

CHAPTER - III

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ICONO-SCULPTURAL STUDY

The word iconography coming from a Greek word *eikon* which means a figure representing a deity through any means or agency intended for worship.¹ It is the science of icons or literally it is the writing in the images by which one can understand the religious, philosophical, symbolical and mythological aspects of a religion.² Thus, the subject has a wide range of coverage starting from the making of icon to its consecration it intended for worship or allied topic.³ Regarding the development of this subject Margaret Stutley has rightly stated that it was Rig-Veda which had germinated the concept of iconography for its future development when it described various Vedic deities. Later, the *Puranas*, *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* and some other ancient treatises have instituted further elaboration and systematized the entire subject as an essential *silpa* cannon. And accordingly, the image maker had to follow all those rules and regulation while consecrating an image for worship or for decorative purpose affix to the temple wall. However, though the image maker sought to follow the rules laid down in iconographical texts *there were regional differences in the treatment of images. Further-more, the artist craftsmen did not all follow the same texts, or they followed texts which is no longer extend, therefore a number of icons do not conform entirely to the rules.*⁴

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1. Vatshyana, K.(ed.) : *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. VII, 2006, p.528
 2. Stutley, M. : *The Illustrated Dictionary of Hindu Iconography*, 2003, p.vii
 3. Vatshyana, K. (ed.) : *Op-cit*, 2006, p.528.
 4. Stutley, M. : *Op-cit*, 2003, pp.vii-viii.

Whatever might be the coverage of the subject, in this chapter our main concern would be the proper identification (iconographical) of the icons, which is yet to be done by any competent authority in a complete manner, here at Madan-Kamdeva. That mean, the iconographical identity would be the thrust area of our discussion in this chapter. Along with that we would also like to concentrate on some sculptural issues, primarily the physiognomy of the sculptures, which supposed to help us in reconsidering the matter regarding the chronology of these aesthetic products and vice-versa.

SECTION : 3:1 : Major Male Divinities :

A) Surya :

Accordingly, we would like to initiate our discussion with the most popular finding of this famous archaeological site i.e. with the *Surya* icons. Presently there are twenty one *Surya* icons⁵ and they are all now conserved to the galleries of the site museum at Madan-Kamdeva. Regarding the iconographical identity of these *Surya* sculptures it should be remembered that the guardian authority of this site Directorate of Archaeology, Assam, had already identified these *Surya* sculptures and thus leaving a limited scope for us to make a fresh entry into the very subject of their iconographical identities. Under such circumstances, here we would like simply to high light the peculiarities of these *Surya* icons, (if any), with their respective icono-sculptural analysis, (in

5. Out of these twenty one *Surya* icons, eight are being the icons of two handed composition and rest of them are being the composition of four hands.

brief) to confirm their identity and thus to make a simple documentation of these artefact.

Iconographical analysis of Hindu deities, more or less, are possible on Pauranic delineation and accordingly, *the locus classicus of our knowledge of solar cult of northern variety is the Bhavishya Purana which gives an account of the origin of the cult, solar deity and his associates, the mode of worship, the solar priest and solar festivals.*⁶ Apart from that, the *Matshya Purana*, the *Agni Purana*, the *Samba Purana*, the *Vishnudharmottara Purana*, the *Garuda Purana* and even the *upa-Purana* like our own *Kalika Purana* etc have also provided a good deal of informations regarding the various iconographical traits of *Surya* icons and vice-versa. Along with these Pauranic information the tretrises like the *Brihatsamhita*, the *Vaikhyanasagama* etc. have also made some description about the composing principles of *Surya* icons.

Among these Pauranic and other descriptions, the *Matshya Purana*,⁷ the *Kalika Purana*⁸ and the famous

6. Majumdar, R.C.(ed.) : *The Classical Age*(1954), 1988, p.442.

7. *Padmāsanah padmakarah padmagarbha samadyuti* :
Saptāśca Saptarajūśwa dwibhūja – ravi (M. P-94/1)
 That means *Surya* should be seated in *Padmasana* on a chariot powered by seven horses. He should be *dwibhuja* and each hand should be decorated with *Padma*.

8. *Padmāsanah Padmakarah Padmagarbhasamadyuti*
Saptāśca Saptarajūśwa dwibhūjo bhāskara Sadāl (K.P. 78:47)
 The description is same as that of the *Matshya Purana* i.e. he is a two handed deity, sit in *Padmasana* on a chariot powered by seven horses and his appearances is as bright as that of the *Padmagarbha*.

*Brihatsamhita*⁹ have described *Surya* as a *dvibhuja* deity with *Padma* in his two hands. On the other hand, the *Agni Purana*¹⁰ the *Vishnudharmottara Purana*,¹¹ the *Garuda Purana*¹² etc. have described *Surya* as *Chaturbhuja* or four handed deity. That means, there were two type of *Surya* images in the imagination of the Hindu theologist and accordingly some aspired him as a two handed deity while some other considered him as being a four handed deity. Apart from these two peculiarities some other important iconographical traits of the *Surya* icons are as follows

- i) *Saptāścaṇḍicakachakraṇī ca rathaṇī tashya Prakalpayet*¹³ that means *he is to be shown on a chariot with one wheel and seven horses*.¹⁴

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9. *Bibhrāṇah Swakararuhe bāhubhyāṇī Paṅkaje mukutdhārī Kuntalabhūṣitabādanah Pralambahāro biyadgabrita* (Bri:sam, 58/47) That means sun shall be represented as holding a lotus in each hands (two) as wearing a crown and pendants with a garland hanging from his neck and as surrounded by Devas
Iyer, N.C. (tr.) : *Brihat Samhita*, 1987, p.290.
10. *Sūryājyamādirakhyohantāscatuhastā dviṣṭdale* (A.P. 51:4) This sloka has clearly stated that the deity like *Surya*, *Aryama* *Agni* etc should always be consecrated as the four handed identities.
11. *Chaturbāhurmahātejah kabacenābhisaṇbritah* (*Visnu d Purana* 3/67/3) That means his colour is as red as *Sindura*. He has four arms. He is dressed in northern style and wears armours. He is adorned with all ornaments. Shah, P.(tr.) *Vishnudharmottara Purana* (III Kanda), 1961, p.149.
12. *O Bhagawan Parimitamayukhamālin Sakalajagat Pate Saptāścabāhana Chaturbhuja Paramasiddhiprada bisphulinga Pingala bhadra ahyehi īdamarghyaṇī namah* : (G.P. 1/16/23) cited from CHA, 1990, Vol.I, p.401.
13. M.P 261/2.
14. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.) : CHA, Vol.I, 1990, p.402.

- ii) *Carandū tezasābritāu*¹⁵ means *his feet are said to be covered by effulgence*.¹⁶
- iii) *Chāḍulakacchannpuṣaṇ*¹⁷ means *his body should be covered with jacket*.¹⁸
- iv) *Pārścayordaṇ pinglāu*¹⁹ means *on his two side there are two of his associates Danda and Pingala*.²⁰
- v) *Arunah Sārathiscasya*²¹ means *Aruna as his charioteer*.²²

These are some of the fundamental motif which remain more or less constant to every *Surya* images from different parts of India only with some elaboration in respect of his attendant.²³

Depending on the easy availability of two handed *Surya* sculpture throughout the ranges of north India, some scholars tried to put forward a generalized view regarding the basic iconographical traits of the *Surya* icons that by and large, it is a two handed deity stand erect on lotus pedestal, holding in his two hands two full blossomed lotuses by stalks and the lotuses rise just above the shoulder.²⁴ On the other hand, limited availability of four handed

15. M.P., 261/4.

16. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p.402.

17. M.P. 261/4.

18. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p.402.

19. M.P. 261/5.

20. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p.402.

21. M.P. 261/7.

22. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p.402.

23. Ibid.

24. Bhattacharyaya, B. : *Indian Images- The Brahmanic Iconography*, 1978, p.34.

Surya sculpture has left for us an opportunity to call them as a 'rare' specimen to the entire art heritage of India.²⁵ The iconographical traits of the north Indian *Surya* images though have beared no such basic dissimilarities among themselves but, in greater Indian context, there are some sharp differences between the north and south Indian *Surya* images which is already made confirm by one of the famous iconographer T.A. Ganapati Rao. According to him *the south Indian figures of Surya, have their hands lifted up as high as the shoulder, and are made to hold lotus flowers which are only half blossomed; the images have invariably the udara bandha and their legs and feet are always left bare. The north Indian images, on the other hand, have generally their hand at the natural level of hips or the elbows and are made to carry full blown lotuses which rise upto the level of the shoulders and their fore legs have coverings, resembling modern socks more or less in appearance and the feet are protected with a pair of footwear resembling boots.*²⁶ Apart from that he further observed that the upper parts of the north Indian *Surya* images are generally adorned with a sort of coat but in south India, this portion of the body of the *Surya* images are always left bare.²⁷ While accepting the observation of T.A.Ganapati Rao, another prominent scholar in this field J.N. Banerjee has stated that the Sun cult in south India had received little importance to the east Iranian form of Sun worship²⁸ which work as a catalyst for an

25. Majumdar, R.C.(ed.) : *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, 1993, p.350.

26. Rao, T.A. Ganapati : *Element of Hindu Iconography*, 1914, Vol.II, Part-II, pp.311-312.

27. Ibid.

28. East Iranian form of sun worship is the main spirit behind the introduction of anthropomorphic form of *Surya Upasana* in north India. This matter will be taken up in details in our following chapter (v).

independent growth of Sun cult there in South India.²⁹ Now regarding the east Indian varieties of *Surya* sculpture of medieval period, the same scholar has further stated his observation that there were two types of *Surya* relief and of them *one showing the god standing in the company of his attendant and other showing him seated in padmasana*.³⁰ The majority number of *Surya* sculpture that has been discovered in Assam are primarily belongs to the first category, however, with some minor variation in respect of absence or presence of attendant, lotus pedestal or plain pedestal, absence or presence of horse or rathas etc.³¹

On the light of this discussion when we tried to analyse the various iconographical traits and peculiarities of *Surya* sculptures available at Madan-Kamdeva, we have found two major varieties, some stand here with four handed composition while other have simple two handed composition. A south Indian delineation (as according to the line of proposition made by T.A. Ganapati Rao), in terms of consecrating lotus buds in their hands (instead of being full blown lotuses, an unique identity mark for the north Indian *Surya* sculptures) is phenomenal characteristic feature of some *Surya* Sculptures available here at Madan-Kamdeva. Highlighting the ideal of south Indian delineation, it is also interesting to observe that the feet of these *Surya* sculptures left bare, in other word, no sign of shoes or other coverage to their feet are there to observe in case of any of those *Surya* sculptures now conserve to the galleries of the site museum at Madan-Kamdeva.

29. Banerjee, J.N. : *Development of Hindu Iconography*, 1974, p.441.

30. Ibid.

31. This observation is primarily on the basis of the collection of Assam state museum and few archaeological find spots of Assam.

Four Handed Surya :

With these primary observations first, we would like to analyse the issues, relating to the four handed *Surya* sculptures as available now to the site museum at Madan-Kamdeva.

As already stated-the four handed *Surya* sculpture is a rare production of Indian aesthetics and thus, their presence here at Madan-Kamdeva can be considered as one of the most precious excavated aesthetic item of this site. Lord *Surya* with four hands, is a phenomenal representation where the extension of his number of hands can better be assigned to an unique aesthetic concept evolved around the impressive Tantric ideologies of that time³² which in its turn, has instituted a new direction to the socio-cultural aspect of our study.

Whatever might be the fact, this group here at Madan-Kamdeva comprises of eleven *Surya* sculptures. Along with their rare four handed stance, this group have beared some specific iconographical traits of their own which further aggravated the uniqueness of these *Surya* sculptures to the entire Indian aesthetics. Accordingly, the chief identification mark of these *Surya* sculptures is the lotus bud (instead of being full blown lotuses) and their feet left beared and thus referred to a south Indian inspiration in their composition, as stated earlier.

Group-I :

Now, to have a comprehensive analysis, we have subdivided the entire collection of four handed *Surya* sculptures of

32. Agrawal, V.S. : *Studies in Indian Art*, 2003, p.259.

the site museum at Madan-Kamdeva in number of groups depending on their stereotype representation as we codified them during the field visit session of our study. Thus, the first group of our discussion comprises of three *Surya* sculpture (fig 1:1, 1:2, 1:3); all of them suffered from age old erosions, however comparing to other two sculptures, the amount of erosions, in case of the figures no 1:2 look to more devastating as the facial portion of the image is now in a state beyond of its identification.

Iconographical traits and present physical conditions of these sculptures in brief are as follows:

Fig 1:1

- a) Condition : eroded and partially damaged
- b) Length : 44 cm Width : 17 cm
- c) Posture : *tribhanga*
- d) Hands : four
- e) Emblems :
 - (i) Upper left hand– lotus bud with a stalk
 - (ii) Upper right hand– almost a vanishing sign of lotus bud with stalk
 - (iii) Left lower hand– erosions have made it quite difficult to identify the exact emblem or *mudra* of the hand. But it look like to be in inverted *Hiranya mudra* with two middle finger stressed close to the palm as if in holding something like *kamandalu* or *Japamala*.
 - (iv) Lower left hand-completely damaged.

Fig 1:2

- a) Condition: partially eroded, the *kiritamukuta* and the portion just above the left eye had already been sliced away.
- b) Length : 43 cm Width : 17 cm
- c) Posture : *tribhanga*
- d) Hands : four
- d) Emblem : (i) Upper left hand-*Padma* with stalk
 (ii) Upper right hand – *Padma* with Stalk
 (iii) Lower left hand – Completely damaged
 (iv) Lower right hand – eroded but look to be in *Varada mudra*

Fig 1:3

- a) Condition : This Sculpture has suffered from higher amount of erosion. The facial Portion is totally damaged.
- b) Length : 38 cm Width : 21 cm
- c) Posture : *tribhanga*
- d) Hands : four
- e) Emblem : (i) Upper left hand – completely damaged
 (ii) Upper right hand – an eroded lotus with stalk
 (iii) Lower left hand – as if he holds something, but in its present state of condition it is difficult to identify.
 (iv) Lower right hand–as if in *Varada* posture

Thus, the descriptions have made their iconographical identity bit more confusing in nature, specially because of the existence of *Varada mudra* as we observed in the right lower hand of (fig 1:2) and an inverted *Hiranya mudra* where the two middle fingers are being stressed close to the palm as if the deity holds

something in his left lower hand as in case of (fig. 1.1). Despite of these confusion, their chief identity mark, of lotus have left for us no other alternative but to accept the identification made by the Directorate of Archaeology, Assam, however with slight modification that all these are the deity of highly prestigious *Saura* clan of diversified Hindu pantheon.

Ornamentation :

Coming to this point it is interesting to observed that the their necklaces are of the composition of rectangular beads instead of two tyred flat necklaces as commonly visible in case of majority number of sculptures here at Madan-Kamdeva. At the same time these sculptures have also introduced us with some other ornamental items and among them wrist bengles, armlets are the most important ones.³³ Another interesting ornamental item expose to us is the *urudamas*, used to decorate the portion below the waist level. It survived however, only with a minor sign as in case of (fig 1:1). Thus, the ornaments exerted to the relam of these sculptural compositions are as follows, *kiritamukuta*, *Pushpakundala*, two tyred necklaces composed of rectangular beads, wrist bengles, armlets, waist gridles and *urudamas*. Similarly, in case of habiliment, these sculptures have maintained the sensuous standard with diaphanous garment clinging to the upper part of the body like a wet sit while the lower half are being clad in Indian form of *dhoti*.

33. These two are the most commonly visible ornaments to all the sculptural product of India, but probably the erosion have erased the sign of these ornament from the body of the majority number of sculpture here at Madan-Kamdeva.

Physiognomy :

Though impressed with a squarish tendency, the warm and full faces of the images can better be said as the ovoid one with slightly pointed delineation of the chin. The highly devastating erosions have made it quite difficult to ascertain the exact nature of the facial appearances of these sculptures. But fortunately the fig 1:2 has provided us with some clues and accordingly, these sculptures have reflected a sense of blissful serenity in their appearance primarily with a dreamy pair of eyes along with normally curve eyebrows and the smiling mouth with small pair of lips. The necks are modelled with deeply incised lines, referring to a fundamental physiognomical character of *Gupta* classicalism.³⁴ Again the sculptures are galloped in a concept of animation which can virtually be observed in the compositions of chests with the nipples, fleshy abdomen with delicately cared naval and with beautiful executions of legs. *Smooth and resilient torso with narrow middle, spreading hips, tapering thigh*³⁵ are some of the other physiognomical features of these sculpture, so to place them in a close proximity to the Dah Parvatia classicalism. It is also interesting to observe that those unknown sculptors have successfully injected a sense of rhythmic movement to the graceful body of these sculptures with the slightest possible bends at the level of knees. In this connection the sculptors have also made an unrest attempt to carve the knees.³⁶ Along with that the bended legs are being

34. Tomory, E. : *A History of Fine Arts in India and the West*, 2002,p.193.

35. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p.457.

36. *A 9th century feature*

Kramrisch, S. : *Pala Sena Sculpture*, 1929, Rupam, p.125.

delicately put forward which further enhance the aesthetic beauty of these sculptures with a sense of delicious movement to their gracious stances.

The museum authority has referred sculptures as being the product of 11th/12th centuries. But their physiognomy specially their disproportionate execution along with elongated limbs have raised a question and it seems more appropriate if we call them as a product of 10th/11th century rather than 11th/12th century.

Group-II :

Gracing the sculptural collection, another highly eroded *Surya* sculpture is there to the site museum which has introduced us with some unknown realities specially, regarding the matter relating to its ornamentation.

Fig 1:4

- a) Condition : highly eroded and broken
- b) Length : 43 cm Width : 21 cm
- c) Posture : *samabhanga*
- d) Hands : four
- e) Emblems: (i) Left upper hand—almost on the verge of its extinction
 (ii) Right upper hand – lotus bud with long stalk
 (iii) Left lower hand – completely damage
 (iv) Right lower hand— erosion have made it quite difficult to identify the exact nature of the hand but still it look to be in *Varada mudra*.
- f) Pedestal : broken full blown lotuses.

Thus, the scope for a genuine controversy regarding the identification of this sculpture is also there but still its compositional similarities to other *Surya* sculpture of this group in terms of emblem, *mudra* etc are enough to confirm this image as being *Surya* or a deity belonging to *Saura* clan in a wider sense of term.

An *amalaka* shaped *kiritamukuta*, is the basic ornamental peculiarity of this *Surya* sculpture. In Indian aesthetic, this shape of *kiritamukuta*, often be regarded as an important determinant in confirming the chronological sequence for any sculptural product and accordingly referred as an indicator of a sculptural product belonging to 12th century A.D.³⁷ Except that, however no such other ornamental peculiarities are there to observe in case of the execution of this sculpture.

Physlognomy :

A meditative approach along with slightly disproportionate elongation of legs are two of the identical physiognomical feature of this sculpture. It has slightly squarish oval face with pointed delineation of the chin, marked by a small pair of lips, expressing no sense of mundane pleasure or blissful serenity as in case of other sculptures, along with delicately carve sloping shoulder, broad chest, narrow middle representing wasp curve are some of the other physiognomical feature of this sculpture. The age long erosions, though now introduced it with a sense of flatness but still the sculptor's attempt to introduced it

37. Bandopadhyay, B. : *Metal Sculptures of Eastern India*, 1981, p.43.

with an ideal of fleshiness, now survived in case of this sculpture only with an outward bulginess of the hip. This is a commonly visible physiognomical feature of majority number of sculptures at Madan-Kamdeva. Similarly, the sculpture also exposed a common feature in terms of amalgamation of the concept of linear and sinuous movement specially, in executing projection of hands.

Regarding chronology, the museum authority i.e. the Directorate of Archaeology, Assam has already confirm it as being a product of 11th/12th century A.D. But its disproportionate elongation has left for us a scope to think about a new chronological slot for this sculpture that it might have been a product of 10th/11th century A.D. rather than 11th/12th century A.D.

Group-III :

Two other *Surya* sculpture (fig 1:5 and 1:6) of this rare category can again virtually be place in an another group of sculptural reproduction which have not only enriched the aesthetic collection of the site museum but also have instituted a fresh lease of life to the chronological parameter of the entire continuum of sculptural product available at Madan-Kamdeva. Before entering into this matter, the present condition as well as iconographical composition of these two sculptures, in brief, are as follows :

Fig 1:5

- a) Condition: eroded
- b) Length : 41 ½ cm Width : 21 cm
- c) Posture : *tribhanga*
- d) Hands : four

- e) Emblem : i) Left upper hand – lotus bud with a stalk
 ii) Right upper hand – same
 iii) Left lower hand – difficult to identify
 iv) Right lower hand – as if in *Varada mudra*
- f) Pedestal : Stand on full blown lotus, now in a partially broken state of condition.

Fig 1:6

- a) Condition: eroded and broken, the facial portion is completely damaged
- b) Length : 41 cm Width : 20 ½ cm
- c) Posture : *tribhanga*
- d) Hands : four
- e) Emblem : i) Left upper hand– lotus bud with a short stalk
 ii) Right upper hand–same
 iii) Left lower hand– completely damaged
 iv) Right lower hand–difficult to identity but seem to be in *Varada mudra*.
- f) Pedestal : broken

Thus, the iconographical traits specially the sign of lotus buds in two upper hand are sufficient enough to call them as being the deities of *Surya* or the deities of any member of *Saura* clan popularly known as *Dasaditya*.

Upholding the popular tradition of sensuous representation these two sculptural products have also showed their preferences to the conventional pattern of ornamentation (i.e. to the usual scanty amount of ornamentation as well as to the diaphanous execution of garment). But still, the importance of

this segment of study however be referred first to the *kiritamukuta* which has a small *amalaka* finial at the top, secondly two tired necklaces, knitted closely with round bids and thirdly, the waist gridle also composed of bids, however, of larger size comparing to the bids used in the necklaces.

Physiognomy :

The smooth and resilient torsos of these two sculptures have also duly exposed the conventional sense of classicalism a commonly visible physiognomical feature of majority number of sculptures available at Madan-Kamdeva. Despite of this classical commonality, there is a minute difference between the two sculptures specially to the matter relating to the execution of narrow middle, which enthralled us with (relatively) a new idea about the linear movement and accordingly, the aptitude of the wasp curve as in case of (fig 1:6) appeared to be simplified to a great extent in the (fig 1:5). The was curve particularly used in framing the narrow middle of a torso seem to have aggravated the tendency of roundness to any sculptural composition. Thus, in reference of these two sculptures, the matter may be sum up in the following words that with the passes of time, those great sculptors might have lost their faith or appetite to the concept of classical roundness as well as to the concept of sinuous beauty. Similarly, it is also interesting to observe that the legs of these two sculptures seem to have lost all form of elasticity under the pressure of a gradually developing concept of stiffness.³⁸ Regarding this, it should further be remembered that with tapering thigh and

38. An aesthetic feature prone to 10th/11th century

Dutta, M. : *Sculptures of Assam*, 1990, pp.81-82.

resilient flesh, these two sculptures, have illustrated the influence of high sounding Dah-Parvatia classicalism and at the same time, it also commemorate an age old classical perception of rhythmic movement by placing one leg slightly forward with a delicate bend at knee.³⁹ Whatever might be the fact—the lovely upper trunk of the body of these two well proportionate sculptures stand in striking contrast to the increasingly stiff lower half of the body.⁴⁰

Thus, the two sculptures can amicably be called as being the product of 11th/12th century A.D.

Group-IV :

The stereotyped delineation again inspired to discuss two other four handed *Surya* sculptures (fig 1:7 & 1:8) conserved in the site museum, in a group. These two though have characteristically maintained the delicate aesthetic trends of this centre of plastic activities, but still their overall compositions virtually referred to some new physiognomical development. But before make an entry into these matters, the present condition and the iconographical traits of these Sculptures, in brief are as follows :

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39. Here at Maḍan-Kamdeva— this appeared to be a popular tradition where the sculptor tried to expose their urged to the rhythmic movement within a very limited parameter of aggravated stiffness of legs.
40. This striking contrast between the two half of the bodies is an 11th century feature
- Dutta, M. Op-cit, 1990, pp.82-83.

Fig 1:7

- a) Condition: eroded, the spotted fungal development on the plastic surface of the image have further degraded the beauty of this sculpture.
- b) Length : 24 cm Width : 20 cm
- c) Posture : *tribhanga*
- d) Hands : four
- e) Emblems: i) upper left hand – lotus bud with a stalk
 ii) upper right hand – same
 iii) lower left hand – difficult to identify
 iv) lower right hand – Major portion of it is now damaged.
- f) Pedestal : stands on full blown lotus, but unfortunately the feet along with the major portion of the lotus are now completely damaged.

Fig 1:8

- a)Condition: slightly eroded, broken just at the level of knees, the portion of the left thigh have also been sliced away.
- b)Length : 30 cm Width : 20 ½ cm
- c)Posture : *tribhanga*
- d)Hands : four
- e) Emblems : i) Left upper hand– lotus bud with a short stalk
 ii) Right upper hand–same
 iii) Left lower hand–completely damaged
 iv) Right lower hand–damaged

Thus, the iconographical traits suggest them as the true representation of the deities of *Saura* clan, if not directly the *Surya*.

Upholding the same ornamental traditions of this centre of sculptural activities, these two sculptures also have distinctive *kiritamukuta* at its top with the sign of *amalakas*.

Physiognomy :

They also have beared the all possible impressions of Dah Parvatia classicalism which can practically be realized in execution of wasp middle with smooth bulging hips and more appropriately in animated chest and abdomens. The oval orientated round face of the images mated with a blissful expression with thick pairs of lips in smiling context, along with bulging eyes with broad but pointed noose, have duly reflected a sense of regional aesthetic ethos in their execution. The legs have given up all short of elasticity and in place of that a sense of stiffness look to have gained its ground.⁴¹ However, by introducing minimum amount of petrified flesh to the tapering thigh region, the compositions of these sculptures have tried to maintain a good sense of parity with the smooth and resilient upper half of the bodies characteristically sensuous in nature.⁴² Over and above the viability of the gliding spirit of the rhythmic contour still be realized in composing these sculptures.

Thus, the date of production of these sculptures can be assigned to the early half of 11th century A.D.

41. By the late 10th century stiffening of legs – impressed the artist and it became special features of 11th century
Ibid, p.82.

42. *The lower half of the body slightly contrast to the elegant upper half of the body—a developing feature of 11th century*
Majumdar, R.C. : *History of Bengal*, 1943, p.543.

Group-V :

Attracting our attention to the compositional similarities, two other broken four handed *Surya* sculptures (Fig 1:9, 1:10) are there which showed a sedative shift from delicacy to a sense of rigidity. The present condition and the iconographical traits of these two Sculptures are as follows :

Fig 1:9

- a) Condition : suffered from erosion and broken just below the waist level.
- b) Length : 23 ½ cm and Width : 19 cm
- c) Posture : *tribhanga*
- d) Hands : four
- e) Emblems : i) Left upper hand – lotus bud with a stalk
 ii) Right upper hand – same
 iii) Left lower hand – difficult to identify
 iv) Right lower hand– difficult to ascertain but might be in *Varada mudra*

Fig : 1:10

- a) Condition : highly eroded, major portion of it goes beyond of its identification, broken just at the level of knees.
- b) Length : 31 cm and Width : 22 cm
- c) Posture : *dvibhanga*
- d) Hands : four
- e) Emblems : i) Left upper hand– erosions have made it quite difficult to identify but still it looks to be a lotus bud with a stalk.

- ii) Right upper hand—same condition prevailed but presume to have a lotus bud
- iii) Left lower hand – difficult to ascertain
- iv) Right lower hand – completely damaged.

Thus, confirming them as being the deities of *Surya* or any one of the *Saura* clan, no new introduction or change specifically be observed anywhere to the matter relating to ornamentation and habiliments.

Physiognomy :

Maintaining the tradition of classical simplicity with the same vigour, the physiognomy of this group of sculptures however, looks to be pregnant with some new aesthetic idiom comparing to the other four handed *Surya* sculptures of the site museum. Accordingly, these flatly conceived sculptures look to have given up the urge for a smooth resilient torso, a classical fascination, identical almost to the entire sculptural compositions at Madan-Kamdeva. Simultaneously, the viability of the gliding spirit of rhythmic contours of these elegant looking sculptures also seems to be suffered a severe set back, at the sharp edges of their the compressive, stereotyped rigidity. Again, the sense of mundane pleasure in the facial appearances are being quite contrastly exposed to their traditional robust bodily form with due collaboration of sinuous beauty, a feature commonly observed at Madan-Kamdeva. However, the intensity of the sinuous curve specially on the edges of the bodies are minimized and the best prove of this fact can be better be referred to the way of executions

of narrow middle where the strength of the wasp curve of the earlier four handed *Surya* images appeared to be normalized to a great extent. Thus, these two sculptures may be regarded as a product of a transitional period when the artists look to have initiated some unrest but bold experiment with their products where they emphasized more on linear movement rather than the sinuous one. This experiment of this new aesthetic ideology, have attained its culmination to the *Kamakhya* School of sculptures of 11th/12th century.⁴³ Thus, these group of sculptures can naturally be place slightly earlier to that of *Kamakhya* sculptures.

Two Handed Surya Sculptures :

Number of two handed *Surya* sculptures have also graced the aesthetic collection of the site museum at Madan-Kamdeva. Depending on the nature of their primary emblems, these sculptures can again categorically be subdivided into two groups, some hold lotus buds in their hands while other carrying full blown lotuses as their emblem.

Two Handed Surya Image with Lotus Buds :

The *Surya* images at Madan-Kamdeva, carrying lotus buds in their hands can be regarded as the unique sculptural representation to the entire north India, as this feature is primarily prone to south India's *Surya* images. Regarding the existence of pro-south Indian *Surya* images, it should however be remembered that the highly ornamental aesthetic tradition of Bengal province, have also accredited with the honour of having both north and

43. Dutta, M. : Op-cit, 1990, pp.98-98.

south Indian iconographical traits in some of their specific exuberance of *Surya* images.⁴⁴

Attracting our attention, this group comprises of two sculptures, of them one survived (fig :2:1) in a good state of condition while other is (fig 2:2) almost on the verge of extinction. Thus the sculpture of our discussion (i.e. the good shaped one) stands here with slightest possible deviation in *tribhanga* posture. Like others, this sculpture is also carved out on an architectural stone block, length of which is 22 ½ cm while the width is 18 ½ cm. Though, the sculpture has broken *kiritamukuta*, broken pedestal as well as in an eroded state of condition, still it has a charming stance to analyse.

Giving an impression of a south Indian aesthetic tradition, the right hand of the image being placed just above the level of shoulder, in which he carried a lotus bud with a small stalk. On his other hand, the deity holds a long stalked lotus bud in such a way that the hand itself seems to be in *Varada mudra*, at the level of thigh. Both hands of the image are being kept slightly away from the body with delicate bends at the level of elbows. The feet of the image rest on a full blown lotus which is now in a broken state of condition. Similarly, the image looks to be a bare footed one, refreshing again a south Indian taste.

Regarding ornamentation, the sculpture has a cone shape *kiritamukuta*,⁴⁵ along with *karnakundala*, two tyred necklace,

44. Majumdar, R.C. : Op-cit, 1993, p. 334.

45. A 10th century feature
Bandopadhyay, B. : Op-cit, 1981, p.36.

aivyonghen,⁴⁶ waist bengel etc found as usual almost to the all bodies of the sculpture at Madan-Kamdeva.

At the first sight the image appear to be nude, but this is a mere illusion, a small ridge at the neck (there is the slightest possibility that the ridge being used to represent *Upagriva*) has made an indication to the existence of a diaphanous garment clinging to the body like a wet sheet. This is a technique to enhance the sensuous charm of the figure. This feature can safely be regarded as an inspiration of highly sophisticated Sarnath idiom. Similarly, a small but sensible mark between the two legs as well as some minor scalloped edges around the waist, have specifically referred to the use of an Indian form of *dhoti* tied with a *Katisutra* to clad the lower half of the body.

Physiognomy and its analysis be an indispensable part for any sculptural study. On one hand, it offers an opportunity to realise the aesthetic sense of any sculptor, at the same time it has suggested some clues in affixing the chronological slot to any plastic product. Thus, the fully modelled image with bulging appearance in its stance is frankly reminiscent of classical volume. The fleshy rounded face of the image with a slightly pointed delineation of the chin have appreciated a shape of a betal leaf to it. The corroded nature of the image (as incase of other sculpture) has created a complicity in ascertaining the condition of the eyes that whether it remain open or close, still the persisting bulginess symbolized an 'unsophisticated almost native' trend to work in its produce. The eyebrows are sharp and simple in nature.⁴⁷ At the same time

46. *aivyonghen* – an Indianised form of Iranian waist gridle
Srivastava, V.C. : *Sun Worship in Ancient India*, 1972, p.310.

47. A 10th century feature –
Bandopadhyay, B. Op-cit, 1981, p.32.

lips are also full and its smiling context giving an impression of a joyous state of mind in mundane pleasure. Square shoulder, broad chest with prominent nipples,⁴⁸ narrow middle, bulging abdomen with eminently carved naval wide and 'fleshy hip'⁴⁹ are some of the other significant physiognomical aspect of this icon. Though the *tribhanga* posture of the image has not been overstressed, but still it serve its purpose of displacing the weight of the body to other side. This is a peculiar technique often found to the aesthetic product of 9th century A.D.⁵⁰ Similarly, the fleshy stance of the image, controlled within a definite outline, have a swelling tendency (around its contour) thus, signaling to a conscious strength from within. This predilection evolved itself into a shape of 'rounded pad', indicating to a sense of petrification to seize the soft fleshy character of the image. The left leg of the image has slightly been put forward giving an impression of a movement. In this respect it is also interesting to observe that the sculptor had carefully attempted to execute knees of the leg, so to give an impression of elasticity and pliability.⁵¹

The guardian authority of this site, Directorate of Archaeology, Assam has already confirmed the date of its production as 11th/12th century a generalised form of estimation made applicable to all available sculpture conserve in the site museum.

48. This is a special feature of *Pala-Sena* Sculpture
Mukherjee, B.N. : *East Indian Art Style*, 1980, pp.4-5.

49. Fleshyness in the hip – a late 9th century feature
Dutta, M. : *Op-cit*, 1990, p.77.

50. Majumdar, R.C. : *Op-cit*, 1943, p.541.

51. A 9th century feature
Ibid.

While accepting this view, we should keep in mind that the sculptures in Madan-Kamdeva are in possession of divergent physiognomical status in their stand. The physiognomy of a sculpture seen to be directly proportionate to the chronology of the same. And accordingly, the sculpture can better be presumed as a product of 10th/11th (specifically the last part of 9th century A.D.) century rather than 11th/12th Century A.D.

The second *Surya* sculpture (fig 2:1) of this group stand almost in a mutilated state of condition. Like the earlier one, this sculpture is also carved out on the surface of an architectural stone block, length of which is 23 cm while width is 19 cm. Referring to its iconographical trait as well as ornamentation no such new incorporations are there, except a fully developed *tribhanga* posture on which the image being executed. The physiognomical analysis of this sculpture under its present eroded state of condition is not possible for us. But still emphasized form of *tribhanga* posture might have referred to a matured form of execution which appreciated the date of its production more near to 11th/12th century A.D.

Two Handed Surya with Full Blown Lotuses :

Depending of the nature of their execution, this group of *Surya* sculptures at Madan-Kamdeva can again be subdivided into two categories for our discussion. The first group comprises of four *Surya* sculpture which have beared stereotype execution to each other. The basic characteristic feature of this group of *Surya* sculptures is that they look like to be stand on an *asana* or on a half grown *ratha*, the back slab of which, (in turn) assumed almost

the shape of a stella. Apart from that they have also successfully exposed, in their stand, the influence of an earth bound (terracotta) aesthetic trend of the soil.

Though there are three sculptures in this group, (fig 3.1.,3.2,3.3) only one survived here in a good shape to analyse (fig 3:1). However, it also suffered blows from age long erosions as the sculpture has lost the portion just below the knees alongwith, the finial part of its *Kiritamukuta*, and most importantly, the right upper side of the back slab, which might have beared the sign of a full blown lotus.

With of all these eliminations, this *samabhanga* posture *Surya* sculpture now stand here with a length of 30 cm and width of 10 cm. Coming to the point of its iconography, the two hands of the images look to be rested on two elbows of the *ratha/asana*, holding two full blown lotuses (of plain nature) in his two hands. However, at present, there is only one lotus with a long stalk assigned to the left hand of the image while the sign of other lotus in his right hand,⁵² as stated, has already been eliminated. Thus, the iconographical trait confirmed it as being an image of *Surya*.

In case of ornamentation, as the body of the sculpture being decorated only with usual sign of *kiritamukuta*, *karnakundala*, two tyred necklace⁵³ and waist gridles. Regarding ornamentation our observation has revealed an interesting point

52. The elimination, has made it quite difficult to identify the exact emblem in the right hand of the image, but comparing to other sculptures of this group it being appreciated without any hesitation as a lotus with a long stalk.

53. Two tyred necklace carve not below the chest at Madan-Kamdeva.

that there are no sign of armlet and waist bangles. Though the reason behind this is quite unknown to us possibly the age long erosions are responsible for the same.⁵⁴ At the first sight, the upper portion of the image look to be nude, but a small ridge on the neck may be referred as an indication of the existence of a diaphanous garment, an aesthetic ideal hailed from high profile Sarnath idiom, to expose the curve of the body in a sensuous way. Similarly, erosions have rubbed out all sign of lower garment except a small ridge between the two legs to lighten the scope for the presence of an Indian form of *dhoti* to clad the body.

Coming to the point of physiognomy, the sculpture has a square face,⁵⁵ chin just below the lower lips has slightly been over stressed.⁵⁶ The eyes are long and open in which the eye lids set against the narrow slit of bulging eye apple.⁵⁷ The thick and bulging lips of the image with a smiling context referring to a sense of mundane pleasure.⁵⁸ Square shoulder with slightest possible dropping tendency, wide chest and hip, narrow middle

54. The sculptor might have imbibed the idea of limited ornamentation from the Jaina iconographical trait, which showed their preference to a bare bodied execution as we have observed in case of the sculptures of Jaina Tirthankara as available at Surya Pahar in modern Goalpara district.

55. *Highlighting a sense of regionalism*

Mukherjee, B.N. : Op-cit, 1980, p.23.

56. A 10th century feature

Bandopadhyay, B. : Op-cit, 1981, p.32.

57. An 11th century feature

Kramrish, S. : *Rupam*, 1929, p.123.

58. Blissfull facial expression generally to be found with 11th century sculpture

Dutta, M. : Op-cit, 1990, p.82.

are some of the other physiognomical features this sculpture. The nipple and navel are prominently executed as an aesthetic technique which might have imbibed from highly sophisticated *Pala-Sena* art tradition. An emphasis to depict a bulging abdomen appeared to be executed in the form of two fat lobes of terracotta type to the lower half of the abdomen. The sculpture also possessed a stiff column like legs with slightly downward tapering tendency⁵⁹ No sign of execution of knees are there to observe. Over an above, a sense of elongation, specially the portion just below the chest, grasp the entire composing outline of the sculpture.⁶⁰ The way of execution of the waist girdles, fingers abdomen etc have duly highlighted an influence of an earth bound terracotta tradition.

However, this is not a phenomenal appearance. The high profile plastic tradition of early medieval Assam has witnessed number of instance in which existence of popular earth bound trend has found active on the side of high profile aesthetic tradition of that time. The production of this groups of sculptures is the best serve example of this fact. M. Dutta has referred two prime factors for the existence of this aesthetic trend that the temple sculptures as well as architectural decors are always indigenously produce; similarly, in erecting a temple the patronizer with his limited option, have to employ both migrating and local artist and

59. An 11th century feature

Majumdar, R.C. : Op-cit, 1943, p.543.

60. A 10th century feature, Again this feature is applicable even to the sculptures (probably) of 11th century A.D.

Bandopadhyaya, B. Op-cit, 1981, p.32 & Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, p.470.

sometime the probationary artist to serve his purpose.⁶¹ These, have widen the scope for assimilating divergent aesthetic trends and occasional appearance of probationary coarseness to their product. Whatever might be the fact, all the three sculptures of this group can be regarded as the product of 11th/12th century A.D. as physiognomy suggest.

Other group of *Surya* sculptures of this category comprises of number of *Surya* icons. But, unfortunately all of them are now in a highly eroded state of condition and almost all have lost major parts of their bodies. Under such circumstances, their analysis appeared to be a difficult task to achieve. But, it is good to see that they all have a stereotype executions (fig 4.1, 4.2) which led us to sum up the matter of their analysis only with some basic characteristic features of these sculptures.

First of all, they all stands in rigid *samabhanga* posture. The erect *samabhanga* posture of sculpture has always been referred to an impression of irrefutable calmness and immutability.⁶² This derivative can better be used here in presuming the exact appearance of this highly eroded sculpture that if not to the meditative sentiment, the sculptors at least have showed their preference in giving a clam and contemplative appearance to their products. Alongwith that square face of the image with beautiful delineation of the chin,⁶³ bulging eyes (wheather the eyes remain open or close is quite difficult to

61. Dutta, M. : Op-cit, 1990, p. 74.

62. Saraswati, S. : *Survey of Indian Sculpture*, 1975, p. 129.

63. This feature placed those sculptures in a close proximity of the Deopani School.

Dutta, M. : Op-cit, 1990, pp. 80-81.

ascertain), eyebrows with normal curve, broad but pointed nose, heavy lower lips,⁶⁴ square shoulder narrow middle '*damaru madhya*'⁶⁵ with animated chest and abdomen (however the erosions have completely damaged the animated layer of the plastic surface) two column like legs with a sense of petrified flesh . . are some of the general physiognomical feature of these sculptures. One of the important change that we observe regarding the physiognomy of these sculptures is that the neck became much more shorter comparing to other sculptures. This is probably because of a sense of compression or because of the limited space provided to the sculptor for their executions.

Secondly, carrying forward a sense of individuality the *Padma* of these sculptures have carved out with beautiful execution of petal. Along with that all these sculptures of this group are executed in a short and stout version with minimized length and width as if they are the product of a hasty proposition. Accordingly, they can be referred as the products of clumsy political or hasty political situation of the country as Assam witnessed during 12th century A.D.

Thus, *Surya* sculptures at Madan-Kamdeva have beared some unique characteristic feature of their own. First majority of them decorated with a strange item *Vanamala*. *Vanamala* is a specific characteristic feature of the *Vishnu* icon.⁶⁶ Under such circumstances, it is quite difficult to ascertain the reason behind

64. A sense of regionalism, Phukan, N. Lokakalpdristi(As), 1987, p. 41.

65. A term generally used to mean the narrow middle of the torso, Saraswati, S. : Op-cit, 1975, p. 126.

66. Bhattacharjee, A. *Icon & Sculptures of Early & Medieval Assam*, 1978, p.7.

it's association with *Surya* images. Still it can be said in reference to a popular religious belief that *Surya* might have worship here as a deity belonging to popular Vaisanava Cult. This has further aggravated the concept of a south Indian ideal in consecrating these *Surya* icons where *Surya* being worship as a deity of Vaisnava Cult.⁶⁷ Secondly, they are all bare footed sculpture to highlight the influence of south Indian delineation. Thus, with all these peculiarities, *Surya* sculptures at Madan-Kamdeva can be divided into four groups i) Fourhanded *Surya* sculptures with lotus buds in their hands ii) Two handed *Surya* sculptures with lotus bud iii) Two handed *Surya* sculpture of terracotta origin with full blown lotus and *ratha* like *asana* iv) *Surya* sculpture with *Samabhanga* posture of sophisticated tradition with beautifully carve lotus.

B) Nataraja :

The overwhelming dominancy of sensible sophistication to the product of this great centre of plastic activities have further been exposed with two celebrated sculptures of Lord *Nataraja*, now conserved in the well shaded structure of the site museum. *Nataraja*, the emblem of Indian fine arts⁶⁸ always have a mind blowing status with his vigorous rhythmic countenance. Generally, in every important *Siva* Temple *a separate place is allotted to Nataraja which is known as Natana Sabha or simply Sabha.*⁶⁹ Thus the image of *Nataraja* in broader sense of term, generally be

67. Bardoloi, N.P. : *Surya(As)*, 2000, p. 53.

68. Sastri, S.N. Ghoshal : *Element of Indian Aesthetics*,
Vol. II ,1983,254.

69. Rao, T.A.G : *Element of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. II.,Part-I, p.229.

referred as a special appearance to any temple wheather it may be the temple complex of Madan-Kamdeva or others. Leaving aside the generalized view, *Nataraja* from Madan-Kamdeva are famous for their four handed composition—a type not frequently available to norther aesthetic zone.⁷⁰

What ever might be the fact—the very idea of *Nataraja* evolved around the concept of cosmic dance of creation and destruction of Lord *Siva* who all along worshipped as the tutelary god of dance and aesthetic experience (*rasa*).⁷¹ In other word the image of *Nataraja* is an outcome of a brilliant combination of *forceful rhythm and intense spiritual introspection*.⁷² In the early and medieval Brahmanical literature Lord *Siva* is described as the originator and the best exponent of various art form. Among these art forms, dance is generally regarded as the central and dominating one, leaving behind the painting and sculpture only to a subsidiary position. In actuality *Dance is the gesture of becoming or manifestation and it is through dance that the Prana of essential principle of all sentiment, forms and awareness of consciousness can best be expressed and communicated*.⁷³ *Bharata's, Natya Sastra*, the pioneering treatise on Indian dramaturgy have simply mention 108 different kind of dance mode without going to their details. The famous south Indian Saiva *agamas* have further reinstated these 108 different dance modes and described all as being identical to *Siva tandava*. However, they also debarred themselves

70. Bhattacharjee, A : *Icons & Sculptures of early & Medieval Assam*, 1978, p.16.

71. Sastri, S.N. Ghoshal : *Op-cit*, Vol. II ,1983, p.288.

72. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : *Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol-I, p.351

73. Mukherjee, R.K. : *The Cosmic art of India*, p. 137.

from explaining all these dance modes, except nine specified dance mode identical to *Siva Nataraja*.

The iconography of *Siva tandava* or *Nataraja* can generally be traced in different *Puranas* and Tantric text. In this connection the south Indian Saiva *agamas* are more vocal in describing the *Nataraja* images specially, the *Koyil Purana* and its successive esoteric literature like, *Amsumadbhedagama*, *Kamikagama Purva*, *Silparatna*, *Suprabhedagama* etc.⁷⁴

Accordingly, the *Nataraja* images describe in the *Uttara-kamikagama* as four armed, three eyed and having brown and scattered clotted hair hanging over both side and back. *Jahnavi* is waiting by his right hand side with folded hand.⁷⁵ With all these the *apasmarapurusha* are always there under his feet.

Another four handed description of *Nataraja* is being founded in *Purva-Karanagama* that he is three eyed, four armed with peacock feather and having chest like that of an osprey and scattered hair locks (*Jata*). *Jahnavi* is visible on the right top of his *Jatamukuta*. By his left ear, he wears a leaf like ear ring and by the right is a crocodile like his right hand hold the gesture of *abhaya*, the little drum is on the right hand and the fire pot on the left.⁷⁶

On the other hand, the treatise like the *Kurma Purana* described *Nataraja* as being a deity of thousand armed.⁷⁷ The *Matshya Purana* on the other hand, described *Rudra* as an eight armed deity but, while the same god is in the mood of *tandava*

74. Sastri, S.N. Ghoshal : *Op-cit*, Vol. II ,1983, 1965, p.295.

75. *Ibid*, 290.

76. *Ibid*, 292.

77. *Ibid*, p.261.

dance, the treatise prescribed him as being a ten armed deity.⁷⁸ *Over and above, the description of a two handed Nataraja is being found in Suprabhedagama where the Lord of fine art kept his right hand in abhya mudra and holds a small drum in his left hand.*⁷⁹ Thus, the *Nataraja* may have the composition of two to eighteen hands, but the most popularly appreciated form of this deity generally have ten arms.⁸⁰ Accordingly, the *Nataraja* images may be of thousand armed, sixteen armed, ten armed four armed and two armed etc. Depending on number of hands there is a sharp difference between north Indian and south Indian *Nataraja* images. Accordingly the south Indian *Nataraja* are mainly of four to two arms composition and *apasmarapurusha* under their feet.⁸¹ On the other hand, the north Indian *Nataraja* are mostly multi armed ordinarily eight to eighteen and they refuse to have any *apasmarapurusha* under his feet.⁸² Now coming to the point of emblem the *Nataraja* images are mainly the beholder of *dambaru*, *abhya mudra*, *fire pot*, *sankha*, *sakti*, *danda*, *traisula*, *kapala*, *naga*, *khatvanga* etc.⁸³ In this connection it should also be remembered that according to the *Matshya Purana* the four armed and eight armed *Rudra* generally have a special appellation of *Janana Yogesvara*.⁸⁴

With these brief discussion, the present condition as well as the iconographical status of the two *Nataraja* images from Madan-Kamdeva are as follows :

78. Ibid., 257.

79. Ibid. 292.

80. Ibid, p.261.

81. Ibid, p. 254.

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid, p.257.

84. Ibid. p. 292.

Fig. 5.1

- a) Condition : the age long erosions have caused severe damage on the upper plastic surface of the image.
- b) Length : 113 cm Width – 59 cm
- c) Leg Posture: *Nikuttitam* – One leg rests firmly on the ground and other resting Upon the toe, stricke the ground with the heel.⁸⁵
- d) Pedestal : no *apasmarapurusha*, but the stage is set with a sitting bull on the right side of the image.
- e) Eye : three, third eye on the forehead.
- f) Hands : four
- g) Emblem : i) Upper right hand – severely damaged, might have hold *trisula*
- ii) Lower right hand–*Dambaru*, the identical instrument of Lord *Siva*.
- iii) Upper left hand– *Khatavanga*
- iv) Lower hand– damaged, the emblem now in a indistinct state of condition.

Fig. 5.2

- a)Condition : eroded, the left leg is broken at the level of knee
- b)Length : 78 cm Width–48 cm
- c)Leg Posture : it is difficult to identify, but still it look to be in same *Nikuttitam* Posture.
- d) Pedestal: no *apasmarapurusha*, the image stands of full blown lotus
- e)Eye : three; third eye on the forehead
- f)Hands : four

85. Rao, T.A.G. : Op-cit, Vol.II, 1914, Part-I, p.263.

- g) Emblems :
- i) Right upper hand– *dambaru*
 - ii) Right lower hand–placed near the chest, probably in *vyakhyana mudra*
 - iii) Left upper hand–difficult to identify, but probably holds *trisula*
 - iv) Lower left hand– totally damaged.
- h) Peculiarities : attempted shade with the help of a Parasol on the head of the image.

The iconographical trait of these two sculptures have got further elaboration with the waist gridle of *Naramundamala*, *Jatamukuta*, *Patra kundala* on the left and *Nakra–Kundala* on the right ear lob, along with other general ornamentation. These all are sufficient enough to confirm these two sculptures as being the true representation of *Siva tandava* popularly known as *Nataraja*.

Physiognomy :

Stressing flesh, elongated torso, disproportionate execution, robust bodily form with vigorous amplitude are some of the characteristic physiognomical feature of *Nataraja* fig no 5.1 *The trunk and limb are pregnant with sub dued vigour and mighty form.*⁸⁶ Here also wasp curve institute a rounded volume to the sculpture, while its gliding linear outline exposed the classical sensitivity. Chest with nipples and fleshy abdomen have duly instituted a sense of breath on one hand and on the other, a blinking sensuous look to the sculpture.

86. A 10th century feature– Majumdar, R.C.: Op-cit, 1943, p.542.

But, the physiognomy of *Nataraja* 5.2 of Madan-Kamdeva is more rhythmic in its countenance. Comparing to earlier one, it is well proportionate in its composition and above all more lighter in volume. Thick smiling pair of lips, bulging eyes with normally curve eyebrows are some of the other characteristic feature of this sculpture. The rhythmic movement of the body however be expressed only with the left side flexion of the head along with the legs, the torso remain straight. Adding with this the *Vyakhyana mudra* can better be explained as if the lord of dance explaining different dance mood to the pupils or to the audience. The linear projection of hand and leg have left little space to sinuous movement, however the wasp curve still serve the purpose in providing rounded exuberance to this sculptural composition.

Thus, coming to the point of chronology— the *Nataraja* Fig 5.1 of the site museum can clearly be referred as a product of tenth century A.D. while the chronology of second *Nataraja* Fig 5.2 may be assigned to a period of 11th/12th century A.D.

C) Vasudeva-Lokesvara (Fig 5.3)

An image of Lord *Vishnu* (as identified), because of its unique six handed composition, is one of the most interesting sculptural specimen available to the site museum at Madan-Kamdeva. This type of sculptural representation of Lord *Vishnu*, specially in stone is totally unknown not only to the aesthetic arena of Assam, but even to the Bengal proper also. In metal (Copper) one such image almost of similar iconographical standard is available to the museum of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad in Calcutta.

Thus, exposing its rarity the importance of this sculpture has further been highlighted to its stella, a characteristic feature of Eastern Indian School of Medieval Sculpture.⁸⁷ In the site museum, this is the only sculpture to carve on a stella, which on one hand confirmed its independent status to place itself in *garbhagriha* and on the other it also revealed the technical obligation of this great centre of plastic activities as a whole, to the high sounding EISMA, thoroughly patronized by the great *Palas* and *Senas*.

The description of *Vishnu* images are generally found available in the *Mahabharata*,⁸⁸ *Brihat Samhita*⁸⁹ the *Vishnudharmottara Purana*,⁹⁰ the *Matshya Purana*, the *Agni Purana* the *Kalika Purana*⁹¹ etc. All the treatises described him as a four handed deity with his characteristic *ayudhas*—*Sankha*, *Chakra* *Gada* *Padma*.⁹² These four identical *ayudhas* of Lord *Vishnu* in his four hands can alternately be organized in twenty four different arrangement in permutation and combination. Each arrangement represent one peculiar form of *Vishnu* and accordingly there are

87. Dutta, M. : Op-cit, pp. 74-75.

88. *Sankha Chakra Gadā Padma cārio hātāt āse mahābhay hare bhakatar ki Rām Rām*

In the *Yajna Parva* of *Mahabharata* a beautiful four handed description of Lord *Vishnu* however, of his *Krishna* incarnation has been found.

Dutta, H.N.(ed.) : *Mahabharata* (As)(1955), 1993, p.856.

89. This tretise also described him as a four handed deity (58/34) (Tr.) Iyer, N.G. : *Brihat Samhita*, 1987, p. 289.

90. In the *Adhyaya* 60 *Vishnu* image described as having one face two arms carrying *Gada Chakra*. In the *adhyaya* 85 *Vishnu* in the form of *Vasudeva* described as a four handed deity.

Shah, P. (tr.) : *Vishnudharmottara Purana 3rd Kanda*, 1961, p.141

91. *Sankha chakra gadāpadmapāni kayah Savaisnava*, K.P. 12/31

92. Barpujari, H.K.(ed) : Op-cit, 1990, p.389.

twenty four different varieties of *Vishnu* images, namely 1) *Kesava*, 2) *Narayana*, 3) *Madhava*, 4) *Govinda*, 5) *Vishnu*, 6) *Madhusudhana*, 7) *Trivikrama*, 8) *Vamana*, 9) *Sridhara*, 10) *Hrishikesa*, 11) *Padmanabha* 12) *Damodara*, 13) *Vasudeva*, 14) *Sankarshana*, 15) *Pradyumna*, 16) *Aniruddha*, 17) *Purushottama*, 18) *Adhokshaja*, 19) *Nrisimha*, 20) *Achyuta*, 21) *Upendra*, 22) *Janardana*, 23) *Hari*, 24) *Krishna*.⁹³

Among them, the most popular sculptural exposition of Lord *Vishnu* in Bengal, Bihar⁹⁴ as well as in Assam are generally assigned to his *Vasudeva form* in which he holds a mace in upper right hand, lotus in lower, while the upper left hand holds the wheel and the lower one, the conch.⁹⁵

Now iconographical traits and the condition of the sculpture of our concern, in brief, are as follows :

- a) Condition : extremely eroded
- b) Length : 107 cm Width – 66 cm
- c) Posture : *samabhanga* or *samapada sthanaka*
- d) Pedestal : plain
- e) Hand : six
- f) Emblems : i) Left upper hand– Chakra
 ii) Left middle hand– the erosions have made it now quite difficult to ascertain the exact nature of the emblem but still the hand look to be in possession of an arrow, as the opposite hand on the right side have holds a bow.

93. Ibid.

94. Banerjee, R.D. : *Eastern Indian School of Medieval Sculpture*, 1981, p.102.

95. Ibid. p.103.

- iii) Lower left hand– Indistinct, but may have in possession of a *sankha*
- iv) Right upper hand– mace
- v) Right middle hand– bow
- vi) Right lower hand– indistinct, but there may be a sign of *Padma* on the palm which is again in *Varada mudra*.
- g) Peculiarity: a cylindrical stella with half rounded top. It is almost plain in nature with slight inflammation that have been seen on the border range of the stella, might have referred to a bead like decoration

Thus, if we leave aside the two middle hands of the image, it appeared to be an imitation of Lord *Vasudeva* in its stand. But, the introduction of two extra hands with bow and arrow have made the matter bit more confusing in nature. Further, it should also be remembered that no major god of Hindu pantheon ever had six handed composition with same *ayudhas*.

Hence, to get out of this problem we have found no other alternative but to abode ourselves to the Buddhist iconography where this type of composition specially of *Lokesvara* images (of Mahayana sect) are more frequent to observe. In *Buddhistic ritual the different species of Bodhisattava are divided according to the five divine or dhayani Buddha*.⁹⁶ *Avalokitesvara* or *Lokesvara* in the Mahayana Pantheon is *emanating from Dhayani Buddha Amitabha and his Sakti Pandara*.⁹⁷ One of the

96. Ibid., p.87.

97. Bhattacharyya, B. : *Indian Buddhist Iconography*, (1924), 1985, p.32.

well known authority on Buddhist iconography Binoytosh Bhattacharyya have claimed that there are 108 different form of *Lokesvara* and of them, at least 23 have beared six handed sequences in their composition. Encouraged with this fact when we tried further to analyse the similarities existed between *Vishnu* and *Lokesvara* images particularly in terms of their *ayudhas*, a strange but an interesting phenomenon came to the desk that all the *ayudhas* of *Vishnu* except mace are popular enough, to the entire varieties of *Lokesvara* images. The bow and arrow are also two commonly available *ayudhas* to the those images of Buddhist pantheon.

Thus, to solve the very problem of its identification we now have made an unrest attempt to mingle the two concept, *Vasudeva* and *Lokesvara* into one and accordingly proposed it as being a diety of *Vasudeva Lokesvara* instead of being recognized it simply as an idole of *Vishnu*. The main encouragement behind this proposition however be derived from some of the Bengali sculpture where this type of amalgamation of *the older Bhagavata class of Vaisnava and Lokesvara of later Mahayana school of Buddhism*⁹⁸ have rearly been shown in their execution. In this connection it should also be remembered that this type of sculptural execution of *Vasudeva Lokesvara* as in Madan-Kamdeva however, totally unknown (uptill now) to the aesthetic arena of Assam proper.

Now coming to the point of ornamentation, no major incorporations are there, the sculptor still have showed their

98. Banerjee, R.D. . : Op-cit, 1981, p. 96.

preference to the scanty amount of ornamentation⁹⁹ as well as to diaphanous habiliment as in case of other sculptures available to this great centre of plastic activities. The most interesting innovation to this sculptural composition however, is the stella with almost of a half round curvature, the top of which is decorated with an unidentified devise (Probably a lotus). At the same time the surviving inflammation at the border range of stella again have referred something about the chronological status of this composition.¹⁰⁰

The age long erosions have made the physiognomical analysis of this sculpture bit more difficult in nature, still it is interesting to observe that the sculpture have beared marked similarities to the *Siva Vishnu* relief of 9th century from Goalpara. The only difference between these two sculptural composition is that the Goalpara sculptures are more static and rigid in their execution where linear rhythm dominates the entire composition, while *Vasudeva-Lokesvara* image from Madan-Kamdeva is in much more lighter in volume, rhythmic, over and above, the sinuous projection however, to some extent have successfully degraded the beauty of linear rhythmic movement in its execution. Secondly, the portion below the level of chest as well as the limbs of the sculpture, specially the arms are being executed with slightest

99. Among the ornamental item—*kiritamukuta* (conical *karna kundala*, two tired necklace (one of them is composed of beads) wrist bangles, armlets, waist gridles and *urudamas* are the most prominent items to observe.

100. This type of stela are being generally prone to 10th century sculpture of Assam—

Dutta, M. Op-cit, 1990, p.76.

possible impression of elongation.¹⁰¹ and accordingly a new technique looked to be evolved around this sculptural composition. Thus, the sculpture can better be referred as a product of a transitional period when a new aesthetic technique seem to have gain its ground. The flesh to the hips¹⁰² and to the thigh is an another physiognomical features of this sculpture. Though there is no clear cut projection of knees, but still the attempt to carve the same is an important physiognomical feature of the sculpture to observe. The erosions have made it quite difficult to ascertain the exact nature of the facial portion of the image but the betal leaf shaped face of the image look to be in smiling countenance with bulging open eyes pointed nose and normally curve eyebrows. The persisting shallowness is an another important physiognomical feature of this sculpture to observe.

Thus, the physiognomy as well as the nature of the stella have duly referred it as being a product of 10th century A.D. more specifically it can better be said as a product of a period stretching from the last part of 9th century A.D. to the first half of 10th century A.D..

D) Indra (Fig. 5.4) :

*Judging from the number of hymns addressed to him*¹⁰³

Indra, look to be the most prominent god during the *Rig-Vedic* period. Started his career as the sole proprietor of rain and

101. A 10th century feature

Bandopadhyay, B. : Op-cit, 1981 pp.32.

102. A late 9th century feature— Dutta, M. Op-cit, 1990, p.76.

103. Sahai, B. : *Iconography of Minor Hindu and Buddhist Deities*, 1975, p. 11.

thunder, he was successful in maintaining his popularity during the epic period, this time however, as the king of Gods. But, his dazzling career has come to an end with the incarnation of the *Puranas* where he found himself in a debased position of a minor divinity as *dikpala* or guardian of eastern quarter.

The iconography of *Indra* mainly be discussed in *the Agni Purana*, *the Matshya Purana*, *the Vishnudharmottara Purana*, *the Brihat Samhita* and in the *Rupamandana* along with the south⁹ Indian *agamas*.¹⁰⁴ The *Matshya Purana* describe him as a two handed deity and the carrier of *Vajra* in one of his hand and lotus in others.¹⁰⁵ The *Agni Purana* described him as the bearer of thunderbolts as his emblem and elephant as his *vahana*.¹⁰⁶ The *Suprabhedagama* adorned him as a two handed deity with thunderbolt and elephant goad as his main emblem.¹⁰⁷ The *Amsumadbhedagama* describe him with a *shakti* in one hand and elephant goad in others.¹⁰⁸ The *Vishnudharmottara*¹⁰⁹ gives the most elaborate description of *Indra*. According, to this treatise he is a four armed three eyed deity, elephant as his *vahana* which should have four tusked. The emblems that are being described in association with these god are as follows *Ankusha*, representing command which subdues all beings, lotus while representing prosperity, the thunderbolt representing anger. The *Padma* and *Ankusha* when are in right hand, one of his left hand should place

104. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p. 411.

105. M.P 260/6.

106. A.P. 51/14.

107. Rao, T.A.G. : Op-cit, Vol. II, 1914, p. 251.

108. Sahai, B. : Op-cit, 1975, p. 12.

109. Shah, P. (tr.) :Op-cit, 1961, p. 159.

on *Sachi* and other should carries thunder bolt. The *Rupavatara*¹¹⁰ also described *Indra* as a four handed deity however, with different attributes, *Ankusha* and *Kamandalu* in two of his hands and other two should have been in *Varada mudra*. Thus, with the increasing number of hand, our ancestral theologist might have tried to impose a super human or magical status to the guardian of eastern quarter probably, to expose the influence of Tantric *sadhana*. In this connection, it is also interesting that the four handed *Indra* always be a phenomenal representation primarily because of its rare availability. According to B Sahai, they are not only unknown to north India but even in south India also they are being rarely available.¹¹¹

Whatever might be the number of hands but the identical emblem of *Indra* are as 1) *Vajra* 2) *Ankusha* 3) *Shakti* 4) *Utpala* 5) *Kamandalu* 6) *Varadamudra*. The text like *The Brihat Samhita*, the *Vishnudharmottara Purana* prescribed him as the three eyed god while the *Matshya Purana* described him as being adorned with thousand eyes. His well ornamented stand has generally been received by the attendant divinities mainly, the consort *who is enjoined sometimes to be seated on his lap. Sometimes he is said to be accompanied by two females holding Parasol and Flywhisk each.*¹¹²

With this brief discussion, the elegant looking sculpture in the site museum at Madan-Kamdeva has successfully assigned a new dimension to the grandeur and dignity of this centre of plastic activities. Referring to its skillful execution with

110. Sahai, B. : Op-cit, 1975, p. 13.

111. Ibid, p. 26.

112. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p. 412.

minute details and more appropriately to its present state of condition, it can better be considered as one of the best conserving specimen in the site museum.

Present condition and iconographical standard of this sculpture in brief are as follows

- a) Condition: good, however the architectural stone block on which the image being carved are now partially damaged.
- b) Length: 44 cm Width 19 cm
- c) Posture: slightly *tribhanga*
- d) Specific existence : Third eye on the forehead
- e) Hands : four
- f) Emblem: i) Left upper hand–Elephant goad or *Ankusha*
 ii) Right upper hand–*Vajra*
 iii) Left lower hand –inverted *Hiranya mudra* with a (meditational) ball in the clutch of the two middle fingers.
 iv) Right lower hand –*Varada mudra* with a sign of *shakti* on the palm.
- g) Pedestal : the god stands on a full blown lotus along with a sitting elephant in the posture of shouting as the tusk raised in the direction of sky.

Thus, the iconographical traits have duly confirmed it as being a deity of *Indra*, the lord of eastern quarter or the pioneering deity of *ashtadikpalas*.

Ascribing to a stereotype delineation, no major innovation, in terms of ornamentations are there to observe to the

body of this sculpture. Conical *kiritamukuta*¹¹³ shape, *karna kundrala*, two tired necklaces of which lower one composed of rectangular beads while the other one is knitted with rounded beads, wrist bengles, waist griddle of rounded beads, *urudamas* are some of the main, ornaments as commonly visible almost to all other divinities at Madan-Kamdeva. One of the strange appearance is the *vanamala* or *vaijanti* (*vanamala* to *Surya* is understandable but same to others except *Vishnu* is quite confusing one) Similarly the preference to diaphanous garment still continued, however the existence of a diagonically flowing *yajnopavita* from left to right is distinctly observe to the body of the sculpture which further intensified its sensuous charm.

Physiognomy :

Worked under a canonical prescription, in case of this well survived sculpture, the religious abstraction and realistic vision of physical charm, almost to the point of sensuousness, go hand in hand. Naturally, no major physiognomical innovation be referred to the bodies of this sculpture. The oval oriented rounded face of the image has duly exposed a spiritual grace in its appearance with a good pair of bulging open eyes, normally curve eyebrows and a small pair of lips expressing the blissful eternal smile. The torso of this robust bodily form highlighted a sense of breath and the wasp curves in the narrow middle have further aggravated the perception of roundness to the sculpture. The introduction of soft flesh in and around the naval and lower abdomen have almost to

113. Conical *kiritamukuta* is a 11th century feature
Bandopadhyay, B. : Op-cit, 1981, p.38.

attained anatomical accuracy of ultimate standard. Though, slightly downward tapering tendency worked over the column (almost) like legs but, still the flesh in the thigh and the delicate knees have indirectly referred first, a sense of movement and than to an earnest endeavour (however of little success), to have a good sense of parity between the two half of the body.¹¹⁴ Here also a synthesis form of linear and sinuous movement (specially be realized in the projection of hand and in the execution of narrow middle) looks to be the dominant aesthetic feature of the time when probably the Tantric *Sadhana* received an overwhelming support from all corners of the society. All these are some of the physiognomical feature which are common almost to the all available sculptures at Madan-Kamdeva. Regarding this sculpture the most important aspect which attract our attention is the sloping shoulder¹¹⁵ which indirectly assigned a period of 11th/12th century for its production.

Section 3:2 Major Female Divinities :

Manifesting a sensuous standard in their stand, the galleries of the site of museum at Madan-Kamdeva are being pact with a good number of female deities, of divergent iconographical standard. However, only four of these images have now been identified by the museum authority (as goddess *Uma*, *Vaikuntha Vaisnavi*, *Laksmi* and *Sarasvati*) while other are still waiting to have a fair deal of response from scholarly world.

In the Hindu philosophy, the female principle or the female half of the male gods have always been regarded as the

114. Striking contrast between the two half is a 11th century feature
Majumdar, R.C. : Op-cit, 1943, p.543.

115. Sloping shoulder – 11th century feature.

Kundalini Sakti or the spirit behind the mysterious powers of the male gods. Accordingly, three *Saktis* or the female spirit of the famous Hindu trinity *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Maheshwar* known as *Sarasvati*, *Laksmi* and *Gauri* or *Parvati* have naturally enjoyed greater popularity through the ages. This development is however nothing but a stage wise elaboration of the motherly cut from the time immemorial, later gained greater reputation in the Hindu pantheon primarily in the name of *Siva Sakti*. Centering around this goddesses, a new sect had also come to the front with a sectarian status known as *Saktas* who vigorously conferred *Siva-Sakti* the supreme status with two of her perennial powers *ghoras* and *saummys*. Under such an overwhelming influence of *Siva-Sakti*, the two other *Saktis* of Hindu trinity retreat to an alien stand of lesser importance and as a result of that modern day's scholars now even dare to call them as the minor goddesses.

A) Gauri (Fig. 6.1) :

We have started our discussion with a sculpture identified as goddess *Uma* in the site museum. This sculpture, carved out in a rectangular architrave which is now in a state of mutilation where it lost not only all plastic charm of the deity but also the other sign of this sculptural composition.

Iconographical traits of goddess *Uma* are categorically be discussed under a general designation of goddess *Gauri*. The most common form of the supreme goddess is being prescribed in *Uttara-Kamikagama* as the consort of *Siva*, with four hands, three eyes and with the emblems like *ankusha*, *pasa*, *abhaya* and *varada*

mudra.¹¹⁶ Rao, further stated that the *Devi* while being represented as the consort of *Siva*, generally assigned with two hands, in one hand she holds a lotus while the other hand hang down freely by the side of the bodies.¹¹⁷ Sometimes, the *Devi* in another form have also equipped with two hands but this time her hands are being composed either of *Sula* or *Pasa*, or of mirror and blue lily.¹¹⁸ About the general form of goddess *Gauri*, *Parvati* or *Uma*, the *Kasyapa Silpa* and *Manasara* states that *she has two hands when accompanying the god Siva and four when represented independently. In the former case she is fully decorated in standing or sitting on a lotus pedestal, holding a blue lily in the right hand while the left hanging down loose*.¹¹⁹ Apart from that different treatises like the *Agani Purana*, the *Vishudharmottara Purana*, the *Devatamurti Prakarana*, the *Rupamandana* etc. have also made some beautiful description about this *Gauri* group of sculptures. Leaving aside the other iconographical traits, this group of sculptures are generally assigned with four hands, characterized by *godha* on the pedestal and flanked by *Ganesha* and *Kartikeya*.¹²⁰ About the emblem of goddess *Uma*, the *Rupamandana* prescribed that her hands should be locked with the items like rosary, lotus, mirror and *kamandalu*.¹²¹

With this brief iconographical description about the possible form of goddess *Uma* as described by the different

116. Rao, T.A.G. : Op-cit, Vol. II, Part-II, 1914, p. 338.

117. Ibid, pp.338-339.

118. Ibid, p.339.

119. Sastri, H.K. : *South Indian Images of Gods and Goddess*, 1974, p. 190

120. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p. 376.

121. Ibid, p. 377.

authorities, we now have tried to analysed the various icono-sculptural possibilities the image, identified as goddess *Uma* in the site museum at Madan-Kamdeva.

- a) Present condition: eroded, almost on the verge of mutiliation
- b) Length: 33cm Width – 24cm
- c) Posture: seated on *Sukhasana*, on a full blown louts major portion of which is now completely eraze out.
- d) Hands : two
- e) Emblems : i) Left hand– she holds a lotus bud with a long stalk. This hand rest on the thigh of the left leg.
 ii) Right hand-placed on the knee as if in absolute comfort
- f) Attendant figure: there is a sign of an attendant figure on the upper right hand side of the image which is beyond to its identification.

Thus, confirming the iconographical identification made by the museum authority we however like to call her with a minor variation that in broader sense of term this sculpture should better be referred as an icon of goddess *Gauri*.

Maintaining the same sensuous standard, a characteristic feature of all the available sculptures at Madan-Kamdeva with scanty amount of ornament and diaphanous garment, the physiognomical analysis of this highly eroded sculpture look to be an extremely difficult task. Image in *Sukhasana* is a rear existence to entire excavated material now conserved to the site museum. The erosions have made it quite difficult to ascertain the exact nature of the facial part, but still the betal leaf patterned face of the image seems to have exposed a

meditative appearance with a divine smile. However, one type of sophistication specially be observed in the execution of lips where the sculptor tried to execute their preference to a thick pair of lips instead of a crescent shape lips as observe in case of the *Laksmi* image. The sense of sophistication as well as its meditative approach have further been manipulated with the lotus bud in the hand of the image, as the lotus in the hand of an image have always been referred to a sense of asceticism.¹²² The linear projection of hand and slightly side ways deeper cut in the execution of narrow middle have instituted a more lighter volume to the entire composition.¹²³ At the same time, the attenuating limbs have further expressed an inherent sublime beauty to the sculpture.¹²⁴ Like the other sculpture, the sense of life or breath also vibrates in the heavily rounded breast and animated abdomen. Thus, the sculpture can virtually be referred as a by product of 11th/12th century A.D. (with no such major variation) as confirmed by the museum authority.

B) Sarasvati (Fig. 6.2) :

Sarasvati, the goddess of learning and fine arts has a wide range of popularity not only among the Hindu (Brahmanical) pantheon, but the Buddhist and the Jainas were also impressed with her qualities.¹²⁵ The Buddhist worshiped her as the consort

122. Mukharjee, R.K : Op-cit, 1965, p.154.

123. These features indirectly place this sculptural composition more near to the Eastern Indian school of Medieval Sculptures.

124. An 11th century feature –Eastern Indian School of Medieval sculpture – Banerjee, R.D.: Op-cit, p.35.

125. Stutley, M. : Op-cit, 2003, p. 126.

of *Manjusri* bestowing knowledge, wisdom and memory while the Jain designated her as the head *Sruta devata* and *Vidyadevis*.¹²⁶ In the Hindu mythologies she is being associated sometimes with *Brahma* (the supreme creator) both as his daughter and wife,¹²⁷ sometimes as goddess *Pusti*, the consort of *Vishnu*.¹²⁸ Whatever might be the fact it is true that she enjoyed popular worship through the ages and the best prove of this fact is that even today also the *Sarasvati Puja* or the worship of *Sarasvati* has a special significance for the student and the fine art community and accordingly the day fifth of the month of *Magha* (*Sukla Panchami*) of every year is being observed specially in Bengal, Bihar and Assam as an auspicious *tithi* for *Sarasvati Puja* when her snow white clay images are generally worshiped in a ceremonious way.

Goddess *Sarasvati* has an unique evolutionary history. In brief, she initiated her career as a sacred river known as *Sarasvati*, on the bank of which the germination of the Vedic literature as well as its cultural development has taken place. The literal meaning of the term *Sarasvati* is a river in possession of a vast sheet of water. The popularity of this river was so impressive that later it was deitified as the goddess of eloquence.

The description about her possible iconographical form are being found in the *Amsumadbhedagma*, the *Vishnudharmottara*, the *Rupamandana*, the *Agni Purana* and in the *Himadri* ¹²⁹ etc. All these treatises described *Sarsvati* as a four handed deity with different attributes like rosary, *Vyakhyana*

126. Sahai, B. : Op-cit, 1975, p. 141.

127 M.P. 3rd Chapter.

128. Sahai, B. : Op-cit, 1975, p. 141.

129. Ibid, p. 142.

mudra, book with *pundarika* or white lotus, *kamandalu*, trident, *Vina* and *Varada mudra*.¹³⁰ The treatise like the *Saradatilaka tantra*, *Prapanchasaratantra* described swan as her vehicle or the *vahana* and at the same time some other treatise, described peacock as the *vahana* of *Sarasvati*.¹³¹ Above all, another interesting point to note about *Sarasvati* is that when she being described as the consort of *Vishnu* she should be a two handed deity playing *Vina* as according to the *Matshya Purana*.¹³² On the other hand the Buddhist votaries also imagined *Sarasvati* as the goddess of bestowing knowledge like their *Manjusri* and *Prajnaparamita* and for them she is mainly a two armed deity playing *Vina*.¹³³

We are fortunate enough with the possession of a beautiful two handed *Sarasvati* image as identified by the museum authority in the site museum at Madan-Kamdeva. In view of confirming this identification, the iconographical traits as well as the present condition of this sculpture, in brief, are as follows:

- a) Condition: carve out in an architectural stone block. An emerging crack at the level of thigh separate it into two half. At the same time a portion at the level of knee is also now being sliced away.
- b) Length : 53 ½ cm width – 38 cm

130. Ibid.

131. Ibid, p. 143.

132. *Sri pushti chāpi Kartavye padma vinā karanvite* (M.P. 258/13).

133. The Buddhist have five different varieties of *Sarasvati*, *Mahasaravati*, *Vajravinasarasvati*, *Vajrasarada*, *Aryasarasvati* and *Vajrasarasvati* and of them only the *Vajravinasarasvati* holds *vina* in her hands as her principal emblem,
Sahari, B. : Op-cit, 1975, p. 143.

- c) Posture : *tribhanga*, where the intensity of the *bhanga* at the level of torso has slightly been over stressed comparing to the lower half. The flexion of the lower half in the *tribhanga* posture was so minimum that at the first sight it looks to be in *dvibhanga* posture.
- d) Hands : two
- e) Emblem: the two hands carrying a *vina* diagonally across the chest
- f) Pedestal : full blown lotus
- g) Eye : there might have been an existence of third eye, but the erosions have made it quite difficult to identify the same.

Thus, the iconographical traits clearly confirmed it as being a deity, no other than the Goddess of knowledge. However, a question generally comes to our mind that according to the *Matshy Purana* the *Vinavadini Sarasvati* can normally be assigned with *Vishnu* as his consort. But the present sculpture carved out in an architectural block, looks to be an independent image. This normally tempted us to call her as being a goddess of Buddhist analogy, as her iconography found to be fit for *Vajravinasarasvati*.

A scanty amount of ornamentation with its stereotyped outline and the diaphanous garment are the characteristic features of all the sculptures found available at this great centre of plastic activities. Accordingly, this though be an image of a famine deity no such new additions are there to observe to the body of this sculpture.

Physiognomy :

This is short and stout version of typical female images found at Madan-Kamdeva. Blooming breast, sensuous abdomen with prominent nipples and naval indicating to a grown up girls are some of the general features as common to all the female figures here at Madan-Kamdeva. This sculpture, with the face almost of betel leaf shape has duly exposed a sense of concentration as the goddess looks to be busy in organizing new musical note. A small pair of lips with divine smile and close eye further aggravated the concept. A slightly exaggerated mode of the *bhanga* at the middle part of the body of this sculpture expedites the sense of delicacy. The successful execution of shade between thigh and the waist, a permanent technique, used here also to create an outward but sensuous bulging sensation to the abdomen of this sculpture. The tapering legs of this sculpture almost to achieve the character of a column, devoid of all possible form of elasticity as there is no incision of knees. This is the best example of 11th century product where the well proportionate sculpture have duly reflected a striking contrast between the two half of the body.

C) Lakshmi (Fig. 6.3) :

Along with that, an image of goddess *Lakshmi* has also graced the aesthetic collection of the site museum at Madan-Kamdeva. Like some other Hindu gods and goddesses, *Lakshmi* has also successfully surpassed the rigid sectarian obligation and accordingly her popularity can even be traced to the annals of Buddhist and Jaina religious texts. She has popularly been regarded as the goddess of beauty, fortune and wealth giver. The

popular mythology regarding the origin of goddess *Laksmi* states that when the ocean of milk was churned by the gods and the *asuras* in search of ambrosils, along with many valuable materials she also came to the surface. On the other hand, from the historical point of view she appeared to be an elaboration of great mother goddess of Indus Valley and Mesopotamian civilization of 3rd/4th millennium B.C in due courses of time.¹³⁴ In actuality, the concept of *Laksmi*, however, be enunciated for the first time in *Sri- Sukta* a *khila* section of the fifth book of *Rig-Veda*.¹³⁵ With these lustrous initiation goddess *Laksmi* however, have received her permanent abode in *vaikunthadhama* as the consort of *Vishnu*, only during the time of great *Gupta* rulers, (the period of Hindu renaissance), and became famous with different names like *Sri*, *Padmini*, *Kamala*, *Gaja-Laksmi* etc.

The iconography of goddess *Laksmi* can primarily be extracted from the treatises like the *Nayasamgraha*, the *Silparatna* the *Amsumadhbegama* etc. Along with that some of the *Puranas* like the *Matshy*, the *Vishnudharmottara*, the *Agni*, the *Markandeya* etc have also made some beautiful description of Goddess *Laksmi*. According to *Nayasamgraha* she would have lotus in her hand, lotus garland and elephant bathing her.¹³⁶ The *Matshy Purana* described that *Gaja Laksmi* bath by two elephants and should carry *Sriphala* and lotus in her hands,¹³⁷ the *Vishnudharmottara Purana* has made two different description about *Laksmi* accordingly when she was depicted near *Hari* she has

134. B. Sahai : Op-cit, 1975,p.157.

135. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p.378.

136. B. Sahai : Op-cit, 1975,p.163.

137. M.P. Ch 261/40.

two hands, at the same time when goddess is represented separately, she has four hands and seated on beautiful *simhasana*¹³⁸ like *Vinayak*. The *Agni Purana* described *Laksmi* as the two handed deity with lotus in the right hand, *Sriphala* in the left.¹³⁹ The *Silparatna* also claimed goddess *Laksmi* as a two handed deity when she is by the side of *Vishnu*.¹⁴⁰ At large she is a two handed deity seated on *Padma* and holds the same in each of her hand.¹⁴¹

The present condition as well as the iconographical traits of this sculpture in confirming her identity, are as follows :

- a)Condition: high sense of erosion have completely removed the smooth plastic surface of the image.
- b)Length: 51 cm Width – 40 cm
- c)Posture : seated like *Vinayaka*, or in a refine *maharaja lilasana*,
- d)Asana : the goddess sit on a six petal pericarp lotus seat with a strange sign probably of an elephant head at the lowest level of the main stream.
- e)Hands: two, both of them are in resting posture at the level of thigh
- f)Emblem: she carried two lotus buds with long stalk in her both hands.

Thus, the two lotus buds with long stalk in the two hands of the image and the *Vinayaka* sitting posture have amicably match with the stated description of the *Vishnudharmottara Purana*

138. *The Vishnudharmottara Purana* (tr.), (III Kanda)

Shah, P. (tr.) : Op-cit, 1961, p. 154.

139. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p.378.

140. Rao, T.A.G. : Op-cit, Vol.II,Part-I, 1914, p.374.

141. Ibid. p.373.

about goddess *Laksmi*. But, the strange sign if be identified is of an elephant head, inspired us to presume her as being an image of *Gaja-Laksmi*.

Now coming to the point of ornamentation the most astonishing aspect which attracts our attention is the headgear used to the image. The usual *kiritamukuta* here is being replaced by a specific pattern of matted hair decorated with pearls which is completely unknown to all other sculptures at Madan-Kamdeva. Apart from that, no such new incorporations are there to observe on the body of this sculpture; she now looks to be satisfied only with the general two tyred necklace, jewelled *Kundala* and waist girdle. Except these all the other signs of ornaments are now being removed by the age long natural erosions. Again the preference to the diaphanous garments seems to have instituted an extra weightage to the concept of sensuality as it being a feminine deity.

Physiognomy :

The broad oval face of the image has duly recognised a maiden handsome look to it with lotus petaled open eyes, generally curved eyebrows and with a blissful smiling countenance. The orientation of chin was more or less sharp and slightly stressed forward primarily to attain anatomical accuracy. Here also, wasp curves used in execution of narrow middle which have duly instituted a sense of depth as well as roundness to the sculpture. The heavy and rounded breasts, fleshy abdomen with prominent nipples and navel overemphasised the sense of femininity. The crescent shape mouth bordered by narrow ridges of line highlighted a sense of unsophistication and almost of a native

tradition.¹⁴² Here the sinuous movement at the rounded contour of the entire composition looks to be successful in overpowering the rhythmic linear concept to a great extent. Another interesting thing to observe is that the straight line marks on the neck on one hand, while referring to the existence of diaphanous garment clinging to the body of this sculpture at the same time it also exposed the prolong influence of Gupta classicalism. Thus, the sculpture can be assigned to a period of 11th/12th century A.D.

D) Vaikuntha Vaisnavi (Fig. 6.4) :

One of the most beautiful image of the present collection of the site museum is the *Vaikuntha Vaisnavi*. It is interesting to find that the existence of the image of this goddess is totally unknown to the entire aesthetic circle of north-east India. The aesthetic exposition of this image look to be an out come of Tantric influence.

The notion to the Tantric philosophy is primarily based on the concept of god through motherhood, with the emphasis on *Sakti*.¹⁴³ In other word, it can better be referred as an attempt to blend the concept of *Siva* and *Sakti* into one, in which *Siva* is always be regarded as the father and *Sakti* as his consort. During the medieval period, Tantra and its practice have caused a great deal of impacts almost on every strata of the Hindu society, notably in Bengal, Assam, Kashmir and also in some parts of south India. The high appreciation of Tantric ideology have received their primary elaboration with the mystic literature. Under such circumstances

142. Bandopadhyay, B : Op-cit, 1981, p.38.

143. Bandopadhyay, P. : *The Goddess of Tantra*, 1987, p.5.

the Vaisnavas have lost their ground specially in the societies of pro-Tantric regions and they almost to retreat to an alien stand. So a natural sentiment was there to couple themselves with the popular current of the societies of that time. Using the same medium, the Vaisnavas also tried to introduced themselves with some mystic element where they emphasized on *Vaisnava Sakti*. *Vaikuntha Vaisnavi* is to be an outcome of this sentiment of the Vaisnava sect. The myth relating to the origin of this deity stated that¹⁴⁴ Lord *Krishna*, during the time of his *Sisulila* when punishing *Kaliyanaga* for his work, his wives prayed *Krishna* in the name of *Rama*, *Pradiyumna*, and *Aniruddha* to excuse him. All of them are the other name of *Vasudeva*. This to have germinated the concept of *Vishnu Chaturmurti* with four arms, four faces, the front face is of a human, other two faces on the two side are of lion and boar while the fourth one is hidden. The *Vishnudharmottara Purana*¹⁴⁵ have further stated that *Vaikuntha* in the human form should be made of four faces or the god of four aspects. Of the central faces—one is in human countenance and other remain hidden; while the two other faces of the central two are of a lion head, acknowledging the aspect of knowledge, and of a boar, referring to *Pradiyumna*, symbolising human power. This led to the emergence of the concept of *Vaikuntha Vaisnava* and his female counter part *Vaikuntha Vaisnavi*. The Tantric text the *Jayadrathayamala*, a stream of the *Brahmayamala* have provided a beautiful description of an independent image mother *Vaisnavi* and accordingly, she should be a four handed deity with a charming

144. Dutta, M. : Op-cit, 1990, p.109.

145. Sastri, S.N. Ghoshal : Op-cit, 1983, p.186.

face holding a conch shell, a wheeled weapon and a club in her hands and seated on the back of the king of bird.¹⁴⁶ Thus, the two concept –the anthropomorphological form of *Vaikuntha* and the ideal of *Vaisnavi* when mingled together, formed a supra-natural deity *Vaikuntha- Vaisnavi*.

Thus, the exceptionally good conditioned sculpture (Comparing to other sculpture), now conserved to the site museum at Madan-Kamdeva have beared the following iconographical traits :

- a) Condition : slightly eroded facial countenance, two lower hands of this four handed deity, both legs of the seated image have now been completely damaged (a portion of the right leg still survived). The natural erosions have also caused a severe damaged to the sign of the dead body under the seat of the deity.
- b) Length : 112 cm Width – 61 cm
- c) Posture: difficult to identify, but as if in refined *Maharaja lilasana*
- d) Seat: a sign of a dead man whose body has been eaten by a fox from the right side and by two birds from the left side.
- e) Hands : four
- f) Emblems: i) Upper left hand – a *Pasa*
 ii) Upper right hand – a club or *gada*.
- g) Face: four, the central human face is being flanked by a lion head on the right side and by a boar head from the left.

146. Ibid.

Thus, the sculpture can better be confirmed as the image of *Vaikuntha Vaisnavi*. Here the image of a dead body on the seat of the deity along with the sign of a fox and two birds on each side seems to be a later appropriation to the concept of *Vaikuntha Vaisnavi*.

Kiritamukuta, rectangular beaded necklace, chain, wrist bangles (Stretching almost from ankles to the wrist) armlets, string like waist girdles with *naramundamala* are some of the general ornamental items observed on the body of this sculpture. The dignity of the sensuous representation still continued with diaphanous garment.

Physiognomy :

The robust bodily form with sinuous lines is the characteristic feature of this sculpture.¹⁴⁷ The face almost of a betel leaf shape with a thick sensuous pair of lips and probably of close eyes (erosion have made it difficult to identify) have duly highlighted the calm and contemplative sentiment of the image.¹⁴⁸ Slightly sloping shoulder, heavy rounded breast, elongated torso with an animated fleshy abdomen have exposed the sensuous qualities of a fully grown woman and on the other hand the smooth texture of the plastic surface of the image have clearly referred to a sophisticated classical idiom. However, the image though have sensuous fleshy character but it is more refined, infusing a sublime beauty to the composition. The beauty of the lion head on the right side of this four headed deity refreshing us almost with

147. Dutta, M. : Op-cit, 1990, p.97.

148. A 10th century feature

Ibid, p.80.

the delicacy of the *Mauryan* column. The sinuous stress to the tips of the fingers have further exposed the aesthetic sensitiveness of this composition. Though sinuosity is the main character of this sculpture but in many occasion the curves specially on the edges of the body have slightly been eased. Thus, giving a gliding linear sensation to the sculpture, it however never gives up its heavily rounded volume. Another interesting point to observe is that a sensible perity is being maintained in the execution of broad chest and the waist, which have duly referred to the use of an expertite hand in composing the sculpture.

Coming to the point of chronology, number of option are there, as stated above, to call it as being a product of 10th/11th century rather than 11th/12th century A.D.

E) Tritya Tripura : Fig. 6.5

In the main temple premise, a confident looking three headed female deity is there in a good shape, (now survived on the left side), as an indispensable part of the main temple plinth at Madan-Kamdeva. Two other similar fashioned female sculptures are also found on the two others sides of the *garbha griha* of the surviving temple plinth. But unfortunately these two are already on the verge of their extinction as they now survived only with the lower part of their composition. Still their specified position, on the three sides of the *garbha griha* as marked as *devistana* in the (fig 21.3), tempted us to call her as being the guardian deity of the main temple complex. Thus, the sculpture of our consideration, though have suffered from age long erosions (which virtually eliminates some parts of her body) still appeared to be the best surviving one.

With all limitations the iconographical trait of this beautiful sculpture are as follows : first, it was a four handed deity at the time of its composition, though all of them are now totally damaged except the partial survival of her left upper hand in which she hold a good volumed *pustak* secondly, the deity sits on a *Pretasana* with an elegant looking *Maharajalilasana*; thirdly, the deity while being adorned with all type of ornament, the *naramundamala* around the waist portion appeared to be a special item to mention.

With these limitation when we tried to have the identity of this sculpture, two beautiful descriptions of *Tripura* group of deities, *Tripur Bhairavi* and *Tritria Tripura* have attracted our attention. Regarding *Devi Tripur Bhairavi*, the *Kalika Purana* ¹⁴⁹ have stated *Devi Tripur Bhairavi* is a four handed deity clad in red cloth, she in her left upper hand holds a *Aksha mala* while in her left lower hand, she is in possession of a good volume book. Similarly, she keeps her right upper hand in *Abhya mudra*. Sitting on *Pretasana*, this *Trinayana Devi Tripura Bhairavi* though being adorned with all type of ornaments, her head, cheast and the waist portion are covered with three rows of *naramunda mala*.

149. **Caturbhūjān** Raktabarnān Raktabastrabibhūṣitam
 Dakṣiṇorddhe Srajañcādhō bibhratīn **Pustakottamama** ||
Abhyañ Bāmahastābhyañ barāñca Dadhatīn Tatha
 Sahashrasurya Sañkāśān **Trinetrañ** Gajagāminīm||
 Pīnutungastanayugān **Sitapretāsanastitām**
 Smitaprasanna Badanān Sarbbālāñkārasnzutām ||
Tlsribhimurndmālabhi Sirobakhyah katīyucal
 Trigurnān Triganībhūteh Pratyekañ Paribhūṣitam||
 (KP.74/94-97):

On the other hand, about *Devi Tritria Tripura* the *Kalika Purana*¹⁵⁰ has made another beautiful description that she is a four handed deity with the *ayudhas* as follows, in her right hand she holds an *Akshamala* while her right lower one is in *Varadayani mudra*, her left upper hand is in *Abhya mudra* and accordingly, in her left lower hand she holds a *Pustak*. She is in possession of a third eye on her forehead. Again in *Urdhapadmasana* the deity sits on the chest portion of Lord *Sadasiva*. Apart from that the *naramundamala* pendant to her chest portion, appeared to be a primary ornament of her choice

Thus, in overall composition the sculpture of our concern though look to have maintained a fair amount of similarity with the prescribed description of *Devi Tripur Bhairavi* and *Tritria Tripura* of the *Kalika Purana*, there are some clear cut variations which have sufficiently confused us in confirming her identities on the line of our proposed assumption. Accordingly, the first point of our objection that genuinely came to our mind is that the deity holds her only surviving *ayudhas* in her left upper hand which should be in the left or right lower one as according to the prescribed direction of the *Kalika Purana*. Secondly, the identical

150. Jabākusumasaṅkāśaṁ Muktakeśiṁ Subhananam ।

Sadaśibṇ Hasantantu **Pretabadwinidhāya** ॥

Hridaye Tasya Devasya Hridharpanmāsanastitām ।

Raktoḥ Plāmirśrītāntu **Mundmālaṁ** Padānugam ॥

Grībāyāṁ Dharayantīntu Pīnonnta Payodharām ।

Caturbhūjaṁ Tathā Nagnāṁ Dhakhiṇādwehakhamālinīma ॥

Baradaṁ Tadadho Bāme Jaganmāyāṁ Tathābhyam ।

Adhastu **Pūstakaṁ** Dhatte **Trenetren** Hasitānanām ॥

Szyadrudhirabhugārttāṁ Tathā Sarbbāṅg **Sundrīm** ।

(K.P. 63/164-168).

naramundamala is visible only to the waist portion of the sculpture of our concern when it should be to the head, chest as well as to the waist region as according to the *Kalika Purana*. The third important point of our concern is to confirm the status of the lying man whom the deity used as the seat for her unique identity. Regarding this the first point which came to our consideration is that the man failed to approach us as being a dead one as the man in his one sided lying posture supported his head with his left hand, and accordingly he looks to be in a pleasure mood of sleeping. This is a decisive observation as on that we can simply reject the scope of her identity on the line of our first proposition i.e. as *Devi Tripur Bhairavi*. Now regarding the question of her other scope of identity, it is interesting that the man in his appearance does not have any form of conformity with the representation of Lord *Sadasiva*, but in concept he looks to be a man of divine identity who has the capacity to bear the weight as well as the pride of this beautiful female deity. This type of representation as a weight bearer of any divine female being is popular with the representation of goddess *Kali* who normally described as being a deity to stand on the chest portion of Lord *Sadasiva*. In reference to Goddess *Kamakhyā*, one of the alien version of Goddess *Kali*, the *Kalika Purana*¹⁵¹ also has made it confirm that *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, *Maheshwar*, the trinity of the Hindu universe are the *Vahana* of the *Mahatejomai Devi Kamakhya* and

151. *Biṣṇubrahma Śibāiddraḍibāi Dhriyatesā Jaganmayī*
Śītapreto Mahādevo Brahmā Lohita Paṅkajam ||
 Hariharīśtu Bijñāyo Bāhonāni Mahāujasah |
 Swamurttañ Bāhanatwantu Tesāñ Jsmanna Jujyate ||
 (KP 58/65-66).

of them *Mahadeva* offered himself in the service of the *Devi* as being a *Sita Preta* (lying like dead body) Depending on that, it can now safely be presumed that though not in appearance, the lying man on which the deity of our concern sits, certainly have an insignia of Lord *Sadasiva* in the concept of its composition. This has normally highlighted the scope of her identity on the line of *Devi Tritria Tripura*, however, with some minor acceptable variations here and there, specially with regards to the composition of her iconography: Thus, in confirming her identity as *Devi Tritria Tripura*, the most unacceptable variation of her identity is her triple headed composition. But, this variation along with the others can be summarized in a words 'innovation', that means, an innovative mind of the sculptor might have worked here to impress the composition where the third eye has found its replacement in three heads of the deity.

Goddess *Tripura* is one among the five variants of *Kamrupini Kamakhya* namely the *Tripura*, the *Kameshwari Siva*, the *Sarada* along with *Kamakhya* herself.¹⁵² That's why *Tripura* was also identified with Goddess *Kamakhya*.¹⁵³ She was the virgin Goddess of sex and beauty and thus being referred in assimilation of the ideal of goddess *Parvati*.¹⁵⁴ Giving more elaboration to her identity the *Kalika Purana* has further stated that there are three different form of representations of goddess *Tripura* with slightest possible variation to each other.¹⁵⁵ These three form of goddess

152. K.P. 62/79/83.

153. K.P. 63/50.

154. Choudhury, P.C.: HPCA, 1987 :419.

155. K.P. 62/79; 63/85-89; 156-162; 164-168.

Tripura have four unique designation namely as *Bagbhava*, *Kamabjak*, *Damar* and *Mohan*.¹⁵⁶ Above all the *Kalika Purana* have also prescribed the entire process of her worship.¹⁵⁷

Thus, certainly be a scion of the *Tripura* group of deities, the most interesting point to observe about this representation is the aesthetic innovation on the part of our age old sculptors. Apart from that its *Kukutanda* faces, elongated torso and sensuously carved fleshy abdomen have duly referred this well conceived deity as being the best probe example of the influence of Pala School of art where the sufficient exposition of classical techniques are there to observe in her execution. She along with the main temple is a product of 10th century A.D.

Section-3 :3 Minor Male Divinities :

A) Vetala (Fig. 7.1):

Attracting our attention, the first sculpture in this section of our study is an emaciated sculpture almost of an abstract qualities. It is interesting to note that this type of sculptural exposition is totally unknown to entire aesthetic arena of Assam. At present, the image have a headless stand which further aggravated the concept of abstractness to the sculpture. Apart from that the age long erosions have also caused a severe damage to the right hand of the image as well as it also partially eliminate smooth upper plastic surface of the image. Carve out on an architectural post the surviving length and the width of this *tribhanga* posture sculpture are 83 and 24 cm respectively.

156. K.P. 63/169.

157 K.P. 63/170-198.

The basic characteristic features of this sculpture are primarily exposed to its physiognomy. Accordingly, in its extremely emaciated appearance, every nob of the bones specially, the rib section of the chest as well as its composing veins are clearly exposed to the surface of the skin of the image. Secondly, the sense of emaciation of this sculpture has further been intensified with its parched up belly. Thirdly, a long stuff almost in the shape of a *khadga* is the only visible *ayudhas* that being placed all along the side of the left hand of the image. Fourthly, the left leg of this nervy composition have slightly been twisted at the level of knee thus, giving a sense of movement to the sculpture. Another interesting point to note about this sculpture is that a peculiar type of waist gridle (almost in the shape of an axe) is there as the only ornamental item, affix to the body of this sculpture.

Naturally, a great deal of confusion roam around the question of its identification, still on the line of T.A. Ganapati Rao—this sculpture can better be placed in an obscure class of Hindu Demi god – where the description of *Vetala* (one such obscure class of Hindu Demi god) looks to have a closer proximity to the peculiarities of the very image of our discussion. In other word—T. A. Ganapati Rao inspired us to call it as being an image of *Vetala*.¹⁵⁸

Coming to the question of its chronology the disproportionate elongation as well as sophisticated execution of the knee section of the leg have inspired to propose it as being a product of 9th / 10th century A.D.

158. *Vetalas* are the highly primitive gods with independent status. Koasmbi, D.D. *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India*, (19964), 1994, p. 170.

B) Dvarapala (Fig. 7.2):

Another unidentified sculpture to the site museum is supposed to be an image of a *Dvarapala*. The *Dvarapala* with their demi god status have generally occupied their position to the entrance of all the Hindu shrine. According to their position, they are known with different names— *sometimes Jaya and Vijaya or Harabhadra and Subhadra according as they occupy the second third or fifth doorway opening into the shrine.*¹⁵⁹

The basic characteristic features of this sculptures are as follows first, it stand almost in a *tribhanga* posture where the bend of the head has slightly been overstressed comparing to two other bend of this sculpture. As a whole, the sculpture in its composition has failed to maintain the parity between the two half of the body i.e. the bend to the head (over stressed) and torso have a striking contrast to the straight column like legs almost in oblique stance. Similarly, a contrast has also been observed in terms of flesh and animation between the two half of the body. Secondly, the linear projection of right hand has reached its ultimate culmination at the level of thigh where the palm section touch the thigh almost in the shape of a plough. The image in his left hand holds an unidentified object probably a mace or a club.

Thus, the iconographical status as well as its gracious but overall simplicity in its execution have duly referred it as being

159. Shastri, H.K. : *Op-cit*, 1974, p. 251.

an image of *Dvarapala*.¹⁶⁰ Now coming to the point of its chronology, primarily because of its contrasting phenomenon, this sculpture can safely be presumed as a product of 11th/12th century A.D.

Section 3:4 Minor Female Divinities

Ganga Yamuna :

An overwhelming sensuous tradition, subjected to a rigid linear contours, however of varied intensity is an identical physiognomial feature of majority number of sculpture conserved to the site museum at Madan-Kamdeva. Two other unidentified female sculptures of delicate *tribhanga* posture is the best prove examples of these fact where linear rigidity primarily be exposed to the surface projection of their hands.

Whatever might be the fact, the present condition as well as the basic iconographical status of these sculptures are as follows :

Fig. 8.1

- a)Condition : eroded
- b)Length : 57 cm. Width – 36 cm
- c)Posture : *tribhanga*
- d)Hands : two
- e)Emblems : i) Right hand – *Chamara*
 ii) Left hand – half blown lotus with long stalk

160. Choudhury, N.D. : *Historical Archaeology of Central Assam*, 1985, p.188.

Dvarapalas are two or four handed and carry the emblem of their respective deities. In south India the *Dvarapala* of *Subramanya*'s temple are of both two and four handed. The two handed *Dvarapala*'s of *Subramanya*'s temple are the bearer of *abhaya mudra* and a club in right and left hand respectively. Stutley, M. : Op-cit, 2003, p. 42.

- f) Pedestal : broken, beyond its identification (but still, supposed to be a *Makara*)

Fig. 8.2

- a) Condition: broken at the level of knees
 b) Length: 42 cm Width – 35 ½ cm
 c) Posture : *tribhanga*
 d) Hands : two
 e) Emblems : i) Right hand – *Chamara*
 ii) Left hand – half blown lotus with long stalk

Thus, the assigning emblems (*Chamara*¹⁶¹ and *Padma*¹⁶²) in one hand, confirmed their divine status and simultaneously also inspired us to presume both as being the images of two famous riverine goddesses of Hindu pantheon, *Ganga* or *Yamuna*.¹⁶³ In an architectural plan these two goddess normally have their position in and around the very entrance of temple. The appearances of *tribhanga* posture sculptures of famine origin near to the entrance or to the door jamb of a temple is one of the distinctive characteristic feature of Hindu temple architecture.¹⁶⁴

161. *The Chamara is part of the insignia of royalty and it also associated with a number of Buddhist and Hindu deities including Ganga, Jamuna—and some female attendants of the gods. When subsidiary female figures in a group hold fly whisk, it signifies that they are attendants.*

Stutly, M. : Op-cit, 2003, p. 28.

162. Similarly *Padma* also signifies divine status.

163. Rao, T.A.G. : Op-cit, Vol. II, pp.530-531.

164. Bhattacharjee, A. : Op-cit, 1978, p.27.

Accordingly, the sculptures of our discussion, as in *tribhanga* posture also seem to have occupied their position to a specified place near the entrance. This in conclusion has provided a new weightage to our presumption that these two are the sculptures of no other than the *Ganga* or *Yamuna*. Except that no further confirmation is now possible regarding the specific identity of these two sculpture primarily because of their damaged pedestal.

Despite of their identical iconographical standard, the physiognomy of these two sculpture have sharply exposed their individual identity. First of all, the life size image virtually tried to maintain the soft fleshy character of its own, with heavily rounded breast, animated abdomen as well as to the fleshy thigh. The crescent shape mouth fit to the rounded face with bulging eyes and pointed nose are some of the other physiognomical feature of this sculpture. The legs though have lost all form of elasticity but still its fleshy execution sought to have maintained a good sense of parity to the smooth fleshy upper trunk of the body.

On the other hand, angularity primarily be observed to the execution of a V shape lips, broad base Mongolian noose are some of the characteristic feature, of the other sculpture. This sculpture is more prone to the linear sensation (comparing to other sculpture) where the surface rigidity or the petrified flesh intended to subdued the soft fleshy nature of the sculpture. Here the blissful happy expression of the fleshy upper trunk of the body look to have a striking contrast to the rigid column like legs or as a whole to the entire lower part of the body. Thus, these two sculptures stand with their traditional sensuous exposition, seem to be the product of 11th/12th century where the life size image can better

be referred as the first generation product while other is the last generation product of that century.

SECTION 3:5

Animal Sculptures :

The discussion will remain incomplete unless and until we have made quick look on the excavated numbers of animal sculptures scattered to the entire range of this ruinous temple site at Madan-Kamdeva. Depending on the nature of its execution the available animal sculptures of this centre of plastic activities can be classed in two categories a) symbolic b) naturalistic, in their appreciation. The first category comprises of three different type of sculptures, *Gaja-Simha*, lion with a rat in the mouth and *Kiritimukha* while in the second category there are four different types of animals, of them three are of horse, deer and a pair of pig affix to the *narathara* section of the main temple plinth and the fourth one is the sculptural execution of a swan affixed to an architectural component (probably a stambha pith or basement of a pillar) now available among the conserving items of the site museum.

(A) With Symbolice Appreciation :

i) Gaja Simha (Fig. 9.1):

Starting with the category of symbolic representation the first important sculpture of our consideration is a bold execution of the popular *Gaja Simha* or *Gaja Kranta* motif. In this representation a lion is being placed over a seated or subduing elephant. The concept behind this execution is a matter of great

controversy but still it appear to be a popular motif found almost in every temple complexes of India, probably to make people aware of the secret of the precious item *Gjamati* which supposed to be in the head of the elephant and it was only the king of the beast who had the capacity to kill the elephant and thus to make men enable to retrieve the precious item.¹⁶⁵ Whatever might be the belief behind this execution, the best available *Gaja-Simha* motif at Madan-Kamdeva is now in a degraded state of condition due to its age long erosions. In the way of execution this motif found at Madan-Kamdeva has an unique bearing of its own. In most of cases the lion is generally placed over a crouching elephant in such a way as if the former tried to climb over the elephant by placing its front paws just over the back of the elephant. But here, the lion being executed firmly by putting almost all the legs (except one) on the elephant and that the front pair of legs on the head of the elephant and if he uttered in success while subduing the elephant is complete.

From the architectural point of view this *Gaja-Kranta* or *Gaja-Simha* motif normally appears on the projecting block of the *tala-bandhana* or at the corners of the *baranda* recess.¹⁶⁶ In Assam and Bengal this motif is found on the either side of the *silapatta* of the icons of gods and goddesses of the temple belonging to a period 9th/12th century A. D.¹⁶⁷ Ignoring the architectural adjustment of

165. Ganguli, O.C. : *Lion on Elephant Motif in Orissan Art*, OHRI, Vol. IV, 1955, p.4.

166. Donaldson & Thomas : *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, Vol. III, 1987, p.1176.

167. Choudhury, R. D. : *Archaeology of Brahmaputra Valley of Assam*, 1985, p. 181.

the motif, the lion looked to be conventionalized in execution, as its mane are schematically arranged and more often it appeared as a hybrid figure while it is not naturalized but imagined one in execution. Explaining the reason behind this conventional execution R. D. Banerjee had put forwarded a view that the inhabitant of Assam were not familiar with the kings of the beast.¹⁶⁸ However, this was not only the case of the people of Assam, everywhere in India there was the paucity of lion which restrict the animal to stand in association of any godhead of early Indian religion; the influx of the animal in companyment of the concept of mother goddess is only a later incorporation, borrowed a fresh in a row, first by the Mahayana Buddhist as the *Vahana* of *Simhananda Avalokitesvara* and then only to the Tantric goddesses of both Hindu and Buddhist pantheon.¹⁶⁹ With all these inception in mind, the sculptor tried to impose super natural power to the lion with opened moth, exposed jaw and flaming eyes in its face resembling a *kiritamukha* musk rather than a lion. Probably, with this intention of imposing a super natural qualities, the sculptor here tried to give a bold exposure to the lion with all possible flesh and abnormalities (like the long tail) which in its turn made the elephant less attractive one.

168. Banerjee, R.D. : ARASI, 1924-25, p. 98.

169. *The paucity of the lion on Indian soil was really a disadvantage for the artist in carving or painting fine figures like those of other animals which frequently attracted their attention.*

Sen, A. : *Animal Motif in Ancient Indian Art*, 1972, pp. 73-74, 111.

ii) **Lion with a Rat in Mouth (Fig. 9.2):**

The lion with a rat in the mouth is the most important as well as unique sculptural representation that we have found at Madan-Kamdeva. Despite of having an unique appellation of its own, no scholarly work had ever made any attempt to divulged the concept behind this execution. Thus, making an earnest attempt to work on that line first, we try to analyse the character of the mouse or the rat. The rat or mouse proved to be a devastating animal to the human civilization through the ages. Even Manu advises the king not to go for the construction of *Mahidurga* (a fort surrounded by water) as the rat and mice can easily infested the same.¹⁷⁰ That means rat or mouse was a constant problem in ancient times which prompted the people of those time to consider the little creatures as a *Vighna* or trouble creator.¹⁷¹ On the other hand, lion is always a symbol of power, stands all along the side of the mothers which to represent the terrible nature of the feminine. *In the human psyche, the animal which were believe to posses some sort of demonic power have normally found their association with the feminine principle.*¹⁷² Again, it is also interesting to find that *all the male bovine or other herbivorous animals (like bull, bison, goat etc) came to be associated with male pro-creative power while the carnivorous (like lion, tiger etc.) irrespective of their sex stood for female principle.*¹⁷³ As stated earlier, the king of the beast has found its association with the famine principle after its incorporation with the Tantric

170. Manu Sam. : VII :70, 72.

171. Sen, A : Op-cit, 1972 p.26.

172. Ibid, p.66.

173. Ibid, p.67.

Buddhist goddesses and then only to the Hindu pantheon.

Thus, attempting to explain the proper implication of the symbol in combination of the character of these two animals, it can virtually be presumed that the lion stand here in simple as a rat killer. The very temple complex of Madan-Kamdeva situated on the bank of river *Swaswati* which might have made it a rat prone areas as according to the views put forward by the great theologian Manu. This might have prompted the sculptors to invent a symbol as a preventing measure against the all projecting danger of rat to the majestic temple complex. Highlighting the graveness of the problem the sculptor used the king of the beast, more appropriately, the prime associate of mother goddesses as a protecting power of these temples against this problem. Not only to the temple complex but for the entire agricultural economy of the state might have suffered from the emerging threat of the little creatures and the people's belief turned towards the mother goddess as the saviour. She with her terrible nature in the form of lion emerged here as the rescuer of the people from the danger.

Coming to the point of its aesthetic application, the sculpture seem to be more demonic in appearance comparing to the lion that we have found in the *Gaja-Simha* motif. At present this unique item survived only with its head portion which makes the aesthetic analysis of the same almost as a difficult task to achieve. But still, the lion supposed to have a spiral curve in its stand which in turn instituted a dragonic orientation to this creation and thus inspired us to think about the influence of a high profile Mongolian culture(or the culture of the land dragon) to this corners of Indian subcontinent.

iii) Kiritimukha (Fig. 9.3):

While referring to the last important representation of this category i.e. about the *kirtimukha* we should have to keep in mind that there was a general tendency in the Indian aesthetics to convert those symbolical figures into grotesque of mythical identities and the *kirtimukha* was one such example of this fact. *The motif occurs throughout the whole history of Indian art, first as a sacred symbol, then as a mere artistic device and latterly as an architectural sine qua non in a class of temple architecture.*¹⁷⁴ *kirtimukha* has a 'Monster face' with protruding tongue, and flaming eyes. Usually it has the *mien of a lion*; and therefore also known a *Simha-mukha*, the lion's face. It is horned; the frown on its fore head (*simhalalata*) is gathered in a third and middle horn between the two stage or ram horn like extensions of the bulge of the eye globes. These protrude from deep sockets..... the nose, which inhales with vibrant nostrils.¹⁷⁵ About the origin of the motif B. K. Barua put forwarded a proposition that it might have hailed from the Polynesian tribes of far-eastern territories in which they fixed human skull as war throphy above the entrance of their dwellings.¹⁷⁶ Whatever might be the origin, the *Skanda Purana* has duly incorporated this symbol with the Hindu pantheon.¹⁷⁷ *Kritimukha made up of the face of the lion (simhamukha) of Death's head*

174. Kramrisch, S. : *The Hindu Temple*, (1946), 1996, Vol.II, p.326.

175. Ibid, p.323.

176. Barua, B.K. : *A Cultural History of Assam*, 1986, p.200

The kirttimukha or the face of Glory is known as Grasmukha in western India as Rahu mukha in eastern India — it is also known as vanaspati, Lord of wood in Java and in Assam

(Kramrisch, S. : Op-cit, (1946), 1996, Vol.II, p.324.

177. Ibid, p.199.

(kala) and the Dragon's head (Rahu, Tamas). The lion, the solar animal, the splendour (Yasas tejas), on the flage of the sund, the symbol of justice and power is the destroyer of fiends¹⁷⁸ and accordingly the same being introduced in the Hindu art in a popular manner. The face of glory, the kirttimukha has thus three aspects i) it is death head of time (kala), the devourer (grasa) of Rahu, the Eclipse ii) Death's head is vested with the insignia of Ahi-vrtra, the Dragon, the ophidian carrier and source of the solar power, the moster which envelops the universe and emits it. In this aspect the chinless, horned, fiery mask covers the reality Purusa while iii) from its lion look and breath, the supreme spirit Brahman goes out into the word.¹⁷⁹ This motif has enjoyed a generous illustration almost in every Indian temple of ancient time. Assam was no exception of that aesthetic arrangement. For every temples of Assam specially assigned to a period starting from 10th to 12th century A. D. this is an inevitable motif normally appeared at the top of the *Silapatta* flanked by two figures of *Vidyadhara*.¹⁸⁰ B K Barua further observed that the kirttimukha motif of Assam are shown without the lower jaw and their eyes have the horn like sockets thus remind us of their close affinity with the khmer motif of Java.¹⁸¹

By the time it reached the soil of Madan-Kamdeva this motif seem to have lost its original auspicious status and it survived simply as a mere decorative formation of a temple architecture.

178. Kramrisch, S. : Op-cit, (1946), 1996, p.326.

179. Ibid., p.328.

180. Choudhury, R.D. : Op-cit, 1985, p.183.

181. Barua, B.K. : Op-cit, 1986, p. 200.

Majority of Kirttimukha on Indian temples are without lower jaws (Kramrisch : Op-cit, (1946), 1996, Vol.II, p. 327).

The surviving temple plinth of Madan-Kamdeva is the best example of this fact. Here a complete strip of the main temple plinth, just below the highly pronounced *narathara* section, is decorated with the *kiritamukha* motif which is an indication of its degradation. Thus, as a whole we have found that all the comprising item of this category more or less had an decorative approach in their execution, but sometime it may have beared some inherent meaning as in case of the lion with a rat in the mouth.

B)Animal Sculpture with naturalistic and decorative appreciation :

Animal sculptures of this category at Madan-Kamdeva can again be discussed under two sub headings, first, the animal supporting the cause of different religious formalities and others are the animal used for secular and decorative purpose; of them the first group comprises of three different types of animal i) a pair of pigs (fig. 9.4) and ii) a deer (fig. 9.5) both of them have made their active participation in erotic activities iii) a seated bull, the *Vahana* of lord *Sada Siva* near the four handed *Nataraja* image (Fig.5.1), while a horse with a hero on its back (fig.9.6) and a swan (*hamsa*) (fig. 9.7) can better be included to category of secular decorative appreciation. In both case, the sculptors have tried to maintain all possible naturalistic application in executing the shape and the type of their chosen animals. Even to the category of animals having the religious appellation, the sculptor emphasized on naturalistic execution instead of imposing some super natural qualities in them to highten their importance as in case of the lion with a rat in the mouth. In other word, the sculptor tried to express their gratitude to the belief of the people in the society in which

the animal on the earth seem to have a prominent role to play. Under such circumstances, the sculptor while making the animal sculptures of this category never like to impose any supernatural qualities on them but, simply tried to worked all along the line of their generally exposed qualities. Accordingly, the whole matter of available animal sculptures at Madan-Kamdeva can be sum up in the following word that the sculptors while embellishing the animals belonging to the symbolic category seem to have applied little bit of innovative mind but that was not in case of second category where they virtually tried to restricts themselves only to the basics of the earth.

Thus, the icono-sculpture study, most importantly reveals diversified physiognomical standard of the sculptures at Madan-kamdev which indirectly instructed a wide range of chronological status for the construction of this mighty temple complex, starting from 9th century A.D. to 12th century A.D. Secondly, the existence of different varieties of icons further exposed the popularity of both Hindu and Buddhist religion in the temple premise. However, the popularity of Hindu icons outnumbered the Buddhist one which probably indicates the dominancy of Hindu religion, as will explain in later stages of the study. Thirdly, the sculptural execution though, have followed the prescribed directions of the *Silpa* cannon, but still the study reveals the scope for the use of innovative mind in consecrating some of the sculpture specially of the animals at Madan-Kamdeva.

