CHAPTER-III
Religious Tenets and Practices

What is Religion? An all acceptable definition of Religion eludes us even to-day. Various attempts have been made from time to time to find a common quotient that runs through all religions. Belief in God or gods is not an essential factor of religion since there are religions without God or where God plays a subsidiary role. Performing religious rituals or worship of personal god is also not central to any religion since there are religions that do not put any emphasis on rites and rituals.

Religion as a whole arises in human consciousness due to certain common problems that human beings face in the world. It is the name for man’s total conscious attitude towards life as it is found and enlightened by rational awareness. It is true that one cannot define a religion with reference to any particular feature attached to it. However, it is a practice, “a behavior that comes out of traditions and cultural elements, sometimes influenced by climatic and geographical conditions, so as to say “any specific form of religion is certainly culture bound” (Masih-6).

The term ‘religion’ has been derived from the Latin word ‘religare’ which means ‘to bind fast’. Literally the term refers to “an institution with a recognized body of communicants who gather together regularly for worship, and accept a set of doctrines, offering some means of relating the individual to what is taken to be the ultimate nature of reality” (Reese, p.488).

Different features of religion overlap with some other kinds which in turn overlap in different ways with other kinds, so that the whole ramifying collection hangs together in a complex network of similarities and differences which Wittgenstein likens to resemblances and differences appearing within a family (qtd. in Pitzer, p.219). A religious thought can be better understood and appreciated only by juxtaposing it with other religions of the world. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the similarities and differences between medieval Assamese and Üttaluyya VañA, a ra religions from the religious viewpoint. It also aims to point out that both these branches are independent and parallel growths owing to their origin at different cultural backgrounds. But in spite of it both the religions have striking similarities.

The VañA, a ra movement of Assam gained strength and momentum at the hands of áa ‘karadeva
and his followers in the last decades of the 15th century and the 16th century. According to Maheswar Neog, "āa´karadeva based his Īśa, a bhakti on ārādhara Śvēmāri's commentary on the Bhīgavata purāṇa. Ārādhara Śvēmāri gave a most authoritative full-length running commentary on Bhīgavata and this commentary is entitled Bhīvīrēha-Dēpikā. In his commentary he tried to harmonise bhakti with the nītrguṇa tattva of Advaita based on jñāna. That knowledge has no intrinsic clash with devotion was well pointed out by Ārādhara. It is to be noted that while introducing devotionalism into the fold of Advaita, Ārādhara never wanted to forgo the central point of Advaita philosophy that Brahman is essentially nītrguṇa, a and nirākāra and all forms of duality is ultimately unreal due to avatāra or adhyāsa. In other words, Ārādhara was a great champion of jñāna-bhakti tattva and it is this philosophical viewpoint which had a great influence in the later religio-philosophical writings in Assam and Odisha. This fixed "Īśa, a as the sole worshipful, and that the celebration of his acts in the company of holy men and the tānta of sole refuge in him was the greatest religion of men" (Neog, p.107). This was the turning point in the religious life of Āa´karadeva and it moulded the new faith and the movement into a definite shape. Thus we see Āa´karadeva was inspired and enriched by the mainstream Vaśīvādavism as he, during his sojourns at various pilgrim centres of India, was acquainted with art, culture and religion of various parts of India and experienced the religion and culture of other parts of it. "So, Assam Vaśīvādavism is both a deviation and a continuation of Vaśīvādavism that swept India during medieval period." (Philosophy of Āa´karadeva, ed. Neelima Sharma, p. 1)

The arrival of Viśistadvaitavīdi Ramanuja at Puri to preach his religion Ārādhaka, and also the arrival of Nanak, Āuddhadvaitavīdi Ballavacārya et al., work of Jayadeva of the order of Nimbarka had had their influence on Uktālia Vaśīvādavism. They also created controversies from time to time. To put an end to these controversies, Pañcaśākhas conceived Lord Jagannātha as the āunyapuruṣa, Puruṣottama, the formless Brahman. The indefinite form of the Lord encouraged them to establish a strong base for their religion. They believed to the concept of the personified āuny and identified it with Īśa, a. Dibakara Das in his Jagannāth Caritāmṛta describes Lord Jagannāth as the Avatāra, i.e. source of all incarnations including Īśa, a. While writing 0-to Bhīgavata Jagannāth Das in his sequenting the book followed the scheme of chapterisation of the original text as accepted by Ārādhara Śvēmāri. He has given supreme place to the practice of realizing the presence of God and has given importance to the oneness of God, Rūdhī-Īśa, a is
the manifestation of one soul in two bodies about one God (Das Goswami R. Atibadi Jagannatha Das Goswami Puri, 1973, p.33). And R¡dh¡-K¤À¸a is not different from Lord Jagann¡th.

3.1 Religious Consciousness

The feeling of one’s own existence, his significance in the scheme of the world and the constant feeling of dread haunts man so badly that he has to search after an ultimate reality, the Absolute, in whom all his dread and anguish get terminated. Questions of existence and nature of God are the central issues of religious consciousness because belief in God has been regarded as the most pertinent and compelling by almost all the great religions. All kinds of thinking that revolve round God or the Absolute is called religious consciousness. In fact religious consciousness is a totality of man’s experience, a search after a quality life in relation to this power which ultimately determines his practical life. When one admits the existence of God and takes Him as the creator and the sustainer of the world he feels that there is the necessity of devotion and action. The thought of God inspires him to deal with the love for God, devotion, dutifulness etc. Hence religious consciousness needs devotion and action.

Religious consciousness includes three elements, i.e. intellectual aspect, emotional aspect and volitional aspect; feeling is the very core of religious consciousness. It makes consciousness vital. But áa’karadeva admits that it is inseparable from will. With the help of intellectual power a man becomes conscious about the world and then acquires knowledge, and taking help from indirect knowledge he argues on unknown things. With this he distinguishes truth from falsehood, considers what is good and what is evil. He believes that where there is no God there is no religion. There are some sects who accept religion only as knowledge or as action or as devotion. They who accept the path of knowledge tell religion as the matter of intellect. According to them knowledge is the only way to achieve God. But intellect is not all for human beings. The knowledge which cannot make life better and happier has no use. If some people become sanyasi and do not work they become burdensome on the society. The person who does not try to solve the problem of the society may be knowledgeable but not religious because it is not true that religious-consciousness does not need duty to society or action.

Man’s religious life consists in the realization of the presence of this Infinite present behind this world, and also utilizing this consciousness for the success of his practical life (dhira sat kriya sidhibe, dekha
Nimaparadha (65), āa ´karadeva opines that religious consciousness is a specific type of complicated mental attitude of a religious person and is subject to realization only. He holds the view that it is the religious idea that shapes one’s whole life and determines one’s whole attitude towards the world and other fellow beings. He believes that through religious consciousness people can achieve political or social consciousness. The existence of an absolute being and the very way to establish oneness with this being, in fact, are the subject matters of āa ´karadeva’s religious consciousness. The feeling of total dependence on God, complete surrender to and the feeling of oneness with the supreme self are the essence of āa ´karadeva’s Vaiśeṣik thought.

Like all the great religions of the world Vaishnavism of Assam and Odisha take the existence and nature of God as the central issue of their religious consciousness. āa ´karadeva’s aim was to arouse religious consciousness in the heart of the people and to unite them by fostering the feeling of love and brotherhood between one another.

A person feels joys and sorrows, indulges in laughter and undergoes suffering on the strength of his feeling. Feeling always depends upon the disposition of the will for its intensity and distinctiveness. Feeling would lose its practical value without a purposive life and this life is possible only through the play of the will. First of all we must have faith in omnipotent God, then only we will seek Him and try to establish oneness with this infinite spirit. Will is the essential ingredient of āa ´karadeva’s nīma-dharma because only with the play of will the question of Value comes to man’s life. In fact, religious consciousness consists of a longing, a desire for good. It is a conscious desire for Puruṣottama and realizing Him one attains the very *Summum bonum* of life which is made possible only by emotion. Both the sects of Vaishnavism admit that we must crave for Hari or the Lord, the creator, preserver and destroyer of jīvas and the world.

Although āa ´karadeva does not explicitly state the role of intellect in religious consciousness, it is implied that he is philosophically not averse to it. The devotee should know about God as one by exercising his reason. āa ´karadeva states that religious consciousness helps a person lessen all his sins by taking the name of God, makes him disinterested in the worldly affairs created by Māyā, makes him free from all sufferings making him realize the nature of life and the world. From this experience the devotee knows that by listening to and chanting Hari’s name one can achieve the goal. āa ´karadeva does not reject the role of
reason and volition in his neo-Vaiśeṣika, avatism but he establishes the supremacy of feeling over the other two elements.

Sects who accept religion only as action accept the existence of God and try to rebuild the society. All are equal in the creation of God, so one should serve the society and only then can he feel the existence of God. This may be the essentialness of humanity, but in the absence of the thinking of God and self-surrender it will not be called religion. This kind of thinking is like the thinking of Kant’s “duty for duty sake”. But this view is also impractical without feeling. Hence for action knowledge and devotion both are required.

Pañcasakhīs did not accept bhakti as the only means for Itiṣṭādhibh. They also gave importance to the worship of guru, tantra, mantra, japa, dbhyāna, sanjām and yoga. They are the supporters of knowledge. Therefore, the devotion preached by them is called devotion mixed with knowledge, the jñānamārābhākhā. Through reason or intellect one can know that this world is produced by māyā. Hence for them the only way to get rid of worldly worries is to know God. The Pañcasakhīs believe that the sight of God is not only possible in the temples but also one can get his darśana in one’s mind by performing yoga, tapa, kārttana etc. Mind and air should be concentrated and fixed within sushumna along with the channels Idā and Piṅgala that help form Trinambikā. The air should be passed through these. By doing all these astānga yogas one can find the darśana of Vaiṣṇava, the. In this Vaiṣṇava one gets the darśan of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and their assimilation as Jagannāth. As a result, one gets self realization. In this way the person who does not get a darśana of God in the temple can get it by performing yoga, tantra, puja etc. and become liberated. Again, by taking the liberated persons as gurus everyone can try for liberation. That’s why the philosophy of Gūḍḍha Vaiṣeṣika, avatism is called devotion mixed with knowledge (jñānamārābhākhā) which is enjoined for all members of the society. While searching for the nature of God and His creations they find no difference between higher and lower caste, rich and poor in religion.

Pañcasakhīs are the preachers of dāśya bhakti. They imagine their own self as the servant of Lord Jagannāth. All of them even if they belonged to Brahmin caste, Vaiṣṇava or sudra took the title “Dasa” which means servant of ātma Jagannāth. It is because they wanted to serve God as the sudras serve their masters unflinchingly and selflessly. Hence here we find the importance of feeling in devotion. According to Pañcasakhīs, religious consciousness is an invaluable feeling of human being which continues throughout his
whole life. It creates a religious feeling or sense in the mind of a person and it gets fulfillment through his religious works. In Paµcasakh¡s' religious consciousness we find intellect as supreme but feeling and volition is also there. Their devotion mixed with knowledge arises more from intellect than from feeling. Through knowledge one can understand the depth of religion, then can perform Ast¡ngayoga, deep meditation, holy spiritual sidhan¡s, tantrapuj¡ etc. willingly, and devotion arises in his heart by performing all these actions and finally he gets the darshan of God and feels himself assimilated with the supreme soul.

In the religious consciousness of Assamese Vaµ̄avaism we find the importance of feeling in comparison to thinking and willing whereas in Ütkaliyµ̄avaism thinking (intellect) is predominant over feeling and willing. In Ütkaliya Vaµ̄avaism reason or intellect is supreme which can lead one to liberation but in Assamese Vaµ̄avaism pure devotion can lead one to attain Supreme Soul. In Assamese Vaµ̄avaism we find devotion as the only way to get rid of worldly desires and worries whereas in Ütkaliya Vaµ̄avaism it is to know God or reasoning (Intellect) as the only way.

3.1(a) Devotion

Of the three ways how to realize personal god, devotion or bhakti is one; the other two being jµ¡na or spiritual knowledge and karma or action. However, all these three though tread on three different paths get they have the same goal, i.e. the goal to mingle with the supreme self or to attain liberation. Of these three, bhakti is easier and simpler; it is the mode of chanting and listening to God’s name, and it helps one to obtain God’s grace in a smoother way. To quote Raj Kumar, "By the pursuit of bhakti or devotion we reach the same goal that is attained by jµ¡na...Bhakti is not the love which expects to be reciprocated. Such a love is a human affection and no more. Prayer becomes meditation, the worshipful loyalty of will which identifies itself with the good of the world. If you are a true devotee of God you become a knowing and a virtuous soul as well. The bhakta shows how to identify himself completely with the object of devotion, by a process of self-surrender” (45).

3.1 (b) Place of Devotion in Vaµ̄ava religion

The derivation of the word “bhakti” is from the verbal root bhaj which means to serve. Service to Lord is a special feature of bhakti. Service consists in serving the Lord with a sense of utter submission of mind, heart, soul and actions at its feet (Bhakti Gît 250). Devotion starts with a yearning for or love of
The word “bhakti” is also taken to mean love. Sandilya defined it as the deep attachment to God. Narada has defined it as deep love of God and adds that it is a state in which one dedicates all one’s acts to Him and feels anguish in deserting and forgetting Him. Madhusudana Saraswati says that bhakti is that state where the mind loses its stiffness as a result of continuous observance of religious duties and where it melts and flows like a stream unto God. Ramanuja defines bhakti as the thought of God, accompanied by the sense of love. Baladeva says that devotion to the Lord is but the essence of bliss and knowledge combined. It is identical to the Lord as odour is to flower. Tawari says, “Ramanuja and the Bhagavadgita have much emphasized the role of bhakti in man’s realization of his highest ideal” (35).

In the time of the Sambhatas the word upasana was also used as synonym of bhakti. Etymological significance of the word upasana is to sit down. So it might have been used in the sense to sit down by the side of the adorable. The Devi Bhagavata explains bhakti as devotion towards the worthy (Devi Bhagavataupari, a vitt, 37). In other words, loyalty is devotion out of respect. Referring to the etymological significance of the word bhakti, the Guru-apari, a says, bhakti, i.e. service is an effective means of attaining Lord (Guru-a Pari, Bhaja ityeba oei dbhatah sebayah pari kictibah Tasmat Seba budeth prokta bhaktih Sadhana bhyagast- II). In the Sndilya sutra, bhakti is defined as the highest attachment (Paramarakti) and in the Niradiya bhaktisutra it is said to be a mental state of the highest love and bliss (parama premarupa, amrita rapaca). (R.M.Nath (ed.), Narada bhakti sutra 2/3, Sandilya sutra ½).

The core idea about bhakti was provided by H.H. Wilson. Wilson has spoken of Bhakti as a religion and identified this religion with Ksæ, a worship. He has placed it at variance with the Vedānta and described the Vedānta as a form of Pantheism (100-102). In contrast to Wilson, Monier Williams did not confine bhakti to the Ksæ, a cult. “Ksæ, a being the incarnation of Viæ, a, he strengthened the link between bhakti monotheism and Viæ, avism. Williams in his Sanskrit English Dictionary offers a number of meanings for the word bhakti such as trust, homage, worship, piety, faith, love and devotion etc. Apart from it, he defines bhakti in his Indian Wisdom and Brahminism and Hinduism as “a religious principle or means of salvation together with karma and jñana” (qtd in Bhakti and Bhakti Movement, p.84-85). George A. Grierson described bhakti as the “monotheistic religion of ancient India . . . descendent of the noble
thoughts in the Bhagavad Gita” (“Modern Hinduism and Its Debt to the Nestorians,” p.337). According to him, “Only the followers of this religion, the Bhagavatas had a correct understanding of the monotheists” (Nirguna, ra and the Bhagavatas, p.6). By establishing a link between the medieval bhaktas and the Vaishnavas, he described the medieval religious resurgence as the Bhakti movement and said, “suddenly like a flash of lightning, there came upon all this darkness a new idea, i.e., Bhakti... Religion now became a matter of emotion. It now satisfied the human craving for a supreme personality to whom prayer and adoration could be addressed in as much as bhakti, faith or devotion, requires a personal and not an impersonal God.” (Grierson, “Modern Hinduism and Its Debt to the Nestorians,” p.313).

Accepting Weber, Monier-Williams and Grierson’s views of identification of bhakti with the Kama, a cult and Vaishnavism, their contemporary R.G. Bhandarkar wrote on the bhakti theme in his Vaishnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems and sought each possible evidence about the worship of Kama, a-Visudeva and Vi, u in the pre-Christian era. He traced the process of the identification of the earlier god Kama, a-Visudeva with Nirguna, a of the narayana section of the Mahabharata, and finally of these two with Vi, u. He also traced the later identification of Kama, a-Visudeva with the cowherd Gopil-Kama, a. Taking them all as one, Bhandarkar treated the cult of their worship (Vaishnavism) as monotheism. Guided by this he attached great importance to the Ekantika-dharma as spelt out in the Mahabharata. Furthermore, Bhandarkar described the Bhagavad Gita as the “earliest exposition of the Bhakti-system or the Ekantika dharma” (14) and as a “more mature manifestation of it.” But Bhandarkar had perhaps undermined the important facts that, notwithstanding the presence of the personality of Kama, a in the Gita, its content is, in fact, geared more to the concept of an impersonal God.

3.1 (c) Concept of Devotion

Bhakti or devotion is of two types. (i) Para (Vaidhji) and (ii) Apari (Vigiligious or Raci). Pari bhakti is jivanamritri bhakti. The main aim of this type of bhakti is to get liberated. In this kind of devotion a devotee remains aware of the majesty and grandeur of the Lord and therefore worships Him according to different formalities enjoined by the scriptures. A devotee of the latter order, i.e., Apari loves the Divinity with all His sweetness (melody) and not affluence (wealth) and therefore loves Him without sticking to rituals. The devotee who is not too much attached or detached towards Varnamrota dharma is the Vaidhji.
The cult of devotion (bhakti) as propounded by the Bhagavata pura was accepted by the later phase of Vaishnavism in Assam. To quote M.M. Sharma, "In the later phase of Vaishnavism, known as neo-Vaishnavism, which had been propagated in the 15th-16th centuries onwards, stress was laid on bhakti and on the singing of prayer songs than on other priestly rituals" (p.327). It teaches that devotion is a way service to Krsna and service simply for the sake of service. In this servitude the supreme pleasure would come as a matter of fact. And that pleasure would culminate in the attainment of the feeling of Lord Krsna, who is won over by an insatiable hankering alone (Bhagavata p.x.4.63). Bhakti, according to Lord Krsna, is the yoga dharma, i.e. the suitable religion in Kaliyuga and no other path is as efficacious as it is (Bhaktiratnakara, Verses 714-62). In bhakti cult it is conceived to be the most important sadhana which leads one's whole self to God. It urges one to worship the divine and surrender completely to him.

The faith and the devotion are mutual and it is a closely interlinked phenomenon. By devotion to the object of our faith we render it real and practical, thereby strengthening and reinforcing our faith. Among the instruments of emancipation the supreme is devotion. Contemplation of the pure form of the real self is devotion. According to Gita there are three paths to realization of God—niskama karma (detached action), true knowledge and intense devotion to faith. As we can easily perceive, faith and devotion are basic to all paths of God realization because without faith in Supreme Reality and the resultant devoutness we cannot become detached nor can we perceive the truth of Reality.

In ekadasa, a utmata of lord Krsna, realization of God comes through devotion. For lord Krsna devotion is a matter of spiritual intuition. It is treated as both means and end of intuitive realization of the Supreme. Its power is immense for the spiritual realization of God.

For lord Krsna, bhaktiyoga is the crown of the spiritual sadhana and the only way to realize God. lord Krsna follows the bhaktiyoga of the Bhagavadgita. His Bhaktiratnakara is a treatise where he by bhakti means the worship of a personal God in the spirit of love and which is directed towards the attainment of liberation (moksha). In order to present a higher ideal of life, God incarnates himself so that the world may be saved and helped to move higher in the spiritual evolution. Thus lord Krsna defines the higher kind of bhakti as the spontaneous and uninterrupted surge of the mind towards Krsna, just by hearing the attributes of him (Bhaktiratnakara, II.1).
As religion without bhakti is fruitless so one should always follow the path of bhakti. For áa´karadeva, devotion or bhakti has a special value in the Kaliyug. Bhakti is the movement (gati), the desire (matti) and the guiding force of life. It is the highest desire and wealth (vitta) and the germ of liberation, it is the solace of life, the vital breath of the body as if were. There is no other way of life save Bhakti in this world and the next. (áa´karadeva Bhigabata, Book X, verse 10864).

Among the three ways of God realization, i.e. Bhakti, Jñåna and Karma, bhakti alone is sufficient to help attain liberation. According to áa´karadeva, “The Vedas say that knowledge begets liberation. But know it for certain that knowledge, so highly spoken of in the Vedas, is inherent in Bhakti. Knowledge comes automatically in the course of devotion. People uselessly mortify themselves by practicing yoga.” (Bhigavata, Book XI, verse 19322). Gopilaarana Dvija admits the necessity of knowledge for liberation, but according to him knowledge comes, as a matter of course, in the process of devotion and no separate effort is necessary for it. (Bhigavata,Bk.III-verse 1729). Madhavadeva says that Svabhodha (self knowledge) comes through the grace of God (Nīranghahā, verse 617). Vaiṣṇavism of Assam presents a blending of different types of Bhakti of which those of Suprema and Bhigavatī are predominant. Devotion is an integral experience in which all the three elements of religious consciousness are blended together. According to áa´karadeva, it is only through the performance of devotion that knowledge arises automatically. He observes that devotion or total surrender to God will prevail in the long run.

Pañcasakhis were yogis as well as devotees. Though they were practicing yoga for the attainment of the divine, they had also experienced the necessity of Nabadhā bhakti (nine kinds of devotion). The saint poets like Achyutananda have shown both the paths of devotion and wisdom for the attainment of the formless Jagannāth of Nityagolaka. They are the votaries of parabhakti. Their Vaiṣṇavism is based on Bhigavatparīta and Bhigavadvītī. Gaṇḍī does not install bhakti as a counter part to Jñāna either. On the contrary, they are regarded as interdependent, and a perfect compatibility is maintained between the two. Bhakti is represented in the Gaṇḍī as an active and passionate search of the self for the divine. It means much more than just an attitude of faith or acts of worship or a code of conduct to be fulfilled “as heard from the others” (Bhigavadvītī, XIII.25).
In the Bhaktiyoga of Bhagavadgītā, Kṛṣṇa points out the superiority of the contemplative bhakti over other forms of bhakti. Pañcasākhis considered that the conscious individual effort to fix one's mind and intellect in God is higher than the effortless acts of surrender and complete dependance. The simple worshipping attitude, devoid of jñāna and yoga is recommended only for the weak who do not aspire for the higher goal. In Bhagavadgītā various options are offered for the cultivation of the bhaktiyoga coupled with a qualitative gradation. “Fix thy mind in me only, place thy intellect in me”, says Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna and adds that “If thou art unable to fix thy mind steadily on me, then try to reach me through abhyāsa-yoga” (Bhagavadgītā, VI.47; XII-13-20). And also “If thou are unable to practice abhyāsa yoga, perform actions for my sake, if unable to do even this, then take refuge in me” (Bhagavadgītā XIII.24). Here the contemplative bhakti is regarded as the highest and the one obtained through abhyāsa yoga as the next in order of merit. Bhakti in the sense of surrender is clearly graded as the lowest.

Utkalīya Vaiṣṇavas believe that one can achieve God realization by following only the path of knowledge. They prescribe bhakti mixed with jñāna (devotion mixed with knowledge) or jñānānandā bhakti which is superior to other mārgas for God realization. However, as the circumstances were not favorable like lack of royal favour as the King was inclining towards Caitanya they were compelled to compromise with the Premabhakti mārga. Under compelling circumstances Pañcasākhis did not reject Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult but in some way or other looked for jñātmā and paramātmā. However, in their view the dwelling place of Kṛṣṇa is not in Vrindāvana, it is in nirākāra mandala.

The parābhakti is devotion mixed with knowledge. The main purpose of it is to attain liberation through knowledge. First of all, one has to know God through yoga sādhana and the scriptural knowledge. In Sanskrit this means jñāna. Again jñāna means jñāna yoga. In some places ānya sādhana is also accepted as jñāna. Pañcasākhis opine that to attain God we have to accept devotion yet then if knowledge is mixed with it the realization of Brahmān would be easier. A devotee should have knowledge about the sādhya and the theory of sādhana. Otherwise, there is the fear of inviting danger or committing mistake or falling in every step. Bhakti, jñāna and yoga stand interwoven in the Utkalīya Vaiṣṇavism. Therefore, devotionism preached by the Pañcasākhis is called devotion mixed with knowledge, where much importance is given to japa, tapa, yoga, dhyāna, sanjāma and gurupujā. Through reason or intellect one can know that this world is
produced by Mgil. Hence the only way to get rid of the world is by knowing God.

3.1 (d) Elements of Devotion

Bhakti can be practiced through all or one of the nine ways of devotion (navadhåbhakti). They are (i) árava, the act of listening to the sports of the Lord from a confirmed devotee (ii) kértana or the act of chanting prayers (iii) smara, the act of remembering the form, sports and names of the Lord (iv) pídasevana or the act of serving at the feet of the Lord by various devotional ways (v) arcanâ or the rite of ceremonial or non-ceremonial worship (vi) vandanâ or the act of homage to the Lord by salutation and prostration (vii) disya consists in worshipping or serving the Lord with the attitude of a faithful and self-surrendering servant (viii) sikhya is based on the sense of friendship between the worshipper and the worshipped, and last, (ix) ímánivedana or total surrender which consists of the feeling that one’s body, mind, senses and the soul are intended for the Bhágavata. The last three elements are the nature of the devotional worship between the worshipper and the worshipped.

arava. Árava árava árava árava: Ákåradeva and Mådhavadeva consider árava as an excellent path to bhakti. Just as the appearance of autumn serves to purify water similarly by listening to the recital of Hari’s glory or name a person’s mind gets purified (Nåmaghôli v.15). People find joy in the name of the Lord which is as sweet as nectar. Listening to the glory of the Lord they experience a feeling of devotion that increases day by day, attain a state of pure happiness with their hearts purified and acquire real knowledge and are received into Vaikuṇṭha. (Bhakti Ratnaivalî v.v.388-389). Real devotees are aware that árava a bhakti is higher than even mukti. Hence what they desire is only the joy of listening to the glories of Hari from the lips of the saints (Nåmaghôli v. 664).

Kértana. AssameseVâlâ avas have noted that the best way out of this dreadful world is árava and kértana. Even Ájinilla could earn salvation by uttering simply the name of the Lord. Soft sounding and short names of Rîma and Kàsa, a bestowed upon one the rewards of dharma, artha, kîma and mokåta (Nåmaghôli v.766). The recital of the playful actions of God in his various incarnations on different occasions is the best path to bhakti during the Kaliyuga.

smara. Smara, is the recalling of the forms and actions of the Lord. Those who even recall him
at the time of breathing their last breath are blessed with sarupya mukti like Ajimila (Bhaktiratnavali, v. 891). The gopis by virtue of their constant meditation on Krsna, a won his favour. (Bhagavatpuran, 10.44.55). Midhavadeva in his Bhaktiratnavali describes that even those who recall Krsna as an enemy are also not deprived of such bliss. Viśnu came immediately to the rescue of Prahlada at the recall of the former by the latter. (āacaṅkara, Kṛṣṇa-v. 384)

Padasevana. In Bhaktiratnavali it is written that when a person surrenders himself at the feet of the Lord, he can easily cross the rough and turbulent sea of the world. Thus a bhakta can even cross the shoreless ocean of the world without building any bridge (Nāmagha, vv. 640,723). Even a low caste cindila serving at Viśnu’s feet is superior to a Brahmin who does not serve at his feet (Bhaktiratnavali V.1007). Midhavadeva also writes that a devotee finds such pleasures from serving at Lord’s feet that he does not seek even for sajanajyamukti by merging into the Lord because this type of liberation will deprive him of serving at the Lord’s feet.

Arcanā. Any worship offered with sincerity pleases God. He only accepts such worship which is offered selflessly since he exists in every body’s heart. Hence by worshipping him, one worships his own self.

Bandanā. Vandana is the praise in veneration to God. By making obeisance (vandana) to Viśnu, the Lord of the universe, man can achieve final release. Even the doing of obeisance to any object as part of the entire universe wherein God is immanent, is received by Him. (Bhakti Ratnavali, v.1104). Arcani and vandana bhaktis are simultaneously present in “Oreal Varan asana” and “Rukmilā, ṇa Hara, a”. Arcani-Bandanā of grandchayagraha and garulisana are proposed in place of deva bigraha.

Disya. Out of different modes of devotion āacaṅkara selected the disya mode. The sevya and sevaka relation remains always present between the worshipped and the worshipper. This relation continues even after one gets liberation.

Sākhya. This form of devotion is of utmost joy to devotee. The milkmen and the milkmaids of Vrindavan and even birds and animals of that place enjoy the fruits of friendship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. So Midhavadeva writes. Yata jivas jantu ca che Nandara Braja/ Tasambhara kimi mahi bhagbara mahattva// Nandidir yena mahi bhūvis tamāla/ Gabhārā sahi mace bhūvisi amāla// (Bhaktiratnavali, V.1123) (Whatever beings and animals are in the Braja of Nanda/they are most fortunate//The same faith that nanda and others bestow
on thou / is also reposed by the ignorant people.,) Hena jani jñānar karmat nidi citā/ Mōte se khabalā mītra kārthā sukhitēva. (ibidem V.1131) (Oh! People, instead of concentrating upon knowledge and action, concentrate only upon how to make friendship with me). The friendly form of devotion is regarded as an easy path to attain salvation.

**Self Surrender** (Etvamivedana). It is the best mode for ā́ karadeva to make the self-free from all kinds of material bondage. Mīdhavadeva also writes “God demands a complete willing self surrender on the part of a devotee” (Bhākṣetrasvāhā, v. v. 1134-1137). The spirit of self surrender is the most essential factor according to which one need to concentrate his mind fully on devotion only.

Assamese Vaśavas look upon God with the attitude of a faithful and loving servant; in other words, the relation between the worshipper and the worshipped, as assumed by them, is that of the servant and the master. Taking into account the relation between the jīva and Īśvara as the created and the creator and limitations under which the jīvas operates, they are of the opinion that the disya-bhāva or the attitude of a faithful and loving servant towards his master is the most proper attitude with which the Lord should be served. In the ultimate stage the jīvas may partake of the nature of the Lord, but as long as the jīvas forms a part of the creation, whether illusory or real, he is preserved and sustained by God. As such, the position of God is that of a master. Therefore, he should be worshipped or adored as the Lord. In fact all the Vaśava writers of Assam beginning with ā́ karadeva have expressed this attitude by describing themselves as the servant of Kṛṣṇa, a (Kṛṣṇa, a kinkara). They have even described themselves in many places as the servant of the servant of Kṛṣṇa, a ā́ karadeva in *Nam-Narastadbha-Sāvīda* says:

"Tomir bhrīyāra bhrīyāra bhrīyā/ tirā bhrīyā bhalo Iov /moka jogannāth nokari anițā / nerbi Mīdhava Svīm!" (verse 309).

(I am your servant, the servant of the servant of the servant of Thou. Oh Lord Jogannāth, don’t make me an orphan by forsaking me, don’t forsake me, Oh Lord Mīdhava).

Assamese Vaśavaism has preferred and adopted ērava, a and kārtana as practical modes (sidhānta) of their devotional practices. These are said to be the most powerful means of generating a devotional attitude and are not subject to restriction of time, place or person. These are the only efficacious methods which should be universally adopted in the present era of Kaliyug (ā́ karadeva Bhāgavata Book I.
verse 38). However, importance of arcani, vandanai, padasevana etc. has not been minimised but it is stated that these are more suitable for the ritualistic type of devotion where an image of the deity is present or when the devotion is of the siddha type, i.e. when the devotee enjoys the presence of the Lord constantly.

Utkalina Vaishyas like their counterparts in Assam hold the opinion that bhakti can be practiced through nine kinds of devotion (nabadhah bhakti), but to it they add the other nine kinds of Siddhanabhakti, i.e. yantra, mantra, tantray, chhila, jyoti, abla, haja, samadhi and rasaga. Papcasakhilis are the propagators of disya-bhakti. They imagine their own self as the servant of Lord Jagannath. All of them take the title “Dasa” which means servant.

First of all, a devotee will hear about God from different religious scriptures, puran, as or from the elders or reliable persons (Srava). Then he will have to sing God’s name (Kirtana). Again, he will recall repeatedly the qualities of God or about God (smarana). He will serve God at his feet (padasevana), will worship him (arcani, bandanvi) and imagine his ownself as the servant of God (disya) and will need His help. Again, he may surrender his own self at the feet of God and remain steady (tmaniedana). We find all these in the Odia Bhagavata of Jagannath Das.

draba. Though Jagannath Das is the pioneer in introducing nabadhah bhakti, he lays greater importance on draba. According to him, men should listen to physical descriptions and actions of gods in order to keep themselves free from the worldly affairs (Jagannath Das Bhagavata, “Haricarita audhun Saasira tara Pr1,1”). Kartika Das in Nabamarga describes that draba is the medium through which a bhakta can reach the realm of God for salvation. Achyutananda in Harivasa discusses the importance of hearing the Bhagavata and Harikatha, the act which frees a human being from sins and vices. In Manmatha Chandrika also he stresses on the merits of draba.

Kirtana. Kirtana is the loud congregational chanting of KALA’s name in its various forms. Sanatana cites the Bhad-Nirada Purio in his Har Bhakti Vilasa to support the ideology of Kirtan, that there is no other way except Hari Nama. Jagannatha Das, Achyutananda Das, Balaram Das, all prescribe kirtana and bhajana, i.e. singing in congregation or individually the glories and attributes of God as a means to free oneself from sorrows and misfortunes in this life. The Bhagavatpura shuns the enjoyment of even the Brahmaloka if there does not flow the stream of recitation of the glories of the Lord (V.19.24). Jagannatha Das advises,
"Uce diñkha Harinama, áuniba Sakala árabana" (Utter the name of Hari loudly so that others can hear it) (Bhagavata).

_Smara_ a. It is the act of constant remembering and thinking of the name of God. It is the relation of devotee with God. According to the Utkaliga Vatāyasanas, smara a of God helps everyone overcome the miseries afflicting one in this world and helps to reach the realm of God where eternal peace prevails. Achyutananda in his writings puts importance on dhyān, an act which helps one’s mind concentrate on Radha-Kṅāra. (Harivāsa Pada 298)

_Padasevana_. All the Pañcasakhis mention the idea of padasevana or worshipping or caressing the feet of God. In Harivāsa we find that Varu a is engaged in the worship of the _pāda_ (feet) of Kṅāra. Jagannatha Das while describing the glories of Kṅāra in his Bhagavata says that padasevana is greater than nectar.

_Arcani_. Arcani means worshipping the swarupa of God with great regard and love. In the Bhagavata the idea of arcani is supported with equal greatness (Bhagavata-10th canto, 81 chap. 69 _pāda_). However, according to Achintya Deb, Jagannath Das and others did not mention arcani separately (p.231).

_Bandana_. It is another form of bhakti in which a devotee worships God with great modesty, humility, prayer and song of praise.

_Disya_. The ways by which a devotee loves God are disya sikhya and bītsalya modes. In the state of disya the devotee regards God as Father, Mother and Master and thinks himself as his servant. Other qualities as modesty, selflessness come naturally at this stage. As a result all the Pañcasakhis take the title ‘Disa’ meaning servant to show themselves as the servant of God. Jagannatha Das describes this kind of bhakti in his Ośa Bhagabata. In Harivāsa Achyutananda also desired to serve ‘Hartara a’, the feet of God, as the servant serves his master.

_Sikhya_. Jagannatha Das while describing bhakti of the gopas, Sudima and cowherd boys mentioned them as sakhis or friends of Kṅāra. In Haribāsa Achyutananda also describes that Sudama, the son of Kaśa worshipped Kṅāra as his friend and it can be marked as an instance of Sakhi Prema. Utkaliga Vatāyasanas include bītsalya bhiva in sikhya bhiva. Jagannatha Das while describing bīlya-lilā of Kṅāra in the Bhagabata mentions bītsalya of Yoḍeli while describing bīlya-lilā of Kṅāra. We also find this rasa in the writings of other Pañcasakhis.
Self Surrender: In Jagannath Das’s Bhagabata we find this mode of bhakti. Whenever a devotee surrenders himself or herself completely or thinks himself or herself as a consort of God (here it is Krsna) it expresses this kind of self surrender.

Yantra, Mantra and Tantra: Apart from nabadhbi bhakti Paucaskhys recognize the importance of yantra, mantra and tantra. Paucaskhys imagine that female body is the embodiment of four seats of tantra. Achyutananda in the Gurbhaktgitaye says, Yantra mantra tantram caita chhigis jyotirthidakam/hajasamidhi, rasagugam ca yo jinitt sa Vatasa, abah (2nd part, 11 Patala, p.4). That he is a true Vatasa, a who has clear knowledge about yantra, mantra, tantra, chhigis, jyoti, abha, haja, samidhi and rasagugam. Achyutananda has even advised people to go only to those teachers who have sufficient knowledge about yantra. Ye guru jine yantra sirai lambita ti payan” (Prostrate before that teacher who knows the quintessence of yantra) (1st part, 1 chanda, Patala p.1). Of the qualities of disciples and masters, Achyutananda says he is a successful disciple who can differentiate between yantra, mantra and tantra and the master who does not know its difference becomes always an object of laughter.

There are certain modes in repeating esoteric formulas of incantation. Before chanting incantations one has to draw yantra and then imagine it to be God and then to worship it according to rules. So mantra and yantra are related to each other. Achaytananda and Ananta have drawn many yantra diagrams which are of the shapes of triangle, quadrilateral, hexagon, octagon and multi angles. In Tantra works there are mention of rules for drawing yantra.

Paucaskhys and their followers had given utmost importance to yantra, mantra and tantra. Some of their works are replete with complicated ideas of yantra, mantra and tantra. For their preferences to tantra, mantra they are even dubbed as clandestine Buddhists. Tantra is divided into left handed tantra and right handed tantra. Left handed tantra are tamiska while right handed are sitvikta. Paucaskhys of Odisha were practitioners of right handed sitvikta tantra and they kept themselves away from left handed tamiska tantras.

Practice of tantra has three modes- sativa, raja and tama properties. Those who practice sativa properties accept paucaskhira practices like eating fish and meat as control of taste, drinking of liquor as taking samarasa, madri as getting enlightenment or jyotirmaya bruhmardasban, madhara as union of
The tântrikas belonging to raja properties take pācacakrīras in their real sense and taking all these they indulge in luxury. Tântrikas belonging to tīmasika properties indulge in sexual activities and animal sacrifice, and by offering liquor and meat to propitiate ghosts, spirits etc. they aspire to attain worldly pleasure and also to exercise power over others or to harm their adversaries. Sages and seers of ancient India engaged themselves in first category of tântra siddhāns. Odisha was once the seat of tântric Hindus and Buddha dharma and ārāma Jagannātha pēthā was the principal Vaiṣṇava peeth. Achyutananda says, Mantrē guṇa, यांत्रे बस्तिः, यांत्रे करित्वा थिलबा’ (Garabhatē Gītā-11.1).

Paµcasakhās had adopted self-controlled yoga marga. They desired to realise the Brahman through repetition of incantations and yoga practices. They are also called tântrika Vaiṣṇavas. Tantra is the basis of Jagannātha-centric Vaiṣṇava religion. Out of seven Vaiṣṇava practices tantric practice is one.

So it will not be out of place to say that Odakāra Vaiṣṇa, aavas, Tāntra is the basis of Jagannātha-centric Vaiṣṇava religion. Out of seven Vaiṣṇava practices tantric practice is one.

So it will not be out of place to say that Odakāra Vaiṣṇava, aavas, Tāntra is the basis of Jagannātha-centric Vaiṣṇava religion. Out of seven Vaiṣṇava practices tantric practice is one.

Chīḍa siddhān

Chīḍa, jyoti and abī-a siddhān are described as modes of yoga in Paµcasakhā literature, although these are not found even in Patanjāli yoga. Achyutananda in his Ārāma Suḥstītas discussed in detail Chīḍa siddhān. About this he says that at the time of Yoga practice the reflection of rays from the sky will be first seen as slight red, then pale and then white. During the state of realization it will take various colours and scenes. One should stand facing the opposite direction of the Sun, towards the shadows of his own body and looking at the shadow must offer “Om” in the heart and see the chīḍa Brahma in his own shadow. All sins are destroyed if one sees this chīḍa every day for twelve years (SS, 5th chap.).

Jyoti Siddhān

About the jyoti siddhān Achyutananda says in his Kabikalpa Gītā that after līfting one’s eyes
towards the forehead one is to fix it on the vacant sky, after which a ray will shine on which one is to keep
his eyes fixed and motionless. After lots of practice a kind of glow will appear that will dispel ignorance
and give lots of peace and happiness. The aim of this sidhan is to get a *jyotirdarshan* through the help of
Ekikāra mantra and is aimed at to keep the mind steady. The ideal time for this sidhan is the bright lunar
fortnight in the month of Māgha during which one should keep himself standing under the open sky and then
make his face directed towards the west and chant the Gīyatri mantra (CP, 28th Pāñcāla.).

**Abā Sādhanā**

In his *Tattva Bodhini* Achyutananda says that abā sādhanā helps one to strengthen his mind and
concentration. The glimpse of abā can be had if one’s mind and body remains pure. The way to achieve it is
to gaze steadfastly at the sphere of the sun and to visualise it while reciting the mantra taught by the
guru. In *Kāicipantha Gītī* he describes that one has to sit firmly on the padmaśana and get a look of Abā. The
time of it is bright lunar fortnight of the month of Māgha. On that particular day the devotee is to take
unparboiled rice while remembering his guru and gaze at the sky while chanting the Abā mantra. As a
result, the hindrances on the way of worship will be removed and one will get the view of Abā (Maharana,
p.352).

**Nāja or Sahāja Sādhanā**

This sādhanā helps one unite individual consciousness with universal consciousness. Its time of
practice is early morning, after restraining slumber and taking light food. Its mode of practice is to sit in
meditation in early morning, and then gaze at the rising sun after closing the left side breathing.

**Samādhi**

In this sādhanā the practitioner reaches the state of amalgamation and mingles to a state of union.
Samādhi, according to Pahānjalī yoga, is of two types- sajāvas and nirvāṇa. During the state of sajāvas
samādhi very subtle movements of śītvik condition are experienced by the consciousness while during the
state of nirvāṇa samādhi all the movements remain absent. The state of samādhi is the ultimate state for a
practitioner. Pūjāsākhīs have mentioned profusely about this state in their literature.

**Rasagu...**
All yoga literature ends with samadhi but the Páca sakhás have gone one step ahead of it. They have imagined "rasaguña" beyond samadhi. Rasaguña is the ecstatic state of knowledge or spiritual illumination. After attaining knowledge one experiences ecstasy in the joy of attaining knowledge. How a practitioner attains what type of joy in the state of rasaguña is beautifully mentioned by Achyutananda in his NityaRáhasa when he describes the playful nature of Yogamayá Káli-Káli. He imagines Káli as Prakárti and Káli as ParaKála. By placing Káli above Káli he has hinted at the ultimate state of the yoga realisation.

3.2 Devotional Practices and Ceremonies

3.2 (a) Initiation

Initiation is the act on the part of somebody becoming a member of a group or religious sect. The mode of initiation varies from sect to sect, from religious group to religious group.

In Assamese Vaishnavism, going through initiation or ordination is called "Sarasa lowa". Administering of it is called "Sarasadhi". In Assamese Vaishnavism no mantra is there and instead of it, the guru imparts the katha, 'Nirm Káthi' or 'Káthi-vastu' in the language used by the ordinary people. Hence it is called Guruvíkya, not Vijamantra or mula-mantra as in Utkalya Vaishnavism. The character and conduct of the person seeking initiation need to be tested before he is formally initiated. According to S.N. Sarma, "As in the case of Buddhist monasticism where four months of probationary period (parivasa) was necessary or Christian monasticism of the Benedictive Order where a novice had to remain on a year's novitate, Assam monasticism also enjoins a probationary period of a few months before a novice is formally initiated and taken as a regular member of the community" (ibidem, p.119). Sarma again says, "Like prabhañjana and upasampada of Buddhist monasticism, there are also two stages of devotional hierarchy in Assamese Vaishnavism. The first, viz. sarasa marks the formal entry of a person into the Vaishnavite order. It is of the nature of an oath by which the communicant promises to lead the life of a true Vaishnav under the sheltering guidance of the Guru. The second stage is marked by a ceremony known as "bhajana," where a person is recognised as a confirmed devotee" (ibidem, p.123).

During the early period of the Vaishnavite movement there was probably no other ceremony except the sarasa. It is told in the biography of áakaradeva that the guru introduced the system of four saras as
(cint sara , a) by deriving the idea of absolute surrender to Lord कृṣ्ण, a from the Gītā, the supremacy and efficacies of the names of वि०, a from the Padmapurı, and the indispensability of holy association from the Bhigabata purı, (S.N.Sarma p.120). The idea of the fourth principle, i.e. the supreme necessity of a Guru, is said to have been introduced by आा  Karadeva himself when he received Madhabadeva as an ideal disciple (6KC-34).

Baranīt Viveka Ratna by Maniram Barhbandar Barua notes below the principal steps of the initiation ceremony in respect of which all the saḥātis agree: i) The person seeking initiation is required to keep himself clean in body and mind from the previous day of initiation and he should observe religious fasting in which a single vegetarian diet is allowed to be taken. ii) On the next day, i.e. the day of initiation, the rite of purification and expiation takes place after the morning bath is over. iii) He is then taken to the presence of the principal image of वि०, a installed in the Satra where he is asked to bow down five times to the image and to the adhitkira as well. In case of नि०, कृता and पुरुा saḥātis instead of an image any of the scriptures composed by आा  Karadeva or Madhabadeva is placed on a चर्र (a tray having a pedestal) to which the person seeking initiation is asked to bow down. He is then acquainted with the history of the sect to which the satra is affiliated tracing the origin to one of the mythological devotees.

Thus Brahma, नि०, पुरुा and कृता Saḥātis trace their origin to ब्रह्म, निरद, महादेव and आनाता respectively. iv) The real part of initiation takes place at the next stage. Here the novice is asked to take an oath, by which he is required to surrender himself to the four fundamental principles (cint Vastu), viz. निमा, देव, गुरु and भक्त. (Sara , a साहित्ति, iii/27-28). This process consists of a few steps and at the end of each step the seeker is required to prostrate before the image or the scripture touching the ground with eight parts of his body (astanga pranama). In this process the four adorable names of the deity, viz. रामा, कृष्ण, निर्मा and हरि (cint nima) are revealed to the communicant for daily meditation or prayer. v) At this stage the significance of and difference between मिना and हित्ति and the process of achieving their unity (aikya-sidhanı) for spiritual attainment are explained to the novice. vi) Description and explanation of six pleasures (sat-cakra), nerves (nādis), five subtle elements (paµca-tanm¯ra), five gross elements (Paµca mahibbata), ten organs (da¿a-indriya), ten winds (da¿a-v¯yu) and lastly cosmogonical accounts of the creation are given out in details. vii) The Guru then explains to the neophyte how the universe (brahminda)
remains in a miniature form within the microcosm (pt., da). viii) The process of mental worship of the Guru and of the deity is then taught to the person. ix) Beatific forms (murti) of Rama, Krsna, Nara, Hari (Viśnu) are analysed and explained. x) Elements and characteristics of Bhakti, meritorious and sinful deeds, ways and conduct of life and such other topics relating to bhakti are explained to the newly initiated person. The person thus initiated should take a few days' training under a trained devotee known as nina-injantyi (qtd.in S.N.Sarma p.120-121).

3.2 (b) Rosary

A devotee is usually conferred with a duly consecrated rosary carved out of basil plant or sandal wood consisting of one hundred and eight or one thousand beads. Rosaries used by Vaishnavas of Assam do not contain meru (largest bead in the central joint of rosary) but they contain four to sixteen nivis (small knots). Ákaradeva-Madhavadeva Carita written by Daitary Thakar (p.393) narrates a controversy between Madhavadeva and some of his adversaries as to the propriety of inserting a meru in a rosary. Madhavadeva is stated to have stressed on the advisability of inserting a meru in a rosary with which only names of a particular deity are muttered or remembered (S.N.Sarma p.122). He admitted its necessity in a rosary with which a tantric mantra is practised. The use of rosary is prevalent in the Puruṣa and the Brahma Saḥātis. The satras affiliated to the Niki and the Kila Saḥātis do not have the system of conferring rosary on their disciples.

"While conferring rosary on a devotee the rosary is consecrated by dipping it in holy water for five times and purifying (saṅskāra) it according to set formulas. The deity in his four adorable forms is worshipped in the rosary. The Guru then utters audibly the four adorable names (Rama, Krsna, Hari, Nariya, etc.) of the deity from ten to one thousand times touching each bead of the rosary" (ibidem, p.122).

After the preliminaries are over the Guru narrates the origin of the rosary and how it came to be associated with the Saḥāti to which the satra is affiliated. Next, he whispers the four names of the adorable deity for five, seven or nine times in the right ear of the conferee and then puts the rosary on the head of the devotee. The guru then explains the significance of each letter that constitutes the four names of the deity as well as of the term mül. The esoteric significance of beads and the thread of the rosary is
communicated to the conferee by the Guru and thus the procedure of jñāgarana (awakening of spiritual potency) and the mode of handling the rosary are also taught. Finally the procedure of conducting japa (meditation) with the help of the rosary is shown to the conferee. (Maniram Barabhandar Barua, *Buruñi-Vivekaratna* (MS), qtd by TN Goswami, *Vaiṣṇava avadīta*, 46)

In satras affiliated to the Brahma Saṃhiti a Vaiṣṇava mantra consisting of eight or twelve or eighteen syllables is offered to a disciple in course of conferring a rosary. The system of conferring dikṣā of both tantric and purāṇic types is prevalent in a few satras of the Brahma Saṃhiti.

Neo-Vaiṣṇavite tradition in Ōkālia Vaiṣṇava vism has similar initiation rites as we find in Assamese Vaiṣṇava vism, and which is deviated from the Vedic rites. The initiation rites are performed both for boys and girls at uneven years of their age, preferably before marriage. This ceremony takes place there where Vaiṣṇavas play the role of whisperers. Here the boys are initiated and given sacred threads preferably before they attain eleven years of age. Achyutananda introduced the following Vaiṣṇava tradition of initiation. As per the tradition, on an auspicious day, the parents of the candidate invite the Vaiṣṇava guru to initiate their ward to the gurumārga or mantra. On that particular day the candidate going to be initiated keeps fasting from the early morning with holy bath and new clothes. The said guru has to follow the paraphernalia of initiation by observing the great guru tradition by arranging a mandala, i.e. putting a piece of new cloth on a low wooden platform upon which coloured powder is sprinkled to draw a tabular diagram designed for the seat of Viṣṇu, the supreme Lord. It is decorated with a few pieces of beetle nuts, mango leaves, flowers etc. and with it an urn (kalasa), symbolic of Lord Ganesha is placed and worshipped. It is first worshipped in sixteen ritualistic manner in Vedic ways. A chapter from the Bhāgavata, preferably from the ekādaśa skandha is recited accompanied with kirtana.

The guru is offered new dress and after the kirtana he invites the candidate to be his disciple. Guru swears tilak on different parts of the body of the disciple, blesses him by sprinkling holy rice smeared with turmeric powder, jujube leaves, flowers and tender grass on his head. Then heads of both the guru and the disciple are covered in a long white cloth and the guru offers the mantra in the ears of the disciple in whispers so that it is not to be heard by others. After giving the mulamantra or gurumantra which is called *Aolanāma batriaksanā* (sixteen names and thirty-two letters) the guru gives a lot of moral sermons to the
disciple. He asks him to remain honest, humble, decent and benevolent to all, to observe all virtues, to be kind and co-operative to all and not to do any moral wrong nor do any wrong to any body. He explains the four fold paths of salvation giving distinct emphasis on bhakti blended with yoga etc. Then the ceremony closes with feasting and sending back the guru with gifts. This is the common way of initiation both for the male and the female disciples. But in case of the Vaiṣṇava who are to be initiated to the gurumantra, the ceremony is a bit different. Here Vedic cārīkarma is performed as is done during the Brahmī initiation ceremony. Here the ears of the boy are pored, like girls who pore for ornaments etc. After the cārīkarma for purificaton is over, the boy is offered the gurumantra by the guru. In this case the Vaiṣṇava goes a step ahead of a Brahmī because he is initiated with gurumāṇa while a Brahmī boy does not receive this nāma.

After initiation a neophyte has to follow the daily practices of certain rituals like pasting different parts of the body in sandal paste in various styles like Harimandira tilak, Rāmānandi tilak, Paµca tilak etc. and to remain sacred and disciplined in all the activities of life. As a Vaiṣṇava, Achyutananda belonged to the school established by Nimbarka. He was primarily initiated to the gurunanma mantra by Sanatana Goswami at the behest of Caitanya. But the teachings of Sanatana Goswami could not fulfill his spiritual urge and refine his Vaiṣṇava avatāri consciousness. So, afterwards he was initiated by Jagannatha Das. After he established himself as a great guru and propagator of the Vaiṣṇava avism, he propounded his own way of initiating the disciples and used his own mantra for initiation of his disciples. Achyutananda assigned Harimandira Tilak on his forehead and Paµca tilaka on arms and chest. Guru Sanatana initiated him into the áy¡ma Paµc¡ksara mah¡mantra Dikāj. But Achyutananda designed his own mantra like Hare Kṛïma// hliyam sliyam kliyam d¡ma//nanda kanda dina dharma// s¡dhu madhu k¡ma brahma//. There are elaborate descriptions of the process of initiation in his work Gurubhakti Gtī. However, the common Vaiṣṇava gurumantra is called Áolan¡ma batri¿ akÀara (sixteen names in thirty-two letters).

Rosary is a distinct feature to Utkaliya Vaiṣṇava avism. Chanting the name of God by an Utkaliya Vaiṣṇava can proceed with a rosary of either wood or basil. The rosary consists of one hundred and eight beads. A Vaiṣṇava is to count daily all these to get merit. This procedure has been widely followed not only by the Hindus but also by the Roman Catholics and the Muslims. The Utkaliya Vaiṣṇava avas invariably keep a rosary in their hand and go on repeating the name. After completing the counting of one round of rosary of
one hundred and eight beads, the worshipper starts counting it again. Utkalika Vaiṣṇava rosary contains a meru (largest bead in the central joint of rosary). In Áyuka Rihśa Achyutananda says, Nobody with a rosary called servant of the Lord unless he uttert Kṛṣṇa in his inner heart; The Name is seed, rosary its robe. Rosary is of no use if only the name of Hari is vainly uttered (Canto 3, Verse 2).

3.2 (c) Mode of Worship

S.N. Sarma mentions, “Worship of image in the traditional sastric manner has lost its importance in satras excepting those of the Brahma Saṅhāti. As the position of image is of secondary importance in the three other Saṅhātis, its worship also is not considered a necessary part of regular devotional routine followed in satras.” (The Neo Vaiṣṇava Movement, p.123)

In Áaṅkara-deva-Madhava-deva Gṛhaṭe it is mentioned that Áaṅkara-deva installed a wooden image of Viṣṇu at Dhubāt to eastern Assam with a view to winning over the Brāhmaṇas to his side (Dātyagārī Thakur qtd. in S.N. Sarma, p.86). Except this there is no other instance of image worship done by him. Madhava-deva was also not a supporter of image worship but he did not prohibit his disciples to do so.

Yet then many satras contain one or more images of Viṣṇu. Perhaps the motive behind this was to enhance the show which helped to attract people towards those institutions. Another reason might be to gain patronage from kings and nobles who generally granted lands and property in the name of an image. However, the daily religious services and devotional functions are held before the sacred scriptures, and not before the images. Only on special occasions when an image of Viṣṇu is indispensable for the ceremony like Doliyatra religious functions are held before an image.

However, in satras affiliated to the Brahma Saṅhāti the worship of śilagṛīma and various images of Viṣṇu form the most important item of daily services. Nidodarādeva, Bhattachareya, Vamsigopaldeva and all other apostles of this sub- sect were regular image worshippers. (Nālanda-Bhāṣādabha Carīta, p.79 and Ramananda: Vāmśigopāla-deva Carīta, p.101).

It is mentioned in the Bardowā-Guru Carīta and Áaṅkara Carīta that Áaṅkara-deva in the eve of his final departure to Kočbehār advised Madhava-deva to look for him. If and when necessary, in the pages of Māriama and Dañama skandha of the Bhagavata (Ramananda, Áaṅkara Carīta, p.295 as published in the
Bordová, Guru Carita, published in the monthly journal Bhib, vol.11-12 (1832-36 saka)). Perhaps on the strength of this, Mādhavadeva positioned the sacred scriptures composed by ∋ā´karadeva on a pre-eminent position by formally installing the Daśama-skandha (10th canto) (of the Bhāgavata) on the sacred altar of the Barpeta Satra (L.N.Bezbarua, ārākāra deva iru Mādhavadeva, p.232). According to Guru Carita, Kātha Mādhavadeva too advised his disciples to regard Kṛṣṇa and Daśama Skandha as representatives of ∋ā´karadeva and Nīmagho as his own representative (p.502). On the eve of his death, when asked by his followers to nominate someone as his successor, Mādhavadeva advised them to read and re-read the Namagho and regard it as their guide. He therefore did not nominate anybody as his successor (Daitari Thakur, ċākaradeva Mādhavadeva Carita, p.514). After Mādhavadeva, it became a uniform practice amongst the Vaśīvas of the Mahāpurāṇa cult to install one of the four principal scriptures, viz. Daśama, Kṛṣṇa, Nīmagho and Ratnāvali on the sacred altar (thiapan) as the symbol of the deity and representative of the first two gurus. But the nature of worship of an image differs from that of a scripture in that when the former is conducted according to the pan Indian mode of worship, i.e. with Sanskrit mantras and rituals, the latter consists entirely of devotional prayers and recitations in vernacular language and offerings are made from nīmapadacaras (gandha, pālpa, dhupa, dāpa and naibedya).

Foot impressions cut on stones (pada-sīla) and footwares (pādakā), supposed to be of ∋ā´karadeva and Mādhavadeva or of any other apostle are carefully preserved and homage is paid to them regularly with incense and offerings. Places where such objects of relic are kept are called thānas. Thus we find the “padosil” of Mādhavadeva in Heramo and Orpok, that of Kṣaṇā at Kāmnir and of chaṭārbhūja at Ghitāhīpat-nākatī (Maheswar Neog, Pabitra Assam, p.271, 274, 276 and 291). This practice of relic-worship came to be in vogue after the death of Mādhavadeva and Dīmodaradeva. Biographers mention that Misradeva, the successor of Vaśāṅgopāladeva, Vamanīdeva, the founder of Dākṣīnapī Satra and Āvamārama, the founder of Kowamara Satra worshipped the wooden footwares of their predecessors, viz. Vaśāṅgopāladeva, Dīmodaradeva and Purulottamadeva respectively (Ramadandan, Vaśāṅgopāladeva Carita, p.225).

The whole programme of singing of hymns and songs, chanting of prayers to the accompaniment of musical instruments and reading and explaining the Bhāgavata and the Gītā is called nīmaprasānga, i.e.
prayers and the functions connected with prayers. The total number of items of services in niraprasanga is fourteen in the three Mahapurukṣa sub-sects and twelve in the sub-sects of Dinodarada and Narideva. These are grouped into three divisions to be observed in the morning after service and their order of performance in the sub-sect of Dinodarada were fixed and systematised by Dinodarada himself.

Pācascakhs opposed the study and practice of the Vedic rites and rituals as the property of Brahmins and were opposed to the practice of the same by other communities as well. Achyutananda writes: "na khola ta-īga kupa/deula tola niū tapa//thipana dian na thipa //na ji Vrindabana Gopa //na ji taḥi Prayaga,Gomati, he mū-ha mātī//" (Oh, Fool! don’t dig tank don’t build a temple don’t install image on the pedestal don’t go to Vrindabana Gopa don’t go to Prayaga, Gomati) xxx Ėmīre Ėmīka dekha / dhekhlē pathu sukha //Tora deha taḥi dekha/dīwa achtī achtī //Bhābi kha be pimara Achyuti, /he mū-ha mātī// (Look upon the supreme soul with your soul and you’ll get joy see your body yourself which looks bright Oh. Fool! whatever Achyuta says, he says after proper deliberation.)(Oh, manā sinha Chaturdio mūrdi', Achyutananda Rachanabali Vol.11, Kabitā khanda, ed. Ratnakara Chatter, p.18).

As the Pācascakhs are against image worship the palm leaf manuscripts of the Bhāgavatapuruṣa, Dandia Rāmāyaṇa and the Harivaṣa are placed at a secluded place on wooden planks called "Bhāgabata Gādi" (seat of Oṣia Bhāgabata). Some of the Vaishnavas keep the image made of neem wood, or photo of dīra-nūpā Jagannāth whom they believe to be nirguṇa, nirākāra Brahma. They also keep silagrāma at the place of worship and worship them through Brāhma priests using the basil leaf and holy water. Priests test the silagrāma off and on whether it is alive or not by putting it in the milk. It is believed that if it is alive then it changes its place. Again, some Īkālīya Vaishnavas keep the picture of Caitanya in the worship room. Emphasis is given on physical cleanliness, and a spirit of meditation is a pre-condition either for reading the Bhāgabata or listening to it. When recited appropriately it creates a mood of religious quietude and calmness.

In many households of Odisha the complete set of Bhāgabata is worshipped along with personal gods and goddesses. As the darkness descends at evening young members of the family after ablutions gather in the worship room and recite chapters from the purāṇa, as elder members of the family listen to it with rapt attention. In Odisha Kṣitih, a is also worshipped in the form of Madhava and Gopinath. In Jagannath Das's
Bhigabata these two names are used frequently and synonymously. In áunya SaÄhita Achyutananda writes, by muttering the nirakara bhajana one has to bind up the lord in the strings of his mind like making a garland of beads with string. So he sings, "O gentleman, meditate with utmost concentration/ And concentrate on the áunya ParuÀa/ In the void would be seen the bright blue body// O Nir¡k¡ra, the formless, manifested in the form of holy tetrad. In the blossoming centre of the lotus/// (Ratnikara Chait, Achayatananda and áunya SaÄhita, p.67).

By chanting mantra of thirty-two letters the shapeless áunya paruÀa can be conceived. Facing upwards a yogi has to concentrate deeply and by meditating the Alekha Brahma in Trikuta Sandhi he can realise the Nir¿k¿re Mantra in Kantha Cakra. The Papcasaabh¿s paved the way for the search of the divine in one’s own self, “Étm¡re ¡tm¡ ku dekha” (See the supreme soul in your own soul). The áunya Brahma exists in every human being. The Òkkal¿yas recognise “Yog¿bira”, “Sa-aaakrubbeda” and awakening of Ku¸ dalini as the steps of religious attainment. Òkkal¿ya VaiÀ has follow Nir¿k¿ra bhajan, áunya bhajan and áarira bheda bhajan.

Achyutananda in his Nityakarma SaÄhita, a blend of prose, poetry and mantras in Ota vernacular and Prak¿ Sanskrit, has parodied the Br¿hmin karma kind. The work was perhaps meant for the lay men to make them confident in their ritualistic life and sanctimonious in performances having no feeling of diffidence and inferiority complex. In this work he has prescribed a VaiÀ , avite ritualistic life from early morning to the time of going to bed where each work begins with a mantra. Some examples of the mantras are given below.

At the time of worshipping the deity Òkkal¿ya VaiÀ avas chant “Yog¿ G¡yatri Mantra”- “Om R¿dh-K¤À¸a, iya Vidmahe, prema rup¡ya dhimahi/ Tam ¿re R¿dh-K¤À¸a a Prachodayat”/” In this mantra R¿dh-K¤À¸a aya and R¿dh-K¤À¸a a procoadag¡ are taken in singular terms as Òkkal¿ya VaiÀ avas believe R¿dh-K¤À¸a a as one entity.

The mantra while plucking basil leaves for use in the worship of the deity is “Tulasi dev¡ SahaÀra, ¡ ViÀ , uceggantar medint, tolant¡ deva K¡rygere, mama dosa na vidyante”. The mantra for offering food to Lord before eating is “Om namah san¿rdan¡¢ga –Om klim K§À¸a, a, govin¿¢ga gop! Janabhallabh¡¢ga namah’. The mantra before starting a journey is “Om B¡ma, a deva rakÀli kara”. The mantra while going to bed is “Om
The palm leaf manuscripts of Bhagavata are preserved in Bhagavata ghara and read every evening. Week long recitations are held in Bhagavata ghara. Hara Hita, Adita Prabhat, Gaddaprabhats, mass Bhagavata pariga, a etc. are performed by devotees.

3.3 Attainment of Devotion

Worldly pleasures and attractions may lead a devotee astray, to which case devotional inclination may not develop sufficiently unless properly guided. Proximity to saints provides a spiritual atmosphere. Vaiaava writers have devoted enough space to eulogise the importance and merits of sat-sanga. "Devas and tirthas can purify after a long time, whereas the very sight of a saint purges one of all sins". (āa karadeva, Bhakti Ratnakara, Verses 78-79, Bhattadeva, Bhakti Viveka, chap. VI/416/417).

According to āa karadeva’s Bhakti Ratnakara, (Chap.XVII, Verses 558-98) the principal common qualities of a bhakta are that he must conquer his gross nature and acquire an equipoise of mind, the harmony of which is not easily disturbed. He must not be swayed in any way by worldly desires. He must rise above the bickerings of mine and thine. Praise and slander are the one and the same to him. He is not overjoyed at one and displeased at the other. Above all, he is deeply attached to Ke Ke. O’ Connell also says, “Vaiaava is a person who is devoted to the Divine in the personal form of Vici a, or Ke Ke, or Hart, or any of directly related forms of the Lord—a Vai a is a devotee of the Lord” (p.134). But all these qualities may not be equally present in all types of devotees. Therefore, devotees have been classified into three types on the basis of attainment of different stages of bhakti. In the Bhagavata they are uttama or the highest, madhyama or the medium and adhama or the lowest (Ct. ár¢mad Bhagavata ed. Tarakanta Kabya Tirtha Bhattacharya, Calcutta, 1982, II, 2, p.721). āa karadeva also described one more type of bhaktas or devotees whom he called icarabhrdita bhaktas or uncultured bhaktas.

Classification of the devotees as given by āa karadeva is in full conformity with the original text of the Sanskrit Bhagavata. According to this work and āa karadeva, uttama bhaktas are superior to madhyama bhaktas. The former perceives the presence of the same God everywhere. They take God as immanent. Even though they enjoy the worldly things they never forget that these are but consequences of maya. They remain indifferent to the happenings of life. Their only pleasure is in chanting various names of
Hari. They know the fact that the same self resides in every individual. So they never make distinction between castes and classes, high and low, haves and have nots. They are above all baser instincts like avarice, pride, longings, jealousy etc. because they know the trickery of maya. They wish only to serve God as His servant. They never care for the treasure of the three worlds (tribhuvana—vibhavahetave pri tralokya-garthyamanah pit lavardha-mapi nimisardhamapi bhigava-padavindabhyanad yon a calati sa vaisnavagyrab) (BR. 53).

He is the uttam bhakta who sees God in all creatures, who does not inflict violence towards anybody, who sheds off greed, attachment, desire, anger, who never acts with a view to having results and who is indifferent to worldly pleasure. One who is friendly with the society, who has love for God, respect for the superior, kindness for the inferior and indifferent to enemies is called the madhyama bhakta (ākaradeva: Bhakti Ratnakar, pp.136 and137). And he who worships the image of God with devotion but has no special feeling for the devotees of God and other persons is the prakrita bhakta (Bhakti Ratnakara, p.139). Again icchabhakta bhakta is he who deviates from his duties. This type of devotee worships God only for the attainment of power or worldly pleasures. And after attaining power he misuses it and forgets that these powers are actually the power of God and not his own.

Again, the bhakti of a bhakta must be sustained and the bhakta should have got training from a guru who will be his philosopher and guide. All kinds of devotees including even the icchabhakta devotees will ultimately get liberation. Though they deviate from the established practices yet they must be respected by all as they are devotees of God. And devotion to him ultimately makes His devotee a religious man. Icchabhakta mohow bhakta pahbira atikira (Bhakti Ratnakara 59). Thus by the training and guidance given by the guru and with the help of holy association bhakti can be attained.

Pañcasakhis believe that attainment of bhakti is possible through knowledge of Reality. Explaining about the bhaktas, Pañcasakhis are of the opinion that a devotee should control all his senses. He needs to learn how to control senses from a sadguru, a honest pious teacher, by prostrating himself at his feet as a mark of total surrender. Achyutananda is of the opinion that with a mind that has not been calmed and made ready for further attainments all yogic practices and austere repetitions are sure to go in vein. If a man’s inner soul does not submit to the path of bhakti and sidhami then he cannot become a real bhakta. He
must have powerful and refined sensibility to receive the genuine knowledge from his guru. Ratnakara Chaitnt says, "Achyutananda has ridiculed the pseudo disciples in many of his poems. He hated the false Vaishnava occupationist Mahantas (Abbots) and the egoistic sadhus" (p.12). To rescue and discipline the neglected society Achyutananda had prescribed rules and had put them in many of his works. Explaining the attributes of a devotee he said, "there are bhaktas who will take food from any home, perform occult acts and also there are bhaktas who make false offerings. There are wandering bhaktas who carry flags to parade their devotion and also there are bhaktas who smear all over their body dust or ashes. He who has attained a right understanding of the Divine is the real bhakta, and a bhakta who has the inward eye to see God within him and to every human being is the best one. Thus a bhakta should be faithful, humble, learned, selfless, active, benevolent and affectionate. Then he also classified bhaktas into uttam, madhyama and prakriya" (Ratnakara Chaitnt, "The Sweet Fragrance of Panchasakha Consciousness" to Achyutananda Das, p.152)

3.3 (a) Guruvda

An aspirant must permanently attach himself to one principal saint, who will be his philosopher, guide, and who will act as the Guru. The life of a Bhakta without a spiritual guide is often compared to a boat plying in the ocean without a helmsman. Hence guru occupies the first place in the Vaishnava religion. áa ´karadeva in his Bhakti-ratnakara explains the necessity of a guru. His disciples are enjoined to serve the guru first. Guru sevi naa geteka apiga/durjana minaka ira jana nāfiya (Other than by serving the guru, the unconquerable mind cannot be controlled by any other means.) (88).

In Guru-bhatim Madhavadeva asserts that without a preceptor the feeling of devotion can never be properly evoked. Vine guru bhakati rakat Ka babu na hot, áa ´karadeva lays down two criteria for a perfect guru. First, he must be a perfect devotee. Secondly, he must be well acquainted with the knowledge of the scriptures, áa ´karadeva, Bhakti ratnakara-Guru Sevi Mahatmya p.5) áa ´karadeva thus gives importance to the role of a guru in the purification of the heart of a devotee. He also stresses on the fact that mere knowledge is by itself not sufficient for divine realization. From the point of view of a novice the guru is as great as the Lord Himself, for it is by the grace of the guru that the disciple comes to know and realize the Lord (Madhavadeva, Nimbhoḍ, verse, 680). Nirt jena ati kripayata/bhakta gurujano sehibaya//Duyo jina
eka miku/sariratva bhoona // (Guru is as graceful as Hari. Both are one and the same. Only there is difference of bodies.) āa' karadeva also praises the concept of guru (bhakti-jñīna-prada-guru-sevi- Mahātmayā) saying guru is no other than god (gurur eva harth).

A bhakta’s preceptor is like Hari, who is full of kindness. Both are as one and are different only in body (Nīmayādhti, 682). In intimate religious circles gurus have been classed to the Caritas into Upakīrī (benefactor), anjāntiya (giver of light) and sahrd guru (preceptor) (Nīmayādhti,422). To these is sometimes added the worshipful deity under the name guru thus making the number four: īsta guru (worshipful deity), Upakīrī guru (the initiating preceptor), anjāntiya guru (one who helps the initiation to understand the significance of the position of the Upakīrī in a disciple’s intellectual life), and sahrd guru (the Lord as manifest in the bhaktas). Guru Caritas always refer to āa’ karadeva and Mūdhavadeva as the first gurus of the order at the time of initiation. Hence āa’ karadeva asks his disciples to serve the guru at first: Saṃsāraka tare guru carana sevaya / hena jñi guru-sevā kariyo sadāya. (By serving the guru one can overcome the cycle of birth and death, Know by this, do always serve the guru) (Rama Charana Thakur qtd. by K.N. Dev Goswami, p.163).

In Odakīlīya Vaē, avitsa Pācasaṅkhīs give much importance to Guruvāda because tantra and yogic path is such a hard matter that one cannot move even a step forward without a religious preceptor or guru. As Odakīlīya Vaē, avitsa is more interested to knowledge than to devotion, so, it is extremely guru-centric. As the jñīnānti bhakti dharma is based on knowledge and yoga hence the teachings and blessings of a guru is very much essential for a disciple. Here the guru acts as the medium for the devotee to realize the truth. The real is to be realized in the heart beyond the senses. Here the conscience, the advice of Guru and the grace of God became one and the same (Mahānta, p.257). Again, the concept of guru bears resemblance with the Socratic way of teaching which is discussed by Kierkegaard in his Philosophical Fragments. Kierkegaard asks the most pertinent question, “How far does the truth admit of being learned? The Socratic answer lies in the affirmation that truth is within us” (qtd. in Chatterji, p.91). Here guru is the unified form of Brahma, Viē, a and Mahēśvara. Pācasaṅkhīs accept guru as the form of real God. Jagannātha Dāsa writes: Śīkāgīte guru gurum Kavara/Gurum Kuru na mānti nara//Gurumā sarba dharma maye/Muhin basat gurudehe//E gheni guru bhagavina/Se gehe mañalya samāna// (Bhīgavaṇa, 11-18) (Guru is the same as God.
Don’t take him to be a human being. All religions are in guru. I reside in the body of the guru. So, guru is a human being as well as a god.

Achyutananda also writes: “SaÄs¡ra ye mah¡ghora yaÉama Šan¿llla/Sadguru sehí kale nísa bue kíla// (Service to sadguru results in the destruction of all evils of the world) (áunya SaÄhita). The true guru or the spiritual preceptor is the bestower of both jµ¡na and bhakti. Hence the being who is serving the guru is superior. In this context Balarama Das writes:”Yíhi padírll Arjuna/Guru’ ka seví kale prí, a//Guru Sev¡re /¡ína prí/Aandhakapuru addhír¡//Guru na sebte Arjuna/Kabam plíba sad/jína//” (Gupta Ötii, p.9)(to reply to your question, Oh, Arjuna, merit is attained in serving the guru. One who attains knowledge in serving guru is relieved from dungeon. Arjuna, from where will you attain meritorious knowledge if you do not serve the Guru?). Achyutananda in áunya SaÄhita writes about three types of gurus, i.e. Bidy¡ guru, Brahmajµ¡nad¡ta guru and Parace guru. The guru who teaches letters, syllables and Veda is called Bidy¡guru, one who teaches religious teachings is Brahmajµ¡nad¡t¡ guru, and Parace guru is he who helps a disciple to discover his identity, rescues him from cares and anxieties of life. In the Gurubhakti Ötii (3rd part) Achyutananda, however, mentions four gurus - Bodha guru, Sab¡¿jaguru, Tattvaguru and Sadguru. The guru who satisfies the mind of his disciple by tattva is Bodhguru. He who helps his disciple in his acquiring of knowledge by bijamántra is called Sab¡¿jaguru, he who teaches his disciple how to know the jyotímrnanga Brahma is Tattvaguru and he who teaches his disciples Paµcama ntra (a¸¡k¡ra, ek¡ksar, t¡raka, áy¡m Paµc¡ksara, Harer¡m mantra) after knowing it fully is Sadguru.

The glory of Guruv¡da is vividly narrated in the Abadhuta Yadar¡ja-samb¡da in 8th chapter of the 11th canto of the Bhgavatí. Abadhuta has accepted twenty-four gurus, who are not only the human beings but several features of nature (like bees, python, birds, insects, trees etc). This view suggests that neither should we ignore the nature nor should we do injustice to her and she is our great teacher and we should worship her.

In ávet¡Áweta UpaniÀad it is stated that yasya deve para bhaktih yath¡ deva tath¡ guru which means one should show devotion to árµguru as he worships God.

Both the VaíA , ava sects- Assamese and Öktalíya- believe the guru as Hari or God. Both of them feel the necessity of a good preceptor in devotion. But whereas Assamese VaíA , avism classifies gurus into IÈta
Guru, Upak¡r¢ Guru, Aµj¡niya Guru and Sahrd Guru. Òtkaltiya Vat¡, avisan divides the same into Vidy¡ Guru, Brahma Òpinadita Guru and Purace Guru, while at another place they classify it into four, i.e. Bodha Guru, Sahita Guru, Tattva Guru and Satguru. Assam Vat¡, avas refer áa `karadeva and Midhavadeva as their istagura (K¤À¸a, a) at the time of initiation but Òtkaltiya Vat¡, avas do not accept any of their saints as their Ia´ta Guru.

3.3 (b) Personal God (Deva)

Tatttriyopanisad connotes Brahman as Truth, Knowledge and Bliss. This Brahman has two aspects - Personal and Impersonal. Assam and Òtkaltiya Vat¡, avas stress upon the worship of the former as it is easy and consistent because of its definite form. The adorable God for áa `karadeva and other Vat¡, avas of Assam is not only personal but He is immanent and all graceful. áa `karadeva in the K¤À¸a describes the twofold aspects of the supreme God. He says that as attributeless or indeterminate God is not comprehensible, devotees including the gods (devas) worship and adore his beautific form in the person of Nir¡ya, a (áa `karadeva, K¤À¸a: Var¡, aní, aní, 84-85)). Midhavadeva in his R¡jasuya Xivya similarly describes God in His nirgu¸a aspect as devoid of adjuncts (up¡dhirahita) and of the nature of effulgence (jyotirupa) but recommends K¤À¸a, a to the lay men for the purpose of devotion. (Midhavadeva, R¡jasuya Xivya, 4) In fact, all the devotional works of the Assamese Vat¡, avism clearly recognise the personal aspect of God and its worship has been enjoined accordingly. The ultimate attempt of áa `karadeva is to identify á¢K¤À¸a, a with the supreme reality. For the Assamese Vat¡, avas K¤À¸a, a, another form of Nir¡ya, a is the personal God, coming down to this earth in order to restore dharma on the earth.

Unlike the Assamese Vat¡, avism, personal god of the Òtkaltiya Vat¡, avas is Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe. In Paµcasakh¡ literature we find profuse praise of lord Jagannath. Balarama Das starts his writing singing the glory of Jagannath. boats aya Jagannath aya, dala/érie Mukhambanda k¡l dt jala//
(Boats aya Jagannath, the embodiment of the universe, He is the whole countenance, water of Kalindi.). In 'Caur¡si Agy¡n' Yashobanta Das writes: Ia´ta Jagannath aya, boats aya dirabrha duat" (The personal God is Jagannath and that is the Darubrahma).

Under sahu, a upisami Lord Jagannath is taken as the personal God, the ideal person (parulottama)
from whom all divine speculations originate. Pācasakhū’s Jagannāth is primarily a Viśṇu, ultimate deity, as is unmistakably evidenced by the presence of a “Guru-a” in his front. He is the Nityakāla, a or Golak Kāla, a. But in this incarnation, according to Sarala Das, Kāla a is without his consort Rādhā. The Purvabrahma Jagannāth is also described in pācasakhū literature as ānya Puruṣa, Nītrikāra, and Nītra jana and He is enshrined at the Nītikaladhāma as such. Jagannāth is called dīru-Brahma since his image is made from the wood. Although Pācasakhūs are against idol worship they cannot see any difference between void Alekh and the dīru-Brahma Jagannāth. He is one and also Trinity which is nothing but the three aspects of His form.

The medieval school of Utikāliya Vaishīṣṭva accepted the Rādhā idea but maintained a novel concept in conformity to their heterogeneous philosophy. They consider Rādhā the “jīvas” and Kāla a the “Parama Atmi” (supreme soul) (Veda Udaya bhagabata, chap.1 ānya Śākhā III), both are single entity. The Lord entered into the womb of His own Śakti Yogamālī, and was born as the twins. Rādhā and Kāla a. (Premabhakti Brahma Gṛ̣tā, Chap.II). Hence in the 16th century Lord Jagannāth was conceived as the embodiment of both Rādhā and Kāla a. Gopinath Mohapatra opines that the trident is nothing but the three divisions of Jagannāth and that there is no difference between Jagannāth, Balabhadra and Subhadra (P.M. 72/50 “Yo Vai Viśṇu, a sa vai rime go rimah Kāla a eva sah...”). It thus logically follows that there is no difference between Rama and Kāla a and Balarama (p.52).

The Parambrahma is the Ekākāra Himself. Achyutananda writes, the Parambrahma is the Ekākāra Himself- Jagannāthha Balabhadra Bhadra Sudarshana Mahamantra mantraraṭṭa ate darubrahma “(Jagannāth, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshana are the darubrahma who are the Mahāmantra and mantraraṭṭa) (Ratnakara Chait- Achyutananda Ḍas 47/108).

Jagannāth’s form is mysterious like a spirit that cannot be seen. He is conceived in the form of Jyoti. He is also playing the flute and nobody could hear the Anahatanada of that flute. He is himself the Brahma Ekākāra and Nītra jana, the darubrahma Ṣaṇāṇi, the void, the lord of devotees. He is ānya Puruṣa who makes His flight in the void.

3.3 (c) Nimatabāva

In the heart of a devotee belonging to each sect of Hindu religion- Āśā, Śīkṣa, Gīnapatya, Saur, Vatāaya, there is a yearning to realise the personal god through prayer and worship, both at individual
level and collectively. It is realised through their related nîma, dhîma and mantra. In Viṣṇu sect we find two kinds of worship—one, worship of Akâra Brahma and the other of Nîma Brahma. Akâra śraddhan of tantrî is born out of the Vedic symbolic worship. In the Atharvasîra Upanîsd (3/56) it is mentioned that Om is the nearest name of the Brahma. In the Kâlîsantara, a Upanîsd we find, for the first time, the mention of sixteen nîmas and thirty-two syllables associated with mahàmantra which are enjoined for the benefit of people in the Kâliyug. One realizes amritattva when he recites nîma. In many places in Upanîsads we find that by reciting nîmabrahma one gets rid of his sins and finds a place at the feet of god. In the 3rd part of Kâbalisapantâsad it is mentioned that a “mortal being attains immortality by chanting the name of God”.

In Bhakti tradition, nîma, i.e. ērava, a and kērtama is a mode of worship of personal god as he is the one who will give eternal peace by liberating one from the bondage. ēravadeva while preaching the Eka ârama, a Upanisad also prescribed nîma as the mode of remembering personal god. This is monotheistic in nature and Nirguna, a Brahma through devotion is the ultimate object of realization. The basis of Nîma Dharma is the Gîtâ and the Bhagavata purâsa. It accepts incarnations of God in different forms, the most important among them is Kâśîvara, a who is both saguna and nirguna, a brahma and whose name and attributes are innumerable. Madhavadeva expresses in the Nîmagho the notion of ontology and hence such formless entity cannot be even thought of. So, by reciting His name we should purify our mind. Through chanting and listening of the name as well as attributes of Saguna Brahma, i.e. Kâśîvara, a one obtains the Nirguna, a Brahma (Kâśîvara, a). In fact the Nîma Dharma of ēravadeva is based on four principles, i.e. Guru (ârâmanâ ēravadeva), Deva (Kâśîvara, a), Nîma (attributes of Kâśîvara, a) and Bhakata (Devotee of Kâśîvara, a). Listening and reciting of nîma is the main mode of sādhan for attainment of Nirguna, a Brahma. Nîma and attributes of Kâśîvara, a and Hari are synonymous.

In Nîma dharma it is viewed that since human mind is always in the state of flux so the reckless wandering of the mind can be checked by nothing but religious feelings. Nîma can liberate one from narrowness, it can purge one of sensual pleasures, inject the feelings of universal brotherhood in one’s mind and help see the world pervaded by Viṣṇu, a. This will free one from worldly bondage. Therefore, one should take the name of God inward and then only will derive the benefits of nîma. More emphasis one will give to
nima, more it will work upon and the effect will purify the heart and transform the body into an embodiment of religious spirit. Only then one will get an inexpressible joy. All religious scriptures like Veda, Vedanta, Upanishad have praised the glory and merit of nima. In Bhakti Pradip it is said that among all religious acts and modes of worship Amrta is the best as among all gods Devakinandan Kripa is the best.

Aa`karadeva in Prabandha Mandana says that dhyana in Satya yuga, gala in Treta yuga, puja or worship in Dwipar yuga were the best modes to attain liberation from the bondage of the world while it is nima in Kaliyug which would help one mingle with the paramarth. In the arthaad Bhagavata Aa`karadeva has said that Brahma and other gods had kept the nima dharma hidden from the people in the Satya yuga while in the Kaliyug God in his incarnation of Kripa disclosed it to the people for their benefit. So the nima dharma which is also Kali nima is the greatest and the most beneficial mode of worship in the Kaliyug. It can be chanted by anybody and everybody, from the highest to the lowest, and there is no bar in time and space to chant it. Every one can achieve mukti by chanting the grace of glory to god.

Aa`karadeva considers citta the subtlest and the most sensitive psychical entity, which cannot perform properly until and unless the evils of intelligence, ego and senses are removed. Removal of evils can be effected by directing senses towards the path of God. As for example, tongue which has sensual longing may be diverted to drink the nectar present in the name of Nitya or Kripa.

Reciting the name of personal god and chanting it in antson is an important mode of devotion. It is seen that he who ever sings the name of Lord Kripa with full devotion is purged of all desires and his mind turns pure. "Nima Aparidha" in the Kirtana Ghat prescribes the way how to chant the nima. It enumerates ten offences which people commonly commit while chanting nima, and which people should always avoid. According to Aa`karadeva, these offences are to speak ill of other devotees, differentiate the name and qualities of Vi`va and Siva, criticize the Vedas, criticize name of the Lord, argue against nima, vitiate nima, consider nima as equal to sacrifice, pilgrimage or fasting etc., remain unmindful of nima, show disrespect to nima and express dislike for nima (Aa`karadeva, Kirtana, V. 48-56).

One attains spiritual realisation when he resorts to Kirtana, that is singing in antson in congregation the glory of God. Kirtana has seven merits. First, it burns away sins of this life, second, it accures great merit, third, it creates aversion for worldly pleasures, fourth, it develops loving devotion
towards God. Fifth, it arouses the mood and spirit of a Vaišnav, sixth, it removes illusion, and seventh, it helps the devotee merge in God who is the quintessence of all life and all joy (Kṛṣṇa-gīth).

The world consists of name and form. Again, Brahma and Nīma are the same. We all believe that God is formless. But when we think of Him we visualize some sort of form. And again, this form is also nīma-rūpātmaka. Madhavadeva also writes in the Nīma-gīthā the two syllable word “Nīma,” the name of God which is also Sabda-brahman. There is no difference between nīma and nīmi and both are inseparable. They are identical and synonymous. Same is the case with god- “Yet nīma sei Hari jana niśthā kari/ Apanu nīmar sanga nasarante Hari”. (Nīma is Hari. Know it right/ Hari never snaps his association with Nīma). (Nīma-gīthā).

It is believed that there are thousand names of Brahma. Nīma is also called Tirak Brahma. Madhavadeva believes that among thousand names of God the idyānīma of Brahma is “Om”- “Om hikeyaṣyagam Brahma”. Hence it is known as akṣara Brahma or Praṇava or Sabda Brahma. It indicates attributeless and formless Brahma.

Lakshminath Bezbarua following the same interpretation establishes the glory and supremacy of the nīma-dharma preached by ācārākara. He does so because the anamity between the name and the possessor of the name, nīma is called Nīma : Brahma n , Nīda-Brahman and Sabda brahman. (Tattva-Kathā, p.122). He explains in āśv. Kṛṣṇā, a - Kṛṣṇā. “That is the Paramāpāda of Viṣṇu where with the help of sound and light the mind finds its resting place” (āśv. Kṛṣṇā, a - Kṛṣṇā, Viṣṇ).

Madhavadeva mentions one hundred and sixty-four names of god. Both Madhavadeva and ācārākara view Kṛṣṇā, a as Viṣṇu, a and Viṣṇu, a as Brahma. Viṣṇu, a is also known as Bhaqavī which is the other name of Brahma. ācārākara’s Bīgavāta mentions that Kṛṣṇā, a is the incarnation of Viṣṇu, a. Hence “Kṛṣṇā, asta Bhaqavī swagam”. “Kṛṣṇā, a” comes from the word “Kṛṣṇa” which means “world”. The absolute thing of the creation “Na” syllable bears joy. The joy or mahānanda of consciousness exists in the syllable ‘na’. These two “Kṛṣṇa” and “na” combine to create the name of Param Brahma Kṛṣṇa, a.

In Assamese Vaiṣṇavism the adorable deity is addressed by different names like Kṛṣṇa, a, Rama, Hari etc., though such a god is not confined to any particular name. He is the universal god and remembered by all mankind. Such a God can be experienced in the innermost recess of one’s heart.
Purcasakhis take Jagannath as Purna Brahma. According to them chanting the name of Lord is an important mode of worship. All sorts of evil in mind are washed away when one chants the names of the Lord. For Otkalita VaLa, avas, _Name_ comes first, then Brahma. Name is the the source of everything; it is the centre of everything. In _Gupta Bala_ Balaram Das says that nina brahma is the cause of every creation. Even Brahma and ViLa, u come from the _Name_. Nima Brahma is nirguna and its form is saguna. There is no worth in saguna, if _Name_ is not there. Achyutananda says that there was name before form. Name expresses itself through form and then only it becomes possible for itself to appear in the world. As name is the cause of form so one needs to know the name first, then only one can recognize the form. To make mind stable and quiet there is the necessity of form. In the _Gurubhakti Bala_ Achyutananda narrates through dialogues how the _gopis_ of Vrindavana and Uddhava establish the supremacy of name rather than the form of KSaLa.

Purcasakhis accept Jagannath as MahaviLa, u. Jagannath for them is the main god. They like the Assamese VaLa, avas stress upon singing the glory of God. They say that in Kaliyug one is to remember, chant and hear the name of Brahma to get liberated from this life. Otkalita VaLa, avas while chanting the name of Brahma follow HareRama mantra first and then HareKSaLa, a mantra, though the Gaudiya VaLa, avas belonging to Caitanya sect in Odisha follow it in reverse order. The Mahamantra of Otkalita VaLa, avas is: Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare Hare KMa ha ka ka ha ha ha ha. This mantra also gets support of the _Kali Santaranopanishada_ (p.546). There it is mentioned: Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Hare Hare KSaLa, a Hare KsaLa, a KSaLa, a KSaLa, a Hare Hare- iti sadalaka nining Kalkulasanastnarnam. Natha paratarapifarh Sarvadevesu, durgati (p.546).

Purcasakhis advise the lay man to utter Rama nima first because the ‘R’ and the ‘Ma’ syllables of ‘Rama’ represents arDradi and KsaLa, a respectively. On the other hand, they describe that the utmost spiritual sense ‘R’ means formless being and ‘Ma’ indicates God Himself. In their view ‘Rama’ is the other name of the union of jivas and Parama ( _Brhaha Sipga-Chap.1-p.74_ ). Hence Mantrairita taking an inverted order in Otkalita VaLa, avism is justified. Achyutananda finds no difference between ‘Nima and Mantra’. Hence in “ _Chayilisha Patala_ ” he writes: “geh ‘nima sehu mantra noben bhuma bhuma/Nima japa Mantra japa abhaya samad/n x x Sekila Karila rupa dajata attha/Nimaku se mahakila karuthe bhaya// (1st part-3rd Patala). (Name and mantra are the same, not different/chanting of name or mantra, both are equal xxx Even that
dreadful form of time in the restless world fears the name of God)

Achyutananda writes in his Sañhit¡ khanda: there are eight Hare words, four Rama and four K¤À¸a words used in this Mah¡mantra. But the question is why one word is used so many times. It is because each use of the name represents a parécticular deity, his Vija mantra and form. Eight Hare: Hare-Balabhadra, Hare-Hling, Hare-Nanda, Hare-Sidhu, Hare-Shim, Hare-Dino, Hare-Brahma, Hare-Hinar

Achyutananda writes in his Sañhit¡ khanda: there are eight Hare words, four Rama and four K¤À¸a words used in this Mah¡mantra. But the question is why one word is used so many times. It is because each use of the name represents a parécticular deity, his Vija mantra and form. Eight Hare: Hare-Balabhadra, Hare-Hling, Hare-Nanda, Hare-Sidhu, Hare-Shim, Hare-Dino, Hare-Brahma, Hare-Hinar, Hare-Nirdma. Next four Ram: Ram-Subhadri, Ram-Ram, Ram-Hling, Ram-Kanda-madhur ro Madhu Kanda. Next four K¤À¸a names indicate: K¤À¸a-Jagann¡th, K¤À¸a-Kli´g (Kama Vija), K¤À¸a-a-Dina, K¤À¸a-a-K¡ma.

Achyutananda tells in the G¢t¡ Kha¸da that all the mantras are hidden in these sixteen names.

We find various explanations of the Mah¡mantra in Paµcasakh¡ literature. From another point of view, "Hare" is visualised as Shiva, Rama as Brahma and K¤À¸a as ViÀ¸u. Caturdh¡ Murti (Jagann¡tha, Balabhadra, Subhadri and Sudar¿ana) is also related with Hare Rama K¤À¸a. In Gurubhakt¡ G¢t¡ Achyutananda has accepted "Ha" as Sudar¿ana, "Re" as Balabhadra, "Rama" as Subhadri and "K¤À¸a" as Jagann¡th. Again he describes Hare, Rama, K¤À¸a, a as Gopi, R¡dh¡ and K¤À¸a.

In this Mah¡mantra there are sixteen names and thirty-two letters. In this mantra we can see the name of "R¡ma" and "K¤À¸a", as these two are the worthiest names of God and these are capable of giving mokÀa. The R¡ma n¡ma is so worthy that K¡ka Bhusanda got liberated by chanting the name of Ram. "R¡ti R¡dhik¡ atanti ma K¤À¸a, a t¡rana// (Attreiba-Jyoti Darsan Gautsharp, 150) (Know that 'R¡' means R¡dhika and 'M¡' is K¤À¸a/Chanting the name of R¡m, the crow named Bhusanda got liberation). In Padma Pur¡¸a devotees are enjoined to chant T¡raka (R¡ma n¡ma) and Paraka (K¤À¸a n¡ma).

These three names are again described in a different way, i.e. three avat¡ras of Jagann¡th in three different yugas. ár¢ N¤sÄha, the avat¡r in the Satya Yug is named as Hari, the avat¡ra in the Tretay¡ yug i.e. "Rabanavi" is named as Rama and " Gopijanaballava", the avat¡r in the Dw¡para yug is named as ár¢K¤À¸a. So, all these three names when chanted in unison make one capable of realizing the reality of God.

We find two kinds of worship–one is worship of syllable (aksara brahma) and the other is the worship of Name (n¡ma brahma). Paµcasakh¡s believe that the world is created when the sperm of Parama
Puruṣa Om falls into the womb of Yogamājī, the Idīśakti. So, Omkāra Adyamātra is the Pra, aha mantra. And the triad-Dānāsīth, Balabhadra and Subhadrā—is the same as sūna Brahma that manifests itself in the triad of energies, viz. knowledge (jñāna-ākāra), will (vīchāra-ākāra) and action (kriyā-ākāra) along with the three guṇa, as, i.e. sattva, rāja and tamāḥ.

In Premabhakti Brahma Gītā it is mentioned that from two letters "Rā" and "ma" Om or one letter (ekaksara) is derived. These two letters denote Rādhī and Kṛṣṇā. Their love odour gives birth to Premrupa Candrabali. Together they form Tri-vija, which are represented by symbols.

The six angles are subsequently expanded to eight angles of sixteen letters (Ha-Re Rā-Ma Ha-Re Rā-Ma Rā-Ma Ha-Re Ha-Re). Eight gopis preside over eight angles. They are Sacala, Lalita, Haripriya, Vimala, Dhanya, arvapati, Padma and Sukeśī. There are eight Hare and four Rāma words in the mantra of these thirty-two letters. The four Kṛṣṇā, a words signify Hamba, śoka, vala and arvā Kṛṣṇā, a. Four Hare words signify the ākāra of Kṛṣṇā, a namely Rādhī, Candrabali, Duti and Tripurā. The other four stand for the ākāras of Rāma, namely Rāma, Rāmagant, Revati and Yogamājī. The four Rāma words denote- Virīka, Balabhadra, Sasadeva and Ananta.

The sixteen words represent sixteen gopis. In ānya Śāhiti II and Guru Bhakti Gītā, pt III-40 it is stated that out of sixteen names thirteen are kept suppressed and only three, namely Hart, Rāma, Kṛṣṇā, a are propagated. Achyutananda believes that if a devotee attached to worldly desires takes the name of Kṛṣṇā, a without keeping faith in Him, Kṛṣṇā, a cannot be obtained. One who sits unmoved and chants the nāma attentively and religiously and surrenders his heart at the feet of Kṛṣṇā, a with unadulterated devotion he can only achieve Supreme Reality. The āolanima hasīaksara mantra was also designed by Achyutananda in a different way from the one given above. Its mantra is, Hare Rāma Kṛṣṇā a, Śyāma, Śyāma Śyāma Śyāma Śyāma Dīna, Nanda Kanda dīna dharma, Śidhu Madhubanama Brahma.

Achyutananda mentions that when a devotee chants nāma repeatedly he enters to the land of anāma where sorrows and sufferings are absent. The anāma is the ideal place for the tattva jñāna. Therefore, they always desire to take shelter in this anāma. Achyutananda has expressed that visiting a temple is possible with nāma but with anāma it is possible to have a darśana of God inside the temple. In ānya Rāṣṭra Achyutananda says, Nobody with a rosary is called servant of the Lord/Unless he utters Kṛṣṇā, a in his inner
heart, / The Name is seed, rosary its robe / Rosary is of no use if only the name of Hari is vainly uttered, (Canto 3, verses 1-3).

A study of Nirmata-tva in Vaishnavism of Assam and Odisha reveals that both have given more stress upon Nama than on rituals and have used aksara brahma and nama brahma as mode of worship, based on the Upanishadic teachings. Both are monistic in nature and believe in one Parama Brahma. Both have used K‰„a and Rama nama as they consider these as the worthiest. Both have stressed on çrava, a and kirtana as mediam of sádhan. Both consider Nama as the ultimate way to salvation in Kali yuga.

Inspite of all the similarities there are dissimilarities too. The Mahamantra of Òtkaliya Vaishnavism is Hare Rama Hare Rama Hare/ Hare K‰„a, a Hare K‰„a, a K‰„a, a K‰„a, a Hare Hare. But in Assamese Vaishnavism we do not find any such mantra. Regarding the use of ‘Om’, Sanjiv Borkakoty writes, “àkaradeva asked his disciples to worship K‰„a, the master of three worlds. He never advised them to seek control over five elements. So, ‘Om’ was not practised in the eka sara, a order.xxx Perhaps, he did not advise it lest ‘Om’ itself became an icon of Brahman. The Maitrayani Upanishad has said categorically that ‘OM’ is an icon of the universal self. It is noteworthy that árâhanta àkaradeva did not advise icon worship. The saint advised the devotees to worship God through His shapeless name only” (p.121). There is reference of caturddhamurty (Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan) in the nirmata-tva of Òtkaliya Vaishnavism but there is no any obvious reference to this in the nama-tva of Assam Vaishnavism. Nama-tva of Òtkaliya Vaishnavism is liberal since in it we find mention of K‰„a, a, Jagannath and juggal murti of Radha and K‰„a, a but Assamese Vaishnavism believes only in K‰„a, a.

3.3 (d) Devotees (bhakta)

According to àkaradeva’s Bhakti Ratnakara, (Chap.XVII, Verses 558-98) the principal common qualities of a bhakta are that he must conquer his gross nature and acquire an equi-poise of mind, the harmony of which is not easily disturbed. He must not be swayed in any way by worldly desires. He must rise above the bickerings of mine and thine. Praise and slander are the one and the same to him. He is not overjoyed at one and displeased at the other. Above all, he is deeply attached to K‰„a, a. Vaishnavism is a person who is devoted to the Divine in the personal form of Višnu, or K‰„a, a, or Hari, or any of the directly related forms of the Lord-a Vaishnavism is a devotee of the Lord. But all these qualities may not be equally
present in all types of devotees. Therefore, devotees have been classified into three types on the basis of attainment of different stages of bhakti. In the Bhagavata they are uttama or the highest, madhyama or the medium and adhama or the lowest (Ct. árṇac Bhagavata ed. Tarakanta Kabya Tirtha Bhatiacharya, Calcutta, 1982, ii, 2, p.721). áa`karadeva also described one more type of bhaktas or devotees whom he called icarabhraÀta bhaktas or uncultured bhaktas.

Classification of the devotees as given by áa`karadeva is in full conformity with the original text of the Sanskrit Bhagavata. According to this work and áa`karadeva, uttama bhaktas are superior to madhyama bhaktas. The former perceives the presence of the same God everywhere. They take God as immanent. Even though they enjoy the worldly things they never forget that these are but consequences of mâyá. They remain indifferent to the happenings of life. Their only pleasure is in chanting various names of Hari. They know the fact that the same self resides in every individual. So they never make distinction between castes and classes, high and low, haves and have nots. They are above all baser instincts like avarice, pride, longings, jealousy etc. because they know the trickery of mâyá. They wish only to serve God as his servant. They never care for the treasure of the three worlds (tribhuvana –vibhavahetave pt tralokyaratgarthamahpi lavarddha-mapi nitisardhamapi bhigavat padaravindabhañjanañad yon a calati sa vataÀ , avaggrah) (BR, 53).

He is the uttama bhakta who sees God in all creatures, who does not inflict violence towards anybody, who sheds off greed, attachment, desire, anger, who never acts with a view to having results and who is indifferent to worldly pleasure. One who is friendly with the society, who has love for God, respect for the superior, kindness for the inferior and indifferent to enemies is called the madhyama bhakta (áa`karadeva: BR, pp.136 and137). And he who worships the image of God with devotion but has no special feeling for the devotees of God and other persons is the prakrta bhakta (Bhakti Ratnàkara, p.139). Again icarabhraÀta bhakta is he who deviates from his duties. This type of devotee worships God only for the attainment of power or worldly pleasures. And after attaining power he misuses it and forgets that these powers are actually the power of God and not his own.

Again, the bhakti of a bhakta must be sustained and the bhakta should have got training from a guru who will be his philosopher and guide. All kinds of devotees including even the icarabhraÀta devotees
will ultimately get liberation. Though they deviate from the established practices yet they must be respected by all as they are devotees of God. And devotion to him ultimately makes his devotee a religious man. Iskrabhairavaka mohor bhakti pahatra atitikram (Bhakti Ratnakara 59). Thus by the training and guidance given by the guru and with the help of holy association bhakta can be attained.

Pañcakṣaḥkha believe that attainment of bhakti is possible through knowledge of Reality. Explaining about the bhaktas, Pañcakṣaḥkha are of the opinion that a devotee should control all his senses. He needs to learn how to control senses from a sadguru, a honest pious teacher, by prostrating himself at his feet as a mark of total surrenderer. Achyutananda is of the opinion that with a mind that has not been calmed and made ready for further attainments all yogic practices and austere repetitions are soon to go in vein. If a man’s inner soul does not submit to the path of bhakti and sidhāmi then he cannot become a real bhakta. He must have powerful and refined sensibility to receive the genuine knowledge from his guru. Ratnakara Ṣaṅhitā says, “Achyutananda has ridiculed the pseudo disciples in many of his poems. He hated the false Vaiṣṇava occupationist Mahārājas (Abbots) and the egotistic sadhus” (p.12). To rescue and discipline the neglected society Achyutananda had prescribed rules and had put them in many of his works. Explaining the attributes of a devotee he said, “there are bhaktas who will take food from any home, perform occult acts and also there are bhaktas who make false offerings. There are wandering bhaktas who carry flags to parade their devotion and also there are bhaktas who smear all over their body dust or ashes. He who has attained a right understanding of the Divine is the real bhakta, and a bhakta who has the inward eye to see God within him and to every human being is the best one. Thus a bhakta should be faithful, humble, learned, selfless, active, benevolent and affectionate. Then he also classified bhaktas into ātīta, madhyama and prakṛtā” (Ratnakara Ṣaṅhitā, “The Sweet Fragrance of Panchakṣaḥkha Consciousness” in Achyutananda Dasa, p.152)

3.4 Pt. da Brahmā da

Akaradeva in his Aṅgāraṇa gives a short account of the pt. da (body) as an epitome of the Brahmānanda (universe) and also describes briefly the six cakras having different li̇-Piɭ gal and Susāmi and the Serpent power Ku, dalānt and winds (dała-vīyu) (verse 199-210). In the ordination ceremony of sāstras a neophyte is to get acquainted with the system of body analysts as described in the esoteric yoga. It is
argued in favour of imparting these teachings that unless a devotee knows his body as the epitome of the universe, as the abode of different deities, his knowledge of the world, God and the self cannot be complete and consequently his progress on the path of spiritual realisation becomes difficult.

In Upaniṣad, the replica of the universe is imagined as a peepal tree (Gṛiṣṭha Subodhini Tīka 15/1). In Pācaśakhi philosophy the universe (Brahminda) may be identified with the body (pt. da). Hence the Pācaśakhi is imagined to Pt. da-Brahminda theory the body as an inverted peepal tree and the action of Śiva parāma in this tree. As Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna- “All the universe may be located within the body, Pt. da and brahminda are the same and this fact I reveal before thee”. (Virīḍa Gṛiṣṭha, IV. Vedānta Śrīra Gṛiṣṭha and 36 Gṛiṣṭha Gṛiṣṭha, XXIV). Yasoda could see the whole universe in the mouth cavity of child ardha-kṛṣṇa.

In view of the Pācaśakhi pt. da and brahminda (universe) theories, both these are the one and the same entity. In Balarama Das’s words, Yhiḍi dekha chhona e brahminda/samāsa ochhti eht ptinde// Brahminda gečeka bhīna/pt. dare eht ptinde ochbast samāna// (whatever you see in this universe, whatever there is in the universe, everything is in this body and all these are present in the body equally) (66, 2nd chap.). Achyutananda in “Chayalï Patala” imagined different places like kṣetra, tirtha (religious places) etc. as parts of the body, from nail to hair. Balarama Das discovers fourteen bhubanās and five bhutas within the body. Some opine that the pt. da brahminda theory of the Utkaliya Vaishnavism is influenced by the kāyasādhanā of the Baudha tantra. Balarama Das in the Gṛiṣṭha also imagined Jagnnath and ārka-kṣetra within this body. In Balarama Das’s words, Nisika Sudarshana kahi/Adhara Subhadra atai//Nayana Jagnnath/a//Balabhadrati se śravā// (Nose is Sudarshana, lip is Subhadra, eyes are Jagnnath and ears are Balabhadra) (Gṛiṣṭha Gṛiṣṭha, 7th chap.p.20).

Pācaśakhs who believe in jñānamātra bhakti maintain that one cannot attain God realisation without realising the pt. da brahminda satťra. Achyutananda writes in Gaurīri Jñānā: Deha yadi ’loka bhedina nahī’/Yiḥira jñāna jñānamuka pakāhi//Debare gebe moče na dekhi/Se loka kamañce moče phul// (He who has not dissected the body, his knowledge is not knowledge//If one does not see me in his body, How does he realise me?). The theory of Pt. da Brahminda was partly adapted from the "Dehabā-" of the Sahajīta Buddhists who found the great world, i.e. the universe within the human body.

3.5 Yoga Sidhānt
The relation of devotion with yoga is deep and intimate. The theme of bhakti based on the Bhagavatapurāṇa is attached to yoga. Ārkaṇadbhagavata is based on tattvātthiguna whose source is fear and vairāgya. Here the word fear for an honest person is towards adharma and for general people it is for death. If this fearful aversion opens the path for knowledge and duty then this path is the way of meditation or yoga. Yoga is described as the cessation of will and is the stage of stability (Yoga Darśan Hä). The description of sarvakāra which was not mentioned in the yoga darsana of Patanjali is found in the Bhagavatapurāṇa (2/2/19-21).

Though the basis of mode of Śādhanā of Āaṅkaradeva is the systems and philosophy of the Bhagavatapurāṇa, its tradition begins from "Purūṣasukta" of Bhagabatapurāṇa, and Riti Nīrīgya. That tradition was known as Paµcarātra tradition. As the yoga of Narīyana Risti begins before thousand years of Christian era it is assumed that it has no connection with the yoga sastra of Risti Patanjali or Hathayoga of the later era.

Āaṅkaradeva’s idea on Yoga is found in his work Anadiptana. Depending on the contemporary geographical, social and individual value system Āaṅkaradeva adopted yoga in some places attached to bhakti. That’s why we get an idea of yoga based on the Bhagavatapurāṇa in the Anadi Pritana (V.V.199-215). We do not find the mention of Virīta Purūṣa and Dhyāna yoga in Āaṅkaradeva’s writings but there we find the mention of Dhrisikāyoga only. In the second volume of the Bhagavata it is mentioned that while remembering God if the mind turns reckless due to the effect of rāja-guṇa, a or becomes unscrupulous due to tamā-guṇa, a one should make his mind stable through meditation. When one makes his mind stable and keeps on meditating, he experiences the sight of the pleasurable God. Five types of yoga- Yama, Niyama, Asana, Prānyama and Prātiyihira are the supporting elements of dhrīra, dhyāna and samādhi. That’s why through Dhrīra, a yoga one should think of the gross form of God by controlling the sense organs and respiration.

It is described in the Anadiptana that all the qualities of Brahmiada are there in the body. All the twenty four categories have entered into its composition, ninety four digits in height. On its back is the Meru sphere (meru mandala) with the Sun above and the moon and the wind below. On either side of the body there are sixteen bones, and there are nine doors into it, the two ears, two nostrils, two eyes, mouth, excretory organ and genital organ. There are seventy two thousand nīdī. The vital winds (prī, a viyu) play
There are three chief nadis called susumní, pt `gall and t-l of which the first one is the most vital and connects itself to the Sun (qtd to M Neog’s áa´karadeva and his Times p.233). According to Yoga sástras, there are six chakras and psychic centres (Muládhara, Svadhisthána, Manúpara, anadára, Visúdda, Sahásrara) in different places of the body, in the anus, genital organ, navel, heart, palate and forehead. These cakras are envisaged as lotuses, the cakra at the heart being an eight petalled one, the cakra in the palate is sixteen petalled and the cakra in the forehead is two petalled. Paramátmá resides in the lotus of the heart and assigns to the j¢vas the fruits of Karma. The vital centre of the body is situated two digits above the excretory organ and two digits below the pubic region and here resides the fire (of life), blazing with the colour of gold. There are ten vital winds, ever blowing in upper and lower parts of the body, prana, apana, samána, vyúna, udána, nága, kúrma, krkara, Devádutta, dhananjaya (Vedánta Pararthása VIII, 28, tr. by S. Sastri). The nádi susumní extends with the spinal chord; when vital winds enter this nerve, man becomes immortal. At its mouth (lower end) is the kundalini, the power of mâyá, looking like a female serpent. It plays with apana vyú with yogic powers and with the heat of the vital fire the ¿akti begins to ascend when wind enters the susumní.

There are fourteen gods presiding over different organs of senses and action. Aditya in the eyes, A´vini Kumar in the nose, Varu¸ a in the tongue, Agní in the speech, Dík in the ears, Víyu in the skin, Indra in the arm, ViÀ¸ u in the feet, Mitra in the anus, Prajanpa in the mouth, Visúdeva in the intellect (citáda), Rudra in the ego, Candra in the mind (manas) and Brahma in intelligence (buddhi). These gods ever keep watch on merits and demerits and God (Ì¿vara Purus) keeps his watch from within the heart. áa´karadeva then concludes that god K¤À¸ a, who resides in the heart’s lotus, has to be worshipped by man (Anádipatana, 199-215). In the Bhágavatapatra, X 40-8, Simkhya and Yoga are combined and they subserve themselves to bhakti. But the earlier VatÁ¸ a, the apostles of Assam have no where stated categorically about the esoteric yoga. Fundamental works of the sect are absolutely free from the esoteric yoga elements. According to S.N.Sarma, “Guptamani, Amulyaratna, Gupta Sara and even Anádipatana are not recognised as authoritative works by the principal VatÁ¸ a sects of Assam” (p.44).

In Bhakti Ratnkaraáa´ karadeva quotes verses from the eleventh book of the Bhágavata to explain the yoga accessories. However, he concludes the chapter remarking that ” By taking sole refuge in God and
with the knowledge of restraints, observances and the like people get rid of the cycle of rebirths through devotion to God alone” (tad-eka-sara, atyag-yama-ntyamadi-vivekera/bhagavad-bhaktatva-Samsaram-taranititi). áa’karadeva is said to have studied yoga and taken yoga exercises of Isana and pril, jyam. Pertaining to the lihtha yoga he practised Ka, dalti yoga too to strengthen the physique. He afterwards gave up practices when the message of bhakti was revealed to him. His yoga was not for everyone. He was more interested in devotional path for reaching God.

áa’karadeva had mixed some elements related to yoga with Bhakti as there was no such environment during his time that could recognise life-values as mass religion in respect of individual and place which Bapchandra Mahanta has termed as liaranar yoga. Righteous behaviour associated with physical and mental purity is a part of this liaranar yoga. In MahapuruÁ£yaí tradition much emphasis is laid on observance of certain principles of life combined with righteous behaviour because to attain philosophical knowledge it is necessary to remain in the company of learned persons and learn from them some religious practices or rites and good behaviour that are necessary for a devotee.

Odisha has had a long tradition of yoga-jµ¡na-bhakti. Paukasakhís devoted a lot in writing treatises on yoga and jµ¡na. They thought these processes are necessary steps through which a person can reach the realm of God or can realise God’s presence. Among these yoga is the first step by which man can reach the realm of jµ¡na. According to the Utkaliya VaÀ¥a, avas the aims of yoga systems are to control disease, decay and death through physical culture and realise the Alekha-NiraÁ£a (the formless and spotless) by transferring the subtler body into a gross physical super conscious one. Body is the abode of mind. Unless body is controlled mind cannot be controlled. So controlling the body is the primary step to control the mind. Divine grace is to be attained through austere religious and bodily practices which help reach spiritual salvation.

The controlling of body, i.e k¡y¡siddhi, means here controlling of bodily air inside the body. Human being can attain divine grace by crossing sada-cakr (the theory of six plexuses), the thousand petalled lotus (Sabasrirá) and the three nerves, i.e. t¥, p¥ gall and susumn. It helps in controlling breathing like Puraka, Kumbhaka and Recaka. The Paukasakhís have taken these processes including various practices of
mudrás and bandhas from Tantrayoga prevailed in the past. These systems of yoga were often called by
tem as Hathayoga or Ghatayoga, which indicate yoga of the human body, i.e. ghaña. Human body is
identified as ghaña, i.e. embodiment. In áivasarodaya of Yasobanta Das it is mentioned that Paµcasakhís
for the sake of yoga made a thorough survey of the whole nervous system of the human body and
consequently found out altogether seventy-two nerves in the navel region of the body. They considered only
sixteen nerves as essential for yogic practices and named them as I-I, pl `gall, susamni, gholeini, bastijhva,
pusa, gasavini, alambusa, kubh, lankhvin etc. But only Id-I, pl `gall, Susamni are regarded as the most
important which are placed inside the spinal column-Id-I on the left, Pl `gall on the right and Susamni in the
middle running parallel to one another. These three vital mystic nerves meet together at Trıkuta (Gupta 667
chap. III, Virata G¢t¡ ch. VI). The place where both the nostrils meet in between the two eyes below the
forehead and above the Trıkuta, there is a small hole known as Brahmarandhra which directs towards the
home of Alekha, and the cover of the hole is described as delicate as the skin of the sesame seed (Balaram
Das, Sapt¡nga Yoga Sara Tiká p.6). The process that the śadhaka follows is to raise the vital wind upward
through susamni and keeps it in the Trıkuta and after entering into the gate of brahmarrandhra must
concentrate upon Alekha and thus conquer Yama, the god of Death, easily.

The life force should be given an upward direction that is known as OHI or Újaini śidhaní. This
process implies return from the realm of Pravritti to the world of Nivritti. (Balaram Das, Sapt¡nga
Yogasasstra 77, also Gupta 667, chap. V, Charita Gupta 667chap. IV). In case of ordinary man this life force
should be conceived in the form of a coiled snake, called Ku¸dalini. Ûtkaliya VaiÀvhas maintain that there
are six cakras in the human body and the Ku¸dalini passes through different stages of yoga. Balarama Das
in his Gupta 667 states that the final stage may be reached when the cover of the self is opened by
constant yogic practices. Gradually the Ku¸dalini gets into Brahmackakra, situated inside the cavity of the
head (Balaram Das, Gupta 667 chap. IV). This Brahmackakra is the antima cakra (final cycle) of the
sadaokras which is also called Agjña cakra, also known as ‘aliniriiktra mandala’. It is also named as
Sahasrira, the thousand petalled lotus having rays of a thousand suns and is defined as the
incomprehensible arena of Alekha. On the other side, the upward journey of Ku¸dalini towards the
Sahasrira is described as the march of the finite towards the infinite. When Ku¸dalini reaches the
Sahasrāra, the union of them is considered the dalliance of Rādhī in Kṛṣṇa in eternal Rasa state. It is here where there is the abode of Rādhī and Kṛṣṇa, who are taken by the Pañcaśaṅkhīs as single entity (the assimilation of jīvātmā with Paramātmā). It is found that the place of Brahmaakra where Kañcā, daunt meets Alekha is also regarded as the seat of Jagannātha, the lord of the universe. This is the nityādhyāma where nityādhyāma is performed. We have seen in Chālisa Pātala of Aciṣṭotamanda Das and Virāta Gītā of Balarama Das that human body is identified in all its aspects with the temple of Lord Jagannātha, making the Sahasrāra region as the seat of the Lord. (Aciṣṭotamanda Das, CP no. 21; Balarama Das Virāta Gītā, chap. IV).

In the later period, Dibakar Das also said that the temple itself is the Sahasrāra, the thousand petalled lotus. The main tuning of these Vaiṣṇava preachers is that they visualised the union of Rādhī and Kṛṣṇa as the image of Lord Jagannātha.

About the yoga sādhana in Assamese Vaishnavism S.N.Sarma says, “Theoretical knowledge of yogic practices are available in medieval Assamese Vaishnavism but practical application of these elements has never been considered indispensable to the devotional process of Assamese Vaiṣṇava” whereas in Utkaliya Vaiṣṇava Vaishnavism we find theoretical as well as practical application of yoga system. Utkaliya Vaiṣṇava Vaishnavas have given much importance to yogic practices and considered these indispensable in the spiritual realisation.

3.6 The Doctrine of Incarnation

The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics defines Avatāra or Incarnation as “The act of a divine or a supernatural being in assuming the form of a man or animal and continuing to live in that form upon the earth.” Following this an example can be offered from Hindu scripture Bhāgavat Purāṇa, where it is mentioned that the Deity reveals himself to Prahlad in a pillar of the royal court in the form of a man-lion combined. The Deity takes this form to save his devotee from the atrocities of his demon father Hiranyakashipu. Avatāra means manifestation of Divine love in its fullness in a special way. In the Gītā the Kṛṣṇa, a says to Uddhava, Yadi Yadi hi Bhārmasya ghnirbhahhata Bhīrata/Abhyāṭhkhina madbhārmaṣa tuḥtiḥ śvetānāmnārṣamyaḥ// Partīrhīṣaḥ Sidhāntīma ca duskṛbhaṁ/Bhārmaśamsīthāpīrthīgha sambhbāṁ guge guge// (whenever and which time merits dwindle and demerits prevails at that time I create myself and for redeeming the virtuous and meritorious persons, for annihilation of wicked persons I take incarnations (IV chap. 7-8).
Thus the doctrine of Incarnation presupposes the existence of a Deity in another world. The theory propounds that the Deity descends on the earth from time to time in order to destroy evil forces and protect good souls, to reinforce the belief that there is a benefactor somewhere in an unknown world, who, when the need arises, descends on the earth to save his devotee by annihilating his (devotee’s) tormentor or to save the earth from deluge. Hindu scripture Padmapurāṇa explains that Avatar is necessary to protect those who are noble in character, to destroy those who are wicked, and essential to re-establish virtue on this earth. The Brahma purāṇa and the Mirkandeya purāṇa also hold the same view.

Aurobindo regards two fold purpose of any Incarnation as Ascent and Descent. According to him, an incarnation comes down to the Earth to take the human being to a higher level by the establishment of Dharma. So, the term Avatar denotes any of the three modes, i.e. manifestation, descent and rebirth. God’s descent to this earth has two objectives, to redeem the world from the evil forces and favour and rescue his devotees who repose faith on him, and make attempt to thwart evil design of his tormentors.

The Vaishava doctrine of Incarnation was explained by Ramana who was influenced by the Alvars of South India. Ramanuja designated the highest Brahma as Bhagavino Harī, Viśva, Puruṣottama and Nīrīga. For Vaishavas Nīrīga as the imperishable spirit of the perishable universe. Ākāradaeva too displays his preference for Nīrīga who is also Harī and Kṣetra. In Kṛtana Ghaṣa he identifies the Deity with Nīrīga. “Prathame pronimo Brahmarupi Sanatana/ sarba Avatāra kira, a Nīrīga, aI// Taju nivi kamalaś Brahma bhitil gita/yuge yuge avatāra dharī asamkhyat//” (KṛtanaGhaṣaA.71) (First of all prostrate before Sanatana who in the form of Brahma/Nīrīga, a is the cause of all avatāras, From whose navel Brahma was born and who takes innumerable incarnations through ages).

Ākāradaeva believes in life before life and after life and in incarnation theory as propounded by the Bhigavatapurāṇa. Following this purāṇa, he included in his writing twenty-four avatāras of the Lord. In the first chapter of KṛtanaGhaṣa entitled ”Caturmsati avatāra Varnām” or description of the twenty-four incarnations of God he has described these avatāras. These incarnations are, i)Matya ii)Kurma iii)Varaha iv)Nāśāva v) Vīma vi)Paraśarīma vii)Āṁśika viii)Havlīm ix) Boddha x)Kalkī xi) Nīrada xii) Nīrīga, a xiii) Sanat Kumar ivx)Kapila xv)Dāūrēgaṇa xvi)Yagga xvii)Isava xviii)Pūrṇa xix)Dhravātari xx)Mōhitri xxi)Vīṣṇu xxii)Nīgārāna xxiii) One who rescued the Elephant King from the clutches of crocodile and
xxiv) One who appeared before Dhruva and subsequently saved him. Another incarnation of the Lord mentioned at the end of the chapter is Arjuna who carried the mandana hill to churn the ocean. Ācāryadeva does not treat this last incarnation as separate one. It may be the same incarnation which rescued the Elephant king, and in both the incarnations Arjuna appears with his mount Garuḍa. All these incarnations are taken by Ācāryadeva from the Bhāgavataparī, and they have been re-arranged by him with some addition and alterations. Ācāryadeva classifies his Lord into three heads: complete incarnations as of Ramachandra and Kṛṣṇa, partial incarnations of a permanent nature as of Buddha and partial incarnation of a temporary nature as of Parāśurama who handed over his divine power to Ramachandra and retired to the mountains after accomplishing his mission.

Out of twenty-four incarnations of the Lord as mentioned in the Bhāgavataparī, Ācāryadeva gives primary importance to ten incarnations calling it daśa-avatāras, though he admits all the twenty-four. Ācāryadeva says, Tatā tuvī Kamala-brahma bhavita jata/yuge yuge avatāra hāri asakhyāta (Kirtanagbhodha/1st ch. vol.1) (From thy lotus navel Brahma was born and took innumerable incarnations on this earth through ages). These two lines of Ācāryadeva refer to the second Purāṇa from whose navel Brahma the creator was born and is the source of various avatāras (namavatāranam nidhanam) and creatures, and is known as Ādi-Nīrāṇa, a.

Both Ācāryadeva and Ramanuja are of the opinion that Brahma is metaphysically the ground of existence, morally the inner ruler, and aesthetically the beauty and bliss. In one of his one-act plays "Kaltyadamanam", Ācāryadeva says, "Oh! Blissful God, I bow down to Thee whose magnanimity is spread over the world without anyone’s comprehensibility and Thou art upholding it." Ācāryadeva takes God’s incarnation as an act of His compassion. Most of his works are centred round the incarnation of Viṣṇu as a child on the earth, Kṛṣṇa, His divine nature as well as His humanness. He believes that Kṛṣṇa is Avatāri and all other avatāras emanate from him. According to him, there is nothing else than the One and this One or “eka” is none but Lord Kṛṣṇa, a, the son of Devaki and Viṣṇudeva. He is "ekamevvidhiyam”, considered the most perfect and the highest form of God in fullness (Purāṇa Brahma), others are considered only partial.

In Odisha Jayadeva was the originator of Kṛṣṇa cult which determined to a considerable extent the religious life of the succeeding time. The concept of Avatāruvada was popularised by him in his Gītāgovinda
through magnificent poetry. Bhāgavata with its promise of repeated incarnations of Viṣṇu for the protection of the virtuous and destruction of the wicked laid the foundation of the concept of the Avatāravāda in the medieval period. It was with this background that the Bhakti movement which gained momentum positioned Kṛṣṇa and Rama cults in the centre of religious life in Odisha. Jagannāth, the imperial cult of Odisha is understood to have gone a metamorphosis with the harmonious combinations of the cults of Buddha, Kṛṣṇa, and Rama. In Dēkaliya Vaīṣṇavaism the personal god Jagannāth is the Avatāra and all others are avatāras emanating from him. After performing their ōlās they again merge into him. Dibakara Das, a contemporary of the Paucaskhās identifies Brahma with Jagannāth when he says, “Parama brahma Jagannātha/ Avatārāt ethu jīta/ kotti kotti ge avatāra/ E taba honti bhillra/”.

In Kiśkinda Sura-gupta Gṝḍhāra Balaram Das writes, “Saṁvāditi niṣṭhitre sthitī, ethu sakala jīta barat/Saṁvāram, avatāramāna, jīta boina pase pana” // (Thou ever dwells in Nilaḍri, from where all emanate including all incarnations and again they merge into Thee). Aṣṭacapana Das too writes in Īṣṇu Śatābhāṣa “Dasa-avatāra ehi dīru re pāra ektōre re se ṭoṇa/ lēvāra sikhāṭa līṁīra ṛtāra niṃaṁ biye Ratna stābhīsan” // (This wooden form is the ten incarnations and they mingle in this wooden form. God Himself appears on this precious throne for his sport). In Rasa Kalloś Viśnukrishna Das also admits this view of the Paucaskhās when he sings: Kachapa matsāḍī avatāra geteka kartikā jīta Jagannātha Janaka (1st Rhiddha) (From Jagannāth are born all the incarnations like tortoise, fish etc.).

Lord Jagannāth has many identities. He is the Puruṣottama of the Gṝḍhāra symbolising the Kāśī Puruṣa and the Akṣara Puruṣa, pervading the heart of all beings. Hence He does not discriminate between the Brahmins and the candīlas. For Dekaliya Vaīṣṇavaism, Jagannāth is thus the Brahma of the Gṝḍhāra and the Oṃkāra. The triad representing Jagannāth, Balabhadra and Subhadra is the same as Sabda Brahma or “Pranaba”, known as Oṃkāra. Jagannāth has been identified as “Dīru Brahma” (PM-72) like the Brahma He has been described as Akṣaya and Anavya (PM 46/31).

Jagannāth is also conceived as Brahma since He is the very embodiment of Brahma. Brahma Himself is Jagannāth and He is the cause of Indradāman’s installation of Jagannāth at the Puruṣottama Kāśī. Jagannāth is also considered Śaṅkara of Viṣṇu, the who creates the Universe in the form of Brahma, destroys it to the form of Rudra and preserves it in the form of Viṣṇu. He is all Incarnations. He is
the same God who sleeps in the ocean of milk and áveśa Dvipa and the same for whom the whole universe is 
like the hair on his body. The Kalpa tree is the symbol of His consciousness (cātāmya). He has appeared as 
Jagannāth to preserve the world. The whole universe is His myā. Brahma prays to Jagannāth with epithets 
like JagadhaŚśa, Nisprapadeśa, Nirikśra, Nirvikśra, GaniŚṭha and Trigu¸tman etc. (PM 27/18-22). 

In the Sāṅkhyā system we find the concept of Suddha-prūpā and Suddha Prakāśit. In Jagannāth the 
same get transferred into absolute Puruśā, which essentially is the dualism of Puruśa and Prakāśit. This, so 
to say, brings into Jagannāth the concept of Advaitism. He is essentially one and also the Trinity, which is 
nothing but the three aspects of his form. It reveals that He is at once one and also Many. 

In the sixteenth century Jagannāth was conceived as the embodiment of both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. And 
there is also no difference between Rama and Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Premabhakti Gūḍi conceived Jagannāth 
as jyāPuruśā, Subhadra as Yoga Myā and Balabhadra as Vedic “Virātā Puruśā” or Anāmā or Sesa signifying 
the Nāga worship. This is the symbolical aspect of Jagannāth. 

Purāṇottama Māhātmya considers Jagannāth identical with Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva. During the time of 
the composition of Purāṇottama Māhātmya there existed only the concept of the four armed Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa a in Odisha while the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa a worship was completely unknown. That is why Purāṇottama Māhātmya 
does not mention Rādhā. It was only after Caitanya’s advent to Odisha that the cult of Rādhā became very 
popular in the state, though Jayadev had sung the love sports of both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa a in most exotic term 
in the twelfth century and Saraladas in his Mahābhārata mentioned about árṇa’s mortal body turning 
to Jagannāth. Only after all these, Jagannāth came to be regarded as the embodiment of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa a pair (JCA 20 ch.20/121). According to this it is suggested that árṇa’s while staying in Nilaśala faces towards 
the west and Rādhā faces to the east. The two thus merge into each other and seem to have transformed into 
one figure of Jagannāth (Jaganātha Caritamrita, ch.12/82). This concept was later developed to such an 
extent that Jagannāth came to be known as Parama Brahma, the embodiment of Kṛṣṇa a, Lakṣmi and Rādhā, 
and that the three, in turn, merge into Him at the time of the Great Deluge. Jaganātha Caritamrita further mentions that Rādhā stays in the heart of Jagannath and so does árṇa (p.66). 

Since the time of Sarala Das’s Mābhārata, composed in the fifteenth century a belief seized the 
popular mind that Āru Brahma Jagannāth taking rest at árṇa’sleśtra is none other than árṇa a of the
Dwipara guy whose mortal body could not be consumed by fire and it was when immersed into the ocean it turned into a log that floated ashore and was collected by King Indradhumma to be carved out for the wooden image of Jagannath. But Purulottama Mihitiya suggests that Jagannath was being worshipped even before Kàsa’s incarnation and ārṇa and Arjuna came to ārṇa to have darshan of Lord Jagannath (Purulottama Moksha 31/52-53). Another Otkalitya VatÌa, avite apostle Yashobanta Basa has visualised Kàsa-Jagannath as inseparable entity and his Premanabhakti Brahmacitta referred Kàsa-Jagannatha and Balabhadra as tithijksara Hlim-Slim-Klim. Achyutananda Das also in his Avaya Sakhita says about the inseparableness of Jagannath and Kàsa. Even the servitors of Jagannath like Chatisanyoga, storekeepers etc. take incarnation and reside in Ārṇa at the instruction of Jagannath. When the sons and grandsons of Kàsa were accursed by Brahmarishis, Kàsa told them to take birth in Nilalaya and serve him there when he would merge in dirubrahma. So Achutananda says “avatara dàa eht dirurupa eht dirure se Hina” (It is the wooden form, He is the ten incarnations. He will mingle into wood). Jagannath too took incarnation of Kàsa and stayed here. Thus Achyutananda has clearly mentioned Kàsa as an avatara.

Pâucasakhis believe in ten incarnations (dàa avatira) of ViÌa, a. Vyssadeva in Sanskrit Bhagavata describes twenty-four avatiras and says “Kalki avatira” is the last one. Poet Jagadeva also describes Kalki avatira as one among the ten avatiras. Like them, Pâucasakhis also mentioned Kalki avatira in their descriptions. It has been established in the incarnation theory that the tenth incarnation of Lord Jagannath will be the incarnation of Kalki in the Kalyug to eliminate adharma and establish dharma on this earth. Achyutananda writes in detail in his Bahuma (a work foretelling events to occur in future) about when and where Lord Jagannath would take his tenth incarnation. Ananta Das and Jagannath Das also prophesied that Lord Jagannath would take the avatira of Kalki at the end of the Kalyug, destroy the wicked and establish virtue on earth after which the cycle of Satyayug would start. And this will be done secretly which would remain unknown to the people. Ananta Das writes, “Bhakataminanka khela prakiti be la Kila jinkart/ Kalki svar£pa behe disarathê para na partie birt// (Puri Madina-1st ch. p.3-4) {Lord Jagannath} will reveal the sports of devotees at an appropriate time! Kalki will appear whom no one will be able to recognise). So the Pâucasakhis exhorted every one to follow the path of truth and virtue.
In Utkaliya Vaśāvism Jagannāth is worshipped as the avatār and Kṛṣṇa as an avatār who is considered one of the sixteen parts of Jagannātha. In the language of Dībhakara Das “Jagannātha ge solakal/kalī/ahun kal e Nandabh/de kalak/Gope bhare Narabh/ (All the sixteen celestial degrees are present in Jagannātha whose one degree is the son of Nanda. One phase extended to a sixteen and Kṛṣṇa was born at the abode of the Gopās) (JC, 18th c.).

āakaṭadeva and his contemporary neo-Vaśāvana hold the view that Kṛṣṇa is the Avatār while all other personal gods including Jagannātha are avatāras whereas the Utkaliya Vaśāvas maintain that Jagannātha is the Avatār and Kṛṣṇa is the avatār. However, both the branches indirectly hint that incarnation of the Deity would uplift the whole mankind towards Truth, Peace, Mercy and Kindness by redeeming them from sinful life. They believe that God descending on earth would lead people on the path of honesty, goodness and truth and teach them to act for the welfare of mankind.

3.7 Dhīma

Dhīma is a holy place. It is the abode of God. Devotees of every religion believe in a place where their respective personal god dwells, and they consider it the most sacred place and fit to be worshipped. Muslims take Mecca or Madina as their holiest place, Christians accept Jerusalem, the birth place of Jesus Christ as their holiest place for worship, ātivas take Vīṇā, Gaudiya Vaśāvas take Vrindabāna as their respective holiest place. Assam Vaśāvas take celestial Vaikuṇṭha as the abode of their personal god Kṛṣṇa, and Utkaliya Vaśāvas take Nilācal kūṭa as the abode of Lord Jagannātha. They all cherish to make a pilgrimage to the respective holy place and pay obeisance to their respective personal god there.

Until and unless one acquires knowledge about merits, effects and essence of the abode of god (dhīma) one cannot aspire to get a place in the higher world. God’s seat carries the same spirit as that of God. They are synonymous, two sides of the same coin, one cannot be visualised without the other because the spirit of the dhīma bears the spirit of God. God manifests himself in the image of the Dhīma. One cannot realise God unless he comprehends the significance of dhīma and one cannot comprehend the significance of dhīma unless he realises god. Devotees who make pilgrimage to the respective dhīma realise the presence of their personal god there. Again those devotees who attain spirituality also find a place in the dhīma. So realisation of God is linked to getting the spirit of dhīma and realisation of the spirit of dhīma is linked to
the enlightenment about the existence of God. A devotee attains the bliss of Bhagavatdhama by resorting to prayer, remembrance of God’s name, satsang and swadhyaya like sidhana. Only then it becomes easier to visualise God. The spirit of the dhama is so powerful that those who enter it feel their association with God here. They attain that form, that spirit which helps them abjure all kinds of desire and worship God only and surrender to him.

Narayan Chandra Dev Goswami in his *Satriyi Sanskritir Swar¸a Rekh¡* says: “Bh¡gavad dhama is termed as paramapida, paramabhyona, sanitan iksh, dibyasthın, paramathıo, paramathıo, parigati, anamayapada, sishwatapada, mahabhiha, brahmaapura, brahmaaloka and baktanatha. Bhagavatdhama or the fathomless Vaiku¸tha , tha is not created by any power. It is self manifested and full of pure essence” (215). In the Brahma tantra it is mentioned that the illuminated (divya) dhima of ár¢ ViÀ¸u Bhagav¡n is devoid of three gunas of the physical world, there only pervades six gu¸as like enlightenment and others.

Seven nether worlds and seven heavens constitute fourteen universes. Above these fourteen lie seven Vaiku¸thas, thus which in order are Sveoa Vilis, ántanu Vilis, Puspa Vilis, Pankaja Vilis, Santana Vilis, Golak Vilis and Kanakadanta Vilis. There is an overlord to each of these. áa´karadeva in his *“Chinha Yitra”* has given a mural painting of seven Vaiku¸thas.

Above seven vaikunthas there lies the abode of Brahman Param¡tm¡ into which entry of my„i, triguna, time (kala) etc. are forbidden, to where entry of even goddess Laksñi is restricted, where Mdbhava, the controller of Prak¤ti and PuruÀa and Soul of all souls and friend of the World dwells.

God takes thousand names, one of which is Vaiku¸tha , tha which is also the name of His abode as His abode and His name are inseparable like God’s name and His image. Brahminda is illusory but Vaiku¸tha , tha or the dhima of God transcends Illusion. But when God of His own appears in the Brahminda for the welfare of His devotees He leaves the Vaiku¸tha , tha. Devotees are enjoined by áa´karadeva to conjure up the image of Bhagavatdhima along with the image of Bhagavın. In his ”Prabalid Garita” and ”Bipraputra” we get a glimpse into áa´karadeva's image of vaikuntha (K¢rtanaghoÀ¡).

For åa´karadeva Bhagavatdhima is of three types and it manifests always in three places, one which is beyond the natural world or fourteen bhuvanas, second which is in this natural world built by the Bhiguvat for His playfulness and the third is in the innermost part of every soul. One can feel the spirit of
the bhigavatadhima in this natural world in the same manner as one gets in Gokul, Vrindivan, Mathurí etc. where God bestows all His power, His essence and all that bliss which is present in His self-created Vaikuθtha. The Vedastuti in KèrtanaghoÀ¡ says that dharmasrams set up by Bhigavata sâtras and also the inner recesses in the heart of devotees are imagined as the abode of God or Vaikuθtha. A devotee always feels the presence of God in the Dhima.

In “Prahlád Carttia” áa karadeva says that though every being embodies the supreme soul or param¡tm¡ yet without realising the presence of that soul in one’s heart he cannot feel the essence of Vaikuθtha. God does not dwell anywhere else in the same manner in which he dwells in the inner recess of the heart of a devotee. For a true devotee all other Vaikuθthas may be over and above him are immeterial in relation to the innermost part of the heart of a devotee. In course of his devotion a devotee can make a dhima in his own heart so that when his soul leaves the mortal body he takes this dhima to the other dhima in accordance with his own will. But he who wills to enter the divine abode of God or constructs bhavadhima without making God’s abode in his heart he acts in a contrary manner and becomes an object of ridicule. A devout devotee can also find an eternal joy as that of the Vaikuθtha in this life by chanting the name of the supreme soul whose abode is in Vaikuθtha.

However, Otkálya VaÀ, avas believe that the celestial abode of God is "Nilchala Dhima” or ár¢ PuruÀottama KÀetra which is also known as Nitya Dhima. All other KÀetras come up from it. The VaÀa poets give much importance to this KÀetra. Describing its importance Yashobanta Das writes: Dekhaye nitya Nil¡chala / Sakala tirthankara ili//Gopa Mathur¡ Vrindivan// Dwíraka Idt gele Sibhina//Sakala gehi sibhne Pat/ Ábara kist Madhge hot// kothi tirtha ge kleetrare/mahinil kahile na Sare//(PB V) (Behold the eternal Nilchala/ Quintessence of all pilgrim centres// Gopa, Mathurí, Vrindivan/And again Kist including//And all the other including Dwiraki/Merit of all these is won here//This place accrues merits worth one crore pilgrim centres/There is no end to its glory//)

Dibakara Das, a poet of the paµcasakhí period describes that ár¢ PuruÀottama KÀetra, i.e. Puri where Lord Jagannáth dwells is the Vaikuθtha in this world. This is the ”Nitya Dhima” where God has been performing His /Âs since ages. Yehu Golaka Nityasthala/ Sehtí giri Nilchala// Kotie yuga jebe j¡i/ Ethire lil¡ na sarat// (What is known as Golaka, the eternal Abode, is identical with Nilchala. Even after a crore of
ages its sanctity will not diminish). (Dibakara Das, J.C. XVIII).

The unique feature of Ótkaliya Vaiṣṇavism is that it has regarded Lord Jagannath as the centre of Vaiṣṇava faith and accordingly it has come to suggest that Jagannath is the universal Lord (Jagatanātha) and is the Ideal Person (Puruṣottama) who is at the centre of all divine speculations. Kṛṣṇa is rather His incarnation. In this connection the Ótkaliya Vaiṣṇavas give more prominence to árkaṇ or Jagannath kṣetra.

The old school of thought exalted the sanctity of Puri. Nilācala was taken to be the replica of Vedāntasrī group like Balarama Das in Vedāntasrī Gītā, by Achyutananda Das in his Gaurbhakti Gītā, and in his other poems, by Dibakara Das in Jagannātha Caritamrita. Dibakrashna Das, a celebrated Vaiṣṇava poet has expressed the same sentiment in his Alavartina Gītā and Rasa Bhūta and Rasa Kallol and also by Bhupati Pañdt in Pauramārī (Preface to Premapacchamrita by Bhupati Pandit).

Thus we see that for the Ótkaliya and the Assamese Vaiṣṇavas devotion is not only adherence to tradition nor is it simply a way born out of worldly disappointments. Devotion is an inseparable part of their life. Both are attracted by the divine glory and both of them believe in one God.

The presiding deity of the Assam Vaiṣṇavas is no doubt Kṛṣṇa, but not Rasikbihari Kṛṣṇa. He is described as the son of Devaki but remains Advaita nirguna. He is neither Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa of Caitanya nor Rukmiṇi Kṛṣṇa. Rādhā Rukmiṇi or Uddhava are seen as devotees of Kṛṣṇa as also Kārma, Madhava et al whereas in Ótkaliya Vaiṣṇavism we find Jagannath as the personal God who is the embodiment of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa manifested as one soul, in one God, who is Jagannath. Both the sects have not given importance to Rādhā. Both of them point out the love of the soul’s inclination towards the universal self. In Ótkaliya Vaiṣṇavism it is the union of jīvas with parama.

Both Assamese and Ótkaliya Vaiṣṇavas recognise devotion of different types. Accordingly, they accept categories of devotees and degrees of devotion. However, they are the supporters of simple form of
devotion called nabadhi bhakti. The aśuya bhakti is acceptable to both of them.

But regarding devotion there are some differences also. While Assamese vaisnavas follow nabadhi bhakti only Utkaliya Vaṭā, avas follow Yantra, Mantra, Tantra, Chīya, ājott, Āhi-a, Naṭa, Samidhi, Rasagu, a along with nabadhi bhakti.

In Utkaḷya Vaṭā avism we find much importance given to Yoga. They take these as necessary steps through which human beings can reach the realm of God. They adopt these systems to control disease, decay and death through physical culture. They also adopt Hatha yoga. But in Assamese Vaṭā avism we do not find so much application of yoga system. Āa-karaṇadeva followed Rṣī Nirīya, a whose yoga has no connection with Ist Patanjali or Harhayoga era. In Āa-karaṇadeva we find the mention of Dhiranīyoga only.

Papacyaksaṅga give much importance to Pt. da Brahmanda which may be partly adapted from “dehabā” of the sahaṣṭiyā Buddhists. There are elaborate descriptions of the Pt. da Brahmanda theory in Papacyaksaṅga literature. But in Āa-karaṇadeva we find little mention of it only in the Anātipitāna. Image worship is rejected by Āa-karaṇadeva, which he strictly followed. Utkaḷya Vaṭā avas are also against image worship but they found no essential difference between nirguṣa worship and ārv brahma worship. They take the image of Lord Jagannāth or dāru Brahma as Nirguṣa nirākāra Brahma. They also worship sālagrām as the symbol of Jagannāth. In keeping conformity with the words of the Gṛtā ‘Sarva dharma Paritajya Māmekam sara-m Vraja’, Assamese and Utkaḷya Vaṭā avas take the idea of coming closer to God as the ideal and the goal of devotion.

Both the trends give much importance to Nīva and used akāra Brahma and Nīva Brahma, based on Upaniṣadic teachings. But whereas we find the use of Mahāmantra in Utkaḷya Vaṭā avism as the mode of worship. In Assam Vaṭā avism we do not find any such mention. In Assam Vaṭā avism we found the mention of Kṛtana with different musical instruments. In Utkaḷya Vaṭā avism during the kṛtana with the name of God the role of Vidyāpati is also sung to the accompaniment of a little khola, gini, jhanja and karatāla. Achyutananda had established a new trend of Rihisa Kṛtana. It is a blend of both Rasa and Kṛtana forming into an organic whole. Pt. da Brahmanda tāṭṭva is enshrined in his rihisas. He used this Rihisa Kṛtana which was a powerful medium for sociocultural unification, as the medium for propagation.

Lastly, whereas Assamese Vaṭā avas take Vaikuṇtha as the abode of God Utkaḷya Vatsnas take
'Nilkala Kāśtra' (Part) as the abode of God.

Works Cited:

--- --- ---, *Narayanī and Bhāgavataś*, rpt. from *Indian Antiquary*, Bombay JRAS, 1908.
Nath, R.M. (ed.) *Narada bhakṛi Satra Sandhya Satra*
--- --- ---, *ka āa, karadeva and His Times; Early History of the Vaś, av Faith and Movement in Assam*, 1963.


