā, Dirgheswari, Šiddheswari temple of Šuālkūchi, Mahāvairabi in Tezpur, Šīlghāt in Nagāon, Davakā, Tāmreswari, Mālinithān, Biswanāth, Tūkreswari and Śingari temple.

The ancient sacred places of the non-Aryans later on, were occupied by the Aryans. The sacred pithas of this land were socially and politically recognized. Various tribes established different temples in different places and they worshipped there on the basis of the local customs, rites and rituals; but these were recorded in the literatures and they are still found in the Pithanirmaya, Kālikā Pūrāna, Jñānarnava Tantra, Kūbjikā Tantra etc. The literatures make different list of holy pithas of India from 4 to 108. But among these lists Kāmarūpa occupies a place as the famous centre of Śakti Pithas and one of the most important holy place in India.

The Kālikā Pūrāna refers to the shrines or temples as holy Pithas. It also regards the water, mountainians, caves, tanks, rivers as the Goddesses and as the holy places, and they were equal in purity to the shrines or temples of Gods and Goddesses. The Kālikā Pūrana refers to a river named Bhairavi
near the Himalayas and regards it as equal to Kāmākhyā and the devotees worshipped the river as Kāmākhyā there. There existed another river named Caṇḍikā, following down from the mountain Dhawal and a tank which was also known as Caṇḍikā. The name of the birth place of the river Gaṅgā was called Kālikā. Even there was found a nagara (city) named Bhōgavatī on the Nilakūṭa hill.

There is a legend and mythological* story regarding the origin of the Pithas in India as well as in Prāgjyotisha –Kāmarūpa. The legend received its final form in the latest Pūrānas and Tantras which put forward the legends about the origin of the holy Pithas. Of course, the germs of legends can be traced in the Rigveda. According to the Vedic view, the Vedic people performed various Yajñas on the alters (later known as Pithas or temple) in particular places. These places came to be known as pithas without shed. But after getting the royal support and patronage, shrines were built under the auspices of the kings. The non-Aryan kings, with a view to win over the support of the Śākta class, extended royal patronage and thus the ancient culture was protected. They built the temples at the royal cost and thereby made them popular among the tribal people.

* Legend- tradition, Mythology- ideas that many people think are true but that donot exit

2 K.P C-78. V-61 P- 793.
3 Parvatiya Copper Plate of Vanamalavarmadeva V- 48
4 K.P C-78 V-103 P- 798
5 K.P, C- 78 V- 104 P- 798
The Tantras and Pūrānas refer to Pithas in various places of ancient India. Many of them had already been destroyed and many are still existing as living faith. The Hevājra Tantra, a Buddhist work mentioned four Pithas, namely Jalandhara, Odiyānā, Pūrnagiri and Kāmarūpa. All belonged to Śakti Pithas. Sādhanāmālā, another Buddhist work mentions four sacred places - Odiyānā, Pūrnagiri, Kāmarūpa, and Śrikatta. Abul Fazal’s ‘Ain-i-Ākbari’ mentions Kāmarūpa as one of the four important pithas. Different traditions put-forward different views regarding the number of Pithas. Historians are also not unanimous about the exact number of the seats of the mother Goddess. The Kālikā Pūrāna mentions seven pithas, among them three pithas belonged to Kāmarūpa. The seven pithas were Devikūta, Udiyānā, Kāmagiri (Kāmarūpa), Dikkarvāsini, Pūrnagiri and Lalitākāntā. The Rūdrayāmala (earlier than 1052 A.D) mentions 10 holy pithas, including Kāmarūpa. The Kūlārnava Tantra listed 18 Pithas, excluding Kāmarūpa. The Jñānarnava Tantra (earlier than the middle of the 16th century) enumerates eight important Pithas in which Kāmarūpa was the principal Pitha. The Kūbjikā Tantra (supposed to be a fairly early work) refers to 42 Pithas. A different section of the Jñānarnava Tantra recognized 50 Śākta Pithas of India in which Kāmarūpa was mentioned as an important Pitha. The Bengali Tāntric teacher Krishṇānanda Āgamavāvisa in

7 K.P C-18 V-41-51, P-123-124
8 Sirkar D.C, The Saktā Pitha P-17
9 Ibid P-18
10 Ibid P-21
his work Tantrasāra recognized 51 Pithas (assigned to 17th century A.D.). A list of 108 names of the Mother Goddess with the specification of her association with particular holy places is to be found for the first time in the Matsya Pūrāṇa (ch-13). In the list of Pithas, the Pithanirmaya (17th century) mentioned 108 names of Mother Goddess or Devi Pithas without mentioning the particular limbs of Goddess (Sati).

There is a legend offering a mythological explanation of the origin of the pithas. According to the legendary or mythological accounts, Sati died in the Yajñasthal held by her father Daksha and Śiva in frantic sorrow, roamed around taking Sati’s deadbody on his shoulder. Bishnū, on the request of the Gods, cut her deadbody into pieces with his Cakra and where the part of Sati’s limbs had fallen, it turned into a Pitha. The most important Śakti Pithas of Kāmarūpa were Kāmākhyā, Úgratārā, Dirgheswari, and Tāmreswari and they were associated with the limbs of Sati, spouse of Śiva. All the Śakti Pithas of Prāgijyotisha-Kāmarūpa were connected with the legendary accounts and mythology.

KĀMĀKHYĀ TEMPLE: The land of North-East India is known as Kāmarūpa-Kāmākhyā. The land is also known outside the land as Kāmarūpa-Kāmākhyā, a great centre of Tāntric Pitha. The Pūrāṇas and Tāntric literatures mention Kāmākhyā as the famous Śakti Pitha and include iconographical description and the system of worship. Kāmākhyā was surrounded by Nine

11 Sirkar D.C, The Sakta Pitha P- 23
12 Sirkar D.C, The sakta Pithas P- 25
Pithas in the Nilacala Hill, that is why it is called Nava Yōni. They are Ípabithi, Bithi, Ípapitha, Pitha, Siddhapitha, Mantrapitha, Brahmapitha, Bishnúpitha and Rûdrapitha. This supreme Kāmākhyā Pitha is called by the Yōgini Tantra as Mahōgrā. The Yōgini Tantra, refers to the origin of Kāmākhyā. Mahākāli said to Brahmā-"Yonimañḍala originates there with my blood and flesh, where the Keśi Asūra is killed. The Yōni is the source of generation of all creatures. But the Kālikā Pūrāṇa also refers to the origin of Kāmākhyā from the limbs of Sati. According to the Yōgini Tantra, Yonimañḍala is the symbol of creation and suggests Brahmā to worship the Yonimañḍala and to create the Universe.

On the advice of Mahākāli, Brahmā worshipped Kāli and attained his siddhi. So Kāmākhyā is a holy pitha not only for the people but for the Devatas too.

There is a common conception regarding the building of the temples or Pithas and that was religion or to pay homage to the power who can protect from all disasters. But if we go to the early non-Aryan period, there was no idea about Gods and Goddesses. They knew only Mother Earth, who produced crops and supplied food and human Mother, who brought up their children. The aboriginal tribes gathered in a place and worshipped Mother Earth for the growth of production. They enjoyed, danced and sacrificed in the place where they performed the worship to

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13 Y.T C- 11 V- 28-29 P- 148
14 Ibid C- 11 V- 57 P- 155.
16 Ibid C- 15 V- 48 P- 213
the Mother. This particular place turned into a shrine under the Kirāṭa rulers and under the Aryan rulers it turned into temple with a beautiful designs. But unconsciously they tended to religion. The main aim of the building of temple architectures, sculptures and arts was the religion. So B.K.Barua comments, “it is the religion which fostered the growth of temples and images. In Assam also temple building and the art of architecture and sculpture grew hand in hand with the spread of religion". There was no trace of temple architectures and sculptures in the aboriginal period, but the inscriptions refer to the temples during the Vauma Dynasty. After the Aryanisation of Kāmarūpa, there came into existence the images of Gods and goddesses replacing the aboriginal deities. They also brought the idea of temple architecture to Kāmarūpa. Artisans were imported from Bihār, Bengāl, Orissā and from South India and on the basis of the local subject-matter under the guidance of the royal authority they built lot of temples with the support of the local people. The Aryanised kings built various temples of different Gods and Goddesses which increased the attention of the people. With the composition of the Pūrāṇas and Tantras specific rites and rituals on the name of Gods and Goddesses were formulated and a disciplined system of worship came into existence. The aboriginal deities took special shapes as divine figures. Thereby spread the Devi mahātmā or the power of the Devi and its influence on the creatures.

17 Barua B.K, Srivastav H.V.Murty, Temples and Legends of Assam, Preface Chapter.
The name of Kāmarūpa and Kāmākhyā both indicate male and female object and their roots go back to the Non-Aryan Kirāta period because there existed among them the pair of Devatas or couple of Devatas just as Kirāta- Kirātani, and the other tribes such as, the Mikiras recognised their devatas as Mikir- Mikirani, the Chutyas as Kūḍī- Māmā and the Mlechas as Mechā- Mecheni, etc. Most probably, Kāmarūpa -Kāmākhyā were the Kūla- Devatā and Kula Devi of the Kirātas. As such the worship of Kāmarūpa (Male ) and Kāmākhyā or Kāmarūpinī (female) might be prevalent among the Kirātas, settled in the Nilakūta Hill. In various pages of the Pūrānas and Tantras, Kāmākhyā is mentioned as Kāmarūpinī. There was another pair of names Kāmeswar- Kāmeswari or Kāmeswar- Mahāgaurī (Lord of sex and queen of sex), which indicate Śiva - Pārvati. She was the Goddess of Kāmanā (desire or aspire of the devotees ) and she was the source of Kāmanā. So she could fulfil the hope and desire of the devotees. She was known as Kāmini, (the most sexual woman), Kāmadā (carnal desire ), Kāmā, Kāntā (beautiful woman ), and Kāmāngadāyini (who bestowed upon organs of sex). The Pūrāna and the Tantra refer to a pair of deities namely Kāmadeva-Kāmadevi. Originally the Kirātas were the devotees of Śiva and later tended to Śakti. Thus all tribes of the Kirātas worshipped their Kūladevatas in couple as Kuladevata and Kuladevi. The cave, where the Yonital organ is seen, is known as Kāmagūha. The Pitha, where Śiva and Pārvati

18 K.P, C- 62 V- 88 P- 615 & C- 63 V- 50 P- 627
19 K.P, C- 62 V- 2 P- 606
20 Ibid C- 62 V- 90 P- 615
met for secret love, is also called Kamapitha. So, myths and epics called the land as Kāmarūpa- Kāmakhyā. The Kālikā Pūrāna and the Yōgini Tantra don’t mention that the word Kāmarūpa- Kāmakhyā were non-Aryan. B.K.Kakati remarks that the word Kāmakhyā is non-sanskritic. The tribes were addicted to meat, wine and sex. In connection to the sex, their deities were named as Kāmadeva - Kāmadevi or Rati - Kāmadeva, Kāmeswara- Kāmeswari (Mahāgauri), Tripūrā- Bhairavi, etc. The area is best known to be the place for pleasure of the Śiva- Pārvati, means for the non-Aryan couple of deities. The Nilācala is full of large number of Śivas (Kāmarūpas) and Pārvatis (Kāmakhyās) in various forms. Few miles away from the Kāmakhyā temple, there were traces of sexual union. Madan-Kāmadeva( the god of love and lust ) was the lord of this place, means he was the presiding deity of the tribes settled here. The tribal people of the place were so addicted to sex that they even involved in sexual union with the beasts also. So it is known, from their nature and character that their Kūladevatās and Kūladeviś were Kāmadevas and Kāmadeviś means Kāmarūpas and Kāmakhyās (Kāmarūpinis). So we find a large number of deities in connection with sex in the Nilācal Hill.

During the aboriginal period, sex was permitted and sexual rituals were performed in the Śakti worship. Sexual rituals or union of male and female was considered by the social law and later on by the Pūrāna and Tantras as the principal element in the attainment of siddhi or Śakti (force). Pranav Jyoti Deka in his book ‘Nilācala Kāmakhyā’ mentions, “In contrast, Hindū Tantras, especially
the Kaulika or Kuladevi tantras as Bagala Tantram, Prānatsini Tantra, invest an enormous spiritual and material worth on the sexual ritual itself. The three primary sexual rituals practised in Hindū Tantras on the Nilācala Hills are namely Cakra Pūjā, Bhairavi Cakra and Yōgini Cakra. Kumāri Pūjā is a ritual wherefrom sex has been purged out. Kāmarūpa-Kāmākhyā was established in the Kāmapitha, one of the four divisions of the land. The name of the pitha is also connected with sex.

Goddess Kāmākhyā was originally a tribal deity, belonged to the matriarchal group. The tribes were belonged to the Austric or Austric speaking tribes. In the pre-historic period, the Nilacala Hill was full of dense forest, plenty of lakes, springs and marshes. The Kirāta people lived in the caves and holes of the rocks. The Yōni of the Nilācala was not human made, it was natural fissure conical in shape. The Kirātas, who belonged to the matriarchal society, used to worship the Yōni as the symbol of regeneration. The reddish water of the spring oozed out from the rock at its foot, where there was a natural fissure. This further strengthened the belief that Mother Earth menstruated through this fissure at the pick time of cultivation. The Pūrānas and the Tantras composed a beautiful imaginary story giving more impression on the Mother cult on the basis of the Yōni symbol as a subject matter. Of course, the main aim of the composition of the myths was to

21 Pranavjyoti deka, Nilacala Kamakhya. P- 51
22 Nath R.M The Background of Assamese Culture. P- 4
23 Nath R.M. The Background of Assamese Culture. P- 4
organize the non-Aryan and Aryan society in the land. So, Kāmākhyā became famous during the Tantra age in 4th and 5th century A.D.24.

Most probably, the Kirātas were responsible for the building of a small shrine around the caves. The Department of Geological science, Gauhati University investigating the age of the temple of Kāmākhyā found few distinct layers of soil below the plinth of the temple containing human artifacts showed to be 2200 years old25. This identified that the temple was built during the Kirāta age. However, the Yōni Goddess Kāmākhyā was presiding deity during the Kirāta rule. Kāmākhyā was contemporary to Rāma of Ayōdhya. Hanūmān came to Prāgyotishpūra in search of medicine. Hanūmān gave a description of men and temples (ugly to heard) of the non-Aryan Origin. At that time the temple was built of hut or wood and the temple was surrounded by trees26. Naraka, conquered Prāgyotisha, drove away the Kirātas to Dikkaravāsini, but a large section of them remained in the kingdom. Naraka established the historical rule in Kāmarūpa. He came to know that the Yōni Goddess was the most popular among the Kirātas. So he adopted liberal policy towards them to strengthen his position. He accepted the Yōni Goddess to satisfy the Kirātas. The Kālikā Pūrāṇa mentions

24 Kakati B.K. P.K.D. Dh. P- 25
25 Deka Pranavjyoti. Nilacala Kamakhya P- 8
that Kāmākhyā was the supreme Goddess in Kāmarūpa. So he accepted Kāmākhyā as his tutelary deity and stopped to worship of other Goddesses.

Naraka imported a large number of Brahmanas and settled them in the Nilācalā Hill. Naraka first introduced Śakti worship in the Nilācalā Hill. The early Sanskrit literatures and inscriptions did not mention the name of Kāmākhyā. The Kālika Pūrāṇa mentions that Naraka was a staunch follower of Śakti or Kāmākhyā. He did not permit Vaśistha to enter into the Kāmākhyā temple. This act of Naraka infuriated Vaśistha and he cursed Kāmākhyā and Naraka also. At once the Manōbhava cave turned into dark for three hundred years.

During the Kirāta period Kāmākhyā was the local Goddess in the Yōni form among the matriarchal Kirāta race. Goddess Kāmākhyā is one but she has many manifestations. They are existed in the Nilācalā Hill called Daśamahāvidyā like - Kāli, Bogalā, Chinnamastā, Mātaṇgi, Bhūvaneswari, Tārā, Sōdāsi, Dhūmāvati, Tripūrāsūndari, and Bhairavi. According to the Kāmākhyā tantra, the Goddess is worshipped in five different forms-
Kāmākhyā, Tripūrā, Kāmeswari, Sōdāsi and Mahāmāyā. There is no image in the temple, only a Yōni shaped stone, smeared with vermillion is set up to represent the Goddess. Kāmākhyā has been worshipped in the vamacara system with Paṃca- Makāra elements which are believed to be of non- Aryan origin, but was formulated and acknowledged by the Aryans. The Kālikā Pūrāna discusses in detail the rites and rituals, system of worship, various offerings, by which the Devi was worshipped. Originally Kāmākhyā was not a bloodthirsty Goddess. Kāmākhyā was regarded as a mother, who fulfills the wishes of her children. But the Aryans introduced it in all the Śakti pithas of the land. The Kālikā Pūrāna refers to the sacrifices by which Caṇḍikā was worshipped.

The Kālikā Pūrāna refers to the system of worship, rites and rituals with various items, which are called Bidhi. The Kālikā Pūrāna also refers to the system of worship to all Śaktis one by one, who are subsisted in the Yōnimaṇḍala. So the Yōgini Tantra suggests to worship the Yōnimaṇḍala as Tripūrādevi, Kāmeswari, Dūrgā, Baishnavi and Yōginis*, in the 63 chapter, Kāmākhyā was known as Brāhmani, Kaumāri, Vaisnavi, Nārāyani, Vārāhi, Indrāni, Cāmūṇḍā and Caṇḍikā. Thus innumerable Devis were worshipped in the Yōnimaṇḍala.

30 Bhattacharya Narendranath, History if Sakta Religion, P- 142.
31 K.P C-55 V- 2 P- 517
* The Yōginis are Anangakusatama, Anangamukhā, Anangamadanā, Anangamadanatama, Anangavesā, Anangamālinī, Madanātama and Madanānākūsāṇ.
Kāmākhyā was identified with Tripūrā, one aspect of whom Tripūrā-bālā (the girl Tripūrā) with a bow and arrow of flowers in her hand stood as the symbol of eternal beauty and sex. Tripūrā-bālā had been worshipped both in the Right hand (dakshinācāra) and Left hand (Vāmācāra) methods which meant that Tantric practices of worship was prevailed in the Kāmākhyā temple. Kāmākhyā has been worshipped in five forms. They were Kūmāri Pūjā, Cakra Pūjā, Vairabi Pūjā, Yōgini Sādhana and Yōgini Cakra. All systems were sex based rituals. Woman is the essential element of this type of worship for the attainment of siddhi. In the Kūmāri worship, a girl of below fifteen, irrespective of class distinction, decorated with flowers and ornaments, was worshipped as the Goddess. But in ancient times in various places it was worshipped a nude girl. In the Cakra Pūjā, a group of male partner sat around a woman in the centre, who was undressed. The woman was worshipped as a Goddess by putting the maximum emphasis on her sex organ. The lady will seat or stand with not only exposed but open sex organ. The devotees worshipped the Yōni. In other places, the devotees touched and kissed the organ, but in the Kāmākhyā, no physical contact is permitted. The most important worship was the Bhairabi Cakra. In the Cakra Pūjā and Bhairabi Cakra five elements like Mādyā matsya, māmsa, mūdrā and maithūna were used freely.

32 Kakati B.K, Mother Goddess kāmākhyā P- 44
33 Deka Pranavjyoti Nilācala Kāmākhyā P- 65
34 Ibid P- 66
Maithūna comes at the culmination of the worship. These were performed secretly. The Yōgini Sādhanā is not a public institution. Here also, a woman was regarded as the celestial Goddess.

The Tantric Pitha Kāmākhyā attracted the attention of the devotees from all over India. People from all countries of India visited the temple and worshipped the Devi Kāmākhyā. The people have been regarding the visit of the temple of Devi as the holy duty for the welfare of the family. The devotees worship Kāmākhyā to avert their danger and misfortunes. The Devi was very popular among the people, it can be understood from a Charyāpada of the 7th century A.D. of a Bengali writer Prabhat Ranjan Sarker in his book, “Bānglā O Bāngāli” (P - 384, 1988)-

Dibāsai Bahūri Kāgai dare bhae,
Rāți bhailie tantraye Kāmṛu jahe. (Bengali language)

That married woman, who is frightened at the cry of a crow in day time, rushed to Kāmākhyā for tantra at midnight.

BHŪVANESWARĪ TEMPLE: One of the most important Dasamahāvidyās is the Bhūvaneswari, which is situated on the top of the Nilācala Hill. Bhūvaneswari is the manifestation of Sakti Kāmākhyā or Mahāmāyā. Bhūvaneswari was worshipped with the Īntric methods and mantras of Kāmākhyā. The devotees gain equal fruits to that of Kāmākhyā by worshipping Bhūvaneswari. Bhūvaneswari is no other than Pārvati. Bhūvaneswri and Durgā

35 Deka Pranavjyoti Nilācala Kāmākhyā, P- 66
36 K.P, C- 79 V- 109 p- 810
are worshipped with the same matras. The devotee visits the holy place of the Devi and worshipped her with a view to remove their obstacles. The Kālikā Pūrāṇa refers to the Astayōgini which were situated around the Kāmākhyā temple in the Yōnipitha namely Gūptakāmā, Srikāmā, Vindyvāsini, Kotīswari, Vanasthā, Pādadūrgā, Dirgheswari and Bhūvaneswari. Mahāgauri Siddharūpini Yōgini was situated as a stone on the top of the Brahma mountain. This beautiful goddess was Bhūvaneswari. The Yōgini Tantra also refers to Bhūvaneswari as Úpapitha. Bhūvaneswari is called the destroyer of demon, siddhikāli and Brahmārūpā Bhūvaneswari. According to the Yōgini Tantra Devi Bhūvaneswari lives in the ‘Mahāgrā’ Pitha. According to mythological description, the forehead of Sati fell in this place.

DIRGHESWARI TEMPLE: The Kālikā Pūrāṇa refers to the Astayōgini of Kāmākhyā with their own Pithas. Dirgheswari was one of the Astayōginis. The Dirgheswari Devalaya is situated on the North bank of the Brahmāputra on the Dirgheswari Hill or Sitā Parvat. The Devi Kūnda (hole) is called Gūpta Kāmākhyā. The Devi is worshipped on the Vāmācāra system. Originally it was a place for meditation. According to the traditional account and Tantra Śastra, there fell the Thighs of Sati in Dirgheswari. There have been seen the foot prints of Bhogavati in the Dirgheswari. The Yōgini

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37 K.P C- 9 v- 109 p- 810
38 K.P C- 62 V- 95-96 P- 616
39 K.P C- 62 V- 125-126 P- 619
40 Y.T C- 11 V- 52-54 P- 154
41 K.P C- 62 V- 95-96 P- 617
Tantra refers to the significance of the worship of Devi Dirgheswari. Devi is called the saviour of the distressed. Devi fulfills the aspirations of her devotees, who visits the Devi Pitha, he can enjoy peace and prosperity for sixty thousand years.

Dristā dirgheswariṁ deviṁ sarvakāmāfala pradaṇg,
Sastibārsasahasrāṇī devaradbhabi madate.

Tiger was the main vehicle of Devi Dirgheswari. According to the traditional account two tigers moved to and fro around the temple complex but they did not do any harm. It is known from the priests of the temple that the system of worship of Dirgheswari is Vāmācāra Tāntric system. In ancient times there did not prevail the system of human sacrifice. The system of sacrifice was introduced later. The Kālikā Pūrāṇa refers to the place as the place of Sādhanā. There are the images of Śiva, Ganesa, Dūrgā, Bishnū and tiger. People have been worshipping Dirgheswari Devi along with Ganesa, Śiva, Manasā, Dūrgā and Kāli with the Tāntric Vāmācāra system. But there was no image of Devi Dirgheswari. It is informed by the priests that it remained abandoned for hundred of years, but from the Āhom period again started the worship. The pitha received royal patronage during the Āhom period. King Rūdra Singha (1634 Sak), Śiva Singha (1675 Sak) And Rajeswar Singha (1679 Sak) extended royal help to this temple. During the Vauma dynasty it had not received any kind of royal support. Various tribes settled around the temple who were
organized under the influence of Dirgheswari Devi. An inscription of the Pāla King Dharmapāla was discovered in Rangmahal but it does not refer to the Devi Dirgheswari or royal patronage to the pitha.

ÚGRATĀRĀ TEMPLE: The Kālikā Pūrāṇa refers to Úgratārā as one of the Yōginis of Kāmākhyā. Úgratārā is situated in the heart of present Gūwāhāti and on the east of Kāmākhyā. From the ancient times it has been worshipped as the saviour of the devotees. The Kālikā Pūrāṇa refers to the origin of Úgratārā. All Devaganas worshipped Mahāmāyā to kill Śūmbha- Niśūmbha and Mahāmāyā was born from the body of Mātanga, a great saint, that is why Devi is called Mātangi. She was brought up in the Himalaya and came to be known as Kālikā42. Devi was terrific in nature and so she was called Úgratārā. She had a matted of hair and so she was known as Ekajata43. The Yōgini Tantra divides the Pithas in two kinds- Gupta pitha (secret) and Vyākta pitha (open). The Gupta pitha is considered as more fruitfull than Vyākta pitha. The Gupta pitha is rare to Śādhas, but only the Divya and Vira kūlapūrūsha can worship and acquire blessings from Devi44. The Kālikā Pūrāṇa refers to the origin of Úgratārā from the naval part of Kāmākhyā. The Kālikā Pūrāṇa describes that in the eastern part of the Brahmagiri

42 K.P C- 61 V- 57-58 P- 600
43 Ibid C- 61 V- 60 P- 600
44 Y.T C- 11 V- 55-56 P- 154
Brahmasaila, on the ground, the beautiful, favourable to devotees, the naval part of Kāmākhyā was situated there.

Brahmasailashya pūrbashyaṅg bhūmithe byabashhitam,
Chārūnimnasūbhābartaṅg kāmākhyānābhimandalam.

K.P C-79 V-77 P-806

The Kālikā Pūrṇa also mentions that parameswari Ûgratārā lives there in the form of Ûgratārā and suggest to worship Kāmākhyā there in the form of Śūbhakārini.

Tabogratārārūpen rāmate parameswari,
Tatra tenoir rūpen pūjitabyā sūbhātmika.

K.P C-79 V-78 P-806

The statement of the Kālikā Pūrṇa proves that Ûgratārā was worshipped in the Vāmācāra system. The Kālikā Pūrṇa put forwards an exaggerated account regarding Kāmarūpa as the most holiest place and refers to the system of Vāmācāra worship of Ûgratārā. The Kālikā Pūrṇa describes that people attains svarga or heaven easily after their death, living in the holy place Kāmarūpa after performing the worship, bathing in the water, giving offerings there.

According to the Kālikā Pūrṇa, Yama could not overpower men in the fear of Śakti (pārvati). So, Yama approached Śiva to solve the matter. Śiva assured Yama and made a plan to establish Yama's power over men, ordered Ûgratārā to drive away the four varnas and twice born people from Kāmarūpa with a view to conceal Kāmākhyā from Kāmarūpa. Vasistha was in meditation in the Sandhyāchal mountain. The act of Ûgratārā enraged Baśistha and he

45 K.P C-81 V-17 P-840
cursed Ugratārā that she would be worshipped from that day as Vāmā*.

Yashmādahang dhrito vāme tvatyaotushtuḥ mānih,
Tashmātvang vāmyaḥāven pūjya bhava shamantikā
K.P c- 81 v- 20 p- 840

Ugratārā is black in colour, tall, her teeth are big and red, four handed, matted hair and remains loughing loudly. Her neck is adorned with a garland of snakes and she is amorous (K.P. c-79, v-80-81, p-807). Although, there is no trace of old temples, the remains of the old temples are scattered here and there. From the earliest times, she had been worshipped in Tāntric method. Even today it has attracted the attention of the devotees from all corners of Assam. The devotees always visited the temple and offered various items including Prasād, Bhōga to the Devi. In the garbhagriha there is a kūṇḍa of water and the devotees, after oblation, touch the water of the kūṇḍa in the hope that it will remove all kinds of distress from their life. Tārā is being worshipped for material wealth, poetic skill and wisdom. We are further told that because she easily confers the power of speech and her complexion is blue she is known as Nilasaraswati (in the Būddha Śakti cult). Because she grants happiness and mūkshya to her devotees. She is Tārā, because she saves people from grave danger, she came to be known in the world as Ugratārā46. Tārā, meaning the saviour, is an appellation of the God Śiva. Then there is the

* Vāmā - against the way of Veda or not in system of Veda (K.p-840)
46 Pal Pratapaditya, Hindu Religion and Iconography. P- 70.
Sanskrit word Tārā or Tārakā meaning star and the word might easily give the name of a Goddess dwelling among the stars. Many such streams later culminated into the conception of Tārā whose cult was established in different parts of India by the sixth century A.D.

MAHĀV AIRABI TEMPLE: Among the ancient Śakti temples, Mahābhairabi temple of Śonitpur has been conveying the ancient glory of Śakti predominance in the non-Aryan society. The temple is situated on a small hillock on the bank of the mighty river Brahmapūtra. According to the tradition, the temple was built by a non-Aryan king Vāna, a powerful figure of the Māyānagar Tezpūr. Vāna, a devotee of Śiva, was liberal to other sects. Śiva was his personal deity or Istadeva, on the other hand Bhairavi, a name of Pārvati, was the Istadevā of his daughter Īshā. The original temple is not there now, it was prostrated on the ground thousand years ago. The piece of stone are scattered near the present temple. No steps are taken for the preservation of the ruins. The present temple has been built later on. The Bharali river flows down in the east of the temple. Īshā is said to have worshipped devi Bhairavi and danced there before the Devi. The system of worship was Vānacāra Tantric system. But the system of worship in ancient times is not known. The priest of the temple informs about the secret worship prevailing there till now. At the time of worship the priest closed the doors and windows, and secretly worshipped

47 Bhattacyarya N.N, History of Sakta Religion, P- 68
the Devi Bhairavi. Sacrifices of animals are a common method in the Devi temples. An alter of sacrifices is seen aside the temple. The devotees of Mahābhairavi have been conveying the importance of the Śakti and the devotees of Bhairavi always visit the temple. Other various items including prasād, bhog, pigeons, goats etc. as sacrifices are offered to the Devi for happiness and prosperity and to free from all disasters. None is allowed to enter into the temple when Devi Bhogavati is worshipped secretly.

**CANDI TEMPLE AND ÚMĀ TEMPLE** : Traditions refer to the ‘second Kāsi’ in Kāmarūpa called Biswanāth. It is a place of great admixture of innumerable temples of deities in the Kūnda form. It is situated on the west bank of the Brahmapūtra. Naturally it is a beautiful place and a pleasant site. Its varied characters surpass the importance of the other pithas. It is a rich cultural granary from the point of art and culture, which has been bearing the earliest socio-religious condition and political ambitions of the kings to uplift the human culture, also a separate artistic mode. The most significant salient features of the place are the Kūndas which identify both male and female or Gods and Goddesses. One of the Kūndas represents Biswanāth( Śiva ), one represents Jāgrā and other two represent Caṇḍi and Úmā. The Úmā temple is now situated in the middle of the Brahmapūtra. Most probably, the place was situated in the west side of the Brahmapūtra and in course of time, a small branch of the river divide it into two parts. The original Biswanāth temple remains in the west. According to local sources ( people ) the west side is called Gayā
Kāshi and the eastern part where a temple, made of bamboo and thatching grass temporarily, is seen called Gūpta Kāshi. The Kālikā Purāṇa refers to Biswanāth (in the form of Liṅga) and Biswadevi (in Yōni form) situated on the bank of the river Brahmapūtra.

Bridhagāñjālāshyāntashtire brāhmaṁśūttāśhya boi,
Viswānāthahvahyo deva sivalingashamantī tah.
Viswadevi Mahādevi yonimandarupini.

K.P C-80 V-23-24 P- 820.

According to the people, this temple remains under water for six months and the current of the river destroyed the temple every year and the people made it again. In the eastern part there existed a Kūṇḍa representing Umā. Like other Śakti temples, Umā was also worshipped in the Tāntric system and the system of sacrifices of animals prevailed there. The Śakti devotees always visit the temple and worship the Śakti Umā. According to traditional views, king Vāna made a plan to build the second Kāsi in Biswanāth. In the western part there found a Caṇḍi image in the floor of a temple called Caṇḍi temple. The image is assigned to the image of Caṇḍi. There existed a huge Kūṇḍa representing Caṇḍi with various items of worship. The present temple is most probably built few centuries ago. In the month of Māgh and Bōhāg, devotees gather there. But it is very surprising that people visit the place not for the purpose of worshiping the Goddesses but for amusement and pleasure. A large number of people gather there only for picnic and make it dirty, which was very unfortunate for the Assamese culture.
and it is a condemnable act. It is known from a local boatman that there is no any public organization to run the management system of the holy pitha. Even the area of land of the Biswanāth temple is under the private ownership of a priest. It is also informed that the Archaeological Department of India visits the place and necessary arrangements are made for the protection of the ancient site. Otherwise, the Assamese people will be deprived of the contributions of a rich ancient tribe and Assam will never witness such a rich cultural glory like this Kāśidhām.

MĀLINITHĀN: Mālinithān, a most important Śakti pitha in the easternmost part of Assam. It is situated at the foot of the present Siāng hills under the Likābali Sub-division of Arūnāchal Pradesh. The present temple is constructed on the plinth of the old temple. The old temples were destroyed and pieces of stones remained scattered and the Archaeological Department of Arūnāchal Pradesh collected and gathered them around the present temple. On the top of the hillock, there they constructed a museum-cum library, where important pieces of stones including images of different Gods and Goddesses are preserved. Among the images there are miniature female image, Saraswati, Apsārā, Vidyādhary, female Erotica, Lakshmi, Śiva, Nandi bull, Sūrya, Brahmā, Dūrgā and many others. They are the witnesses of a rich cultural civilization. There is standing a Śakti temple on the ruins of the old temple. The inscriptions of Assam, Pūrānas and Tantras make no mention about the origin of the Mālinithān. Mālini is identified as Pārvatī. The period of construction of this temple is assigned to 10th to 12th century A.D. It is known
that L.N Chakravarty (1970-72) made an excavation and unearthed more than hundred magnificent, valuable masterpieces of stone images of Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu pantheon along with beautifully decorated plinth of temples. Amongst the findings, a large stone image made of spotted granite stone of Daśabhūjā Dūrgā image, now found in the Museum.

The head of Sati was believed to have been fallen at Mālinīthān and thus Mālinīthān became one of the important Śakti Pithas. The Kālikā Pūrāṇa refers to the eastern part of Kāmarūpa where the head of Sati had fallen. The eastern part of Kāmarūpa is identified by the historians to be the Mālinīthān. Mālinīthān is considered as the prominent Śakti shrine of the east of Kāmarūpa. Goddess Mālini is worshipped in accordance with the Hindu Tantric rites. The temple was known to the local people and the nearby Missing hunters long before the excavation. At that time no priest is there and there was no people around the temple complex and no worship was done there. The image of the ten handed Dūrgā or Mahisāmardini in Kātyāyani form was worshipped later on as Goddess Mālini. The Goddess is in tribhanga posture on her Vāhana lion. She is shown trumbling Mahisasūra, the demon with her feet. The head of the Goddess is adorned with Karapādamukūtā and garland (Hāra).

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48 Tage Tada A descriptive Account of the Malinithan P-21
49 K.P, C-18 V-44 P-123
50 Dutta J.C Malinithan P-23
51 Tage Tada A descriptive Account of Mālinīthān. P-88
Mythologically, Mālinīthān is associated with Lord Krishna legends. According to the legend, the king Bhismaka ruled in Kūḍḍil. He had a daughter named Rūkmini. Having heard about the successful exploits and beauty of Krishna she expected Śrīkrishna as her husband. But her elder brother Rūkmavir arranged her marriage with Śiśūpāl, king of Chedi. So Rūkmini dispatched a royal priest Bedanidhi to Dvārakā and invited Krishna to Kūḍḍilanagar. Rūkmini was the devotee of Śiva and Pārvatī. She gained their favour to get her beloved. Krishna came to Kūḍḍil to marry Rūkmini, and on the way to back to Dvārakā they rested here where Śiva and Pārvatī were in meditation. Goddess Dūrgā in the guise of a woman garlands (Malini) offered Krishna a garland of beautiful flowers whereupon Lord Krishna was immensely satisfied and addressed her Mālinī52.

The temple architecture may be assigned to the Pāla dynasty. The epigraphical records of the Pāla speak that they have constructed different temples in various places of their kingdom. The salient features of the art and architecture of the Pāla period were the construction of a group of temples at one place, short stature of temples, the ratha type of ground plans, use of low quality sand stones, presence of erotic figures etc53. The three temple bases of Mālinīthān possess these characteristics. So it may be believed that Mālinīthān was influenced by the Pāla rulers. The present temple was constructed sometime in 1968 and since then regular offerings are being made to the Goddess. The

52 Dutta J.C Mālinīthān P- 56
53 Tage Tada & B.J Das, A Descriptive Account of Malinithan. P- 25
presiding deity of the temple is Goddess Durgā. Neighbouring people, both tribal and non-tribal have been offering their obeisance to Goddess Mālinī. It is known from the temple’s priest that people offer he-goat, ox, cow, pig, pigeon, duck, both gold and silver flowers, clothes for the satisfaction of the Goddess. J.C. Dutta comment that Undoubtedly, once Mālinīthān was an eastern-most important religious centre of Aryan culture, from where the wave of Aryan civilization expanded to other parts of its neighbourhood. Mālinīthān has drawn the devotion of the people of both the hills and the plains since time immemorial thus forging a link between the Aryan and non-Aryan culture54.

TĀMRESWARI TEMPLE: Devi Dikkarvāsini was situated in the extreme east of Kāmarūpa, on the bank of Dikrang. So Devi was called Dikkarvāsini. It is frequently mentioned in the Kālikā Pūrṇa and the Yōginī tantra as the easternmost boundary of ancient Kāmarūpa.

The Kālikā Pūrṇa refers to the origin of the name of Dikkarvāsini. Dikkara means Sūrya and Śiva. Devi was situated on the bank of the Dikkara that is why Devi was called Dikkarvāsini.

Devi Dikkarvāsini lives in the octagonal Saumāra pitha. The devotees can attain their mokshya by Jnāna yōga or Dhyāna Yōga55.

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54 Dutta J.C. Malinithan P- 65-66
55 Y.T C- 1 V- 42-43 P- 276
The Yōgini Tantra refers to the Pitha as ‘Hayatāmra’. The Devotees worship the Devi in various forms as mother - Kāli, Dūrgā, Bhairavi, Cinnamastā, Tārā etc. Rajanikanta Bordoloi mentions that in the Chūtiya society mother was called ‘Tāmār māi’. Naraka, defeated the aboriginal Kīrātas and drove them away from his kingdom to this point. There is no authentic and reliable evidences regarding the origin of Tāmreswari temple. According to popular tradition, the Chūtiyas were the offshoot of Vismaka, king of Kundila. ‘Tāmār Māi’ was the tutelary deity of the King Vismaka. The Kālikā Pūrāṇa refers to it as the land under the spiritual command of Goddess Dikkaravāsinī (Dūrgā) in two forms- Tikṣna-kāntā (dreadfully attracted) and Lalita Kāntā (Gracefully attracted). Tikṣna - Kāntā was black, tall, and matted haired (Ekajata). She is also called Ūgratārā. Dūrgā has six yōginis - Cāmūṇḍā, Sūbhagā, Bhisanā, Bhagā, and Bikatā (K.P C-80, V-46, P-822) all are dreadful names.

She is to be worshipped in general like Goddess Kāmākhyā. But Tikna-kāntā Devi was fond of madirā, human sacrifice, modaka, coconut, flesh, curry and sugar-cane. The Devi is called as Lalita- Kāntā due to her beauty (K.P C-80, V-67, P-823).

After the death of Vismaka, his successors were very weak and the Misimis came into conflict to carry away the Devi from...
the Chûtiyâs to their area. As a result the Devi disappeared for
hundred years. During the reign of Ratnapâla the image of the
Devi was discovered and installed in the temple\textsuperscript{61}. The last Hindu
rulers of Kâmarûpa were the Palas but their inscriptions do not
mention about the relation of the Devi Tâmreswari and the royal
dynasty. Inscriptions refer to Ratnapâla as Śaivite, Indrapâla as
follower of Śiva and Pârvati and Dharma Pâla as Vaisnavite. But
B.K Kakati mentions that after the fall of the Pâla dynasty, certain
local potentates called Bâra-Bhûyâns (multiple landlord) came into
power for sometime in that region. They were the worshippers of
the Devi and mention is made there of the existence of the
dreaded Goddess at Śadiyâ even while they were in power\textsuperscript{62}. The
Devi was enshrined in a copper temple and called Tâmreswari
Devi (the goddess of the copper temple). This temple was a
famous centre of worship for the hill tribes. The roof of the
temple was of copper and the walls were of stones. There is a
stone image of Devi in the temple. The Goddess was popularly
known as Kesâi-khâiti (eater of raw flesh) because of the annual
human sacrifice\textsuperscript{63}. Deories were the chief priests of the temples.
Except the Deories, other Brahmanas could not perform the system
of worship. The Deory priests were to perform the duties of
worship, Áthparyâ, pochâtolâ, and Balikatâ\textsuperscript{64}. Dûrgâ was annually
worshipped and during the time of Dûrgâ pûjâ ducks, pigeons,
\textsuperscript{61} Bordoloi rajanikanta Tamtrswari P- 3
\textsuperscript{62} Kakati B.K, Mother Goddess Kâmâkhyâ, P- 61
\textsuperscript{63} Kakati B.K, Mother Goddess Kamakhya P- 61
\textsuperscript{64} Bordoloi Rajanikanta Tamreswari Mandir P- 3
buffaloes, goats and human being were sacrificed. In the beginning those persons, who were sentenced to death and the criminals were sacrificed in the altar of the Devi. But, later on a special class was formed called ‘Sāror khel’ for the opportunity of the sacrifice in the temple. As a reward, they were granted land. The neighbouring hill tribes like misimis, khāmits, Ābors etc. visited the temple during the time of Dūrgā Pūjā with a view to seeing the human sacrifice. The common people were afraid of the Deories. Even the king accepted the flowers of the Devi standing before the Deories. Devi was worshipped in the Tāntric Vāmācāra system. Devotees from outside land like Tibet, Cina Benga and other parts of India came here to worship the Devi Tāmreswari.

References to various Śakti temples are found in Gōālpārā also. In Gōālpārā there are three Kāmākhyā temples- Kāmākhyā, Jaibhūi Kāmākhyā and Mānkāchār Kāmākhyā. Besides these, there are Śakti temples like Alokjhāri Mahāmāyā, Bagaribārī Mahāmāyā, Aisākhāt and Tūkreswari Bhāgvati. During the reign of Sri Harsha (7th-10th Cen. A.D) Orissa had cultural contact with Kāmarūpa. As a result the sculptors from Anga, Banga and Kalinga reached Kāmarūpa. Gradually Tāntric cult spread to Gōālpārā. So the historians believed that under the Gupta influence temples were built in this area. There is a temple at Śingimārī and there was found a gold image of Devi Mahāhāyā. Devi Mahāmāyā

65 Bordoloi Rajanikanta Tamreswari Mandir P- 3
66 Ibid p- 16
67 Sarma Sivananda Goalparar Itihas P- 38
68 Sarma Sivananda Goalparar Itihas P- 42
is believed to be the Kûla Devī of a tributary king Dhawal Ghosh under the Pāla king Ratnapāla

There are traces of a large number of Śakti temples on the Kapili valley. On the east of Davakā ruins of various temples at Devasthān, Dakmakā Mahāmāyā, Bargangā, Bûrthagohān Thān and Ākāsīgangā have been found.

In the outskirt of the Šûalkûchi village on the north bank of the Brahmāpûtra about 18 miles to the west of the Gauhati stands the Siddheswari temple on the top of a hillock. The two images are placed in front of the maindoor having been displaced from their original positions one of Mahisamardini Dûrgā with a rounded state and the other of Sûrya with a conical state are evidently specious of south Indian sculpture. The hair-knots of consorts Chāyā and Sayana are definitely of the Drāvidian pattern

69 Sarma Sivananda Goalparar Itihas, P- 14
70 Kalita Naren kapilipar Kacharipar P- 16
71 J.A.R,S V-XVIII 1968 P- 36