

CHAPTER - V

CHAPTER-V

SCULPTURE : THE TRUE REFLECTOR OF THE SOCIETY

*Each art tradition is the revelation of the attitude and values of a particular culture and social milieu and adds its characteristic contribution to humanity's heritage of art.*¹ Thus, in this chapter, we will simply try to have a brief sketch of the life of *Kamrupi* society, contemplation of which can duly be assigned to a period starting from 9th century A.D. onward. Emphasizing on different socio-economic issues (like the theory of social division and its implications in the society, economic condition of the country, people's dresses and ornaments, etc.), main objective of this study is however, to have an idea about the religious beliefs of the people of ancient Assam as according to the reflections received from the available aesthetic product here at Madan-Kamdeva.

SECTION : 5.1 Socio-Economic Condition :

A) Social Division :

Indian society survived with a traditional concept of social division of *varnasramadharm*. The term *varnasramadharm* means a social and ritual obligations that sought to be obeyed by the people of Brahmanical India in accordance with their specific *varna* or colour² or caste.³ In actuality, this is an encapsulate form of some important social and ritual obligations set out for the Hindu Indians in the *dharmasastra*. Whatever might be the

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1. Mukherjee, R.K. : *The Cosmic Art of India*, 1965, p.95.
 2. Thapar, R. : *Early India*, 2002, p. 27.
 3. The term Varna later means the caste
Kosambi, D.D. *The Cultural and Civilization of Ancient India*, 1994, p.81.

meaning, the influence of this traditional concept of *varnasrama* had made the Indian society a caste ridden society with the emergence of four specific *varna* or caste, namely as *Brahman*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Sudra*. However, duties of each caste though had strictly been instructed by our *dharmasastras*, but they never appeared to be rigid in nature in any period of its development, specially in respect of food, professions and in marriage relationship which creates number of sub castes and interestingly they all have found their necessary accommodation within the fold of orthodox Hinduism in due course of time.⁴

Like in other parts of India, the theory of *varnasramadharm* had enjoyed a high sense of respect (if not from the common people) but at least from the royal fraternity of Kamrupa. Number of references are there, where the king of this tract often described themselves as the upholder of this theory in their respective inscriptions⁵ The *Kalika Purana* and the *Yogini Tantra* (1/6/40) have also made some references about the prevalence of *varnasramadharm* in Kamrupa. However, the theory never have any practical implication,⁶ rather it being used as a

4. Choudhury, P.C. : HCPA, 1987, p.311.

5. In the Nidhanpur C. P. inscription king Bhaskarvarman being referred as a protector of *varnasramadharm*. Similarly, king Indrapala in his Guwahati grant described himself as the upholder of this theory.

6. All over India *Varna* is only a reference category, it represents a model of a broad division of society on the basis of quality and functions and their organic linkages. It does not reflect, however, the reality of social order, which is much more complex.....there is no uniform all India hierarchy, even the distribution of *Varna* is not uniform throughout Hindu society.

Dube, S.C. : *Indian Society*, 1992, pp.48-49.

theoretical statement referring to a two fold caste system composed of *Brahman* and man of other professions including the tribals to swell in *Sudra* community.⁷

Thus, it was because of its theoretical application or because of its flexible existence, the sculptures of Madan Kamdeva refused to reflect anything in co-herent to the concept of caste hierarchy, rather it proposed a class distinction at the rank of rich and poor in their overall exposition. Number of factors are there for the emergence of this distinction in the society. Like in other parts of India, in *Kamrupa* also, the ideal of feudalism seem to have played a vital role in forming a wealthier community in the society. Feudalism in India *began with land grants made to the Brahman, temple, monasteries when villages together with their fields and inhabitants with fiscal administrative and judicial right (with rights to enjoy fine received) and with the exemption from the interference of royal official were given to the beneficiaries.*⁸ There is a general but important observation that the practice of granting land and growth of landed intermediaries first began in backward tribal areas where the pressure on land as in case of fully Brahmanised area was not so grave one, particularly because of lack of advancement of agriculture.⁹ That means, the peripheral areas of India's main heartland (like Assam) might have prone to a process of transition from tribalism to that of feudalism.¹⁰

7. In actuality, it was at least from the time of the later half of the Gupta period *the term Varnasrama* started to mean two caste *Brahman* and *Sudra* where all the lower classes of the *Brahman* community considered to be the *Sudras*.

Bhattacharya, N.N. : *Bharatiya Jati Varna Pratha*, 1987, p.155.

8. Guha, A. : *Medieval and Early Colonial Assam*, 1991, p.66.

9. Ibid, p.69.

10. Guha, A. : *Feudalism in Early Medieval India, Some comments*, 1963, a mimeographed paper.

Whatever might be the fact, as to the information derived from the Nidhanpur copper plate inscription the process of granting land in true sense of term said to have initiated by king Bhutivarman during 5th century A.D. The pan Indian political condition had further accelerated the process of granting land in Kamrupa. It was from 5th century A.D., imperial *Gupta* power was gradually exposed to the tract of their decline which had created an atmosphere for the evolution of the concept of regionalism or regional states in Indian sub-continent. In case of Kamrupa, the imperial *Gupta* though not tried to establish their direct suzerain authority, but still their declining trends, provides the ruler of Kamrupa an opportunity to enhance further their political pride, if not in other parts but at least in eastern India. Thus, the raising political importance had normally attracted large number of *Brahman* and other learned personnel to this remotest corner of India.

Apart from that, *Kamrupa* at that time was a land of peace, stayed far away from the fear of the attack of different nomadic tribes from central Asian region, which further prompted the migration of those learned personnel or to change their centre of activities from the main heartland of India to *Kamrupa*. Thus, the continuous flow of learned *Brahman* expedited the process of land grant at the support of royal house, who were always in favour of those newly migrated people, specially for the technical advancement of agriculture. Depending on different epigraphical evidences eminent scholar A Guha states that in *Kamrupa* land grants were made mainly in favour of *Brahman* scholars, priest and religious institutions.¹¹ But in reference to some important

11. Guha, A : Op-cit, 1991, p.40.

literary evidences the same scholar finally concludes that *not only the Brahman, but the Kayastha, Daivajna and other high class migrants also favoured with royal land grants.*¹² All these have normally provided a scope to think that there were two types of land grants, first the religious one, in favours of religious institution and the priestly communities (who in one way or other engaged themselves with those institution); secondly, the land grants of secular nature, enjoyed mainly by the government officials in return of their service to the state in lieu of their salary. The paucity of metallic currency after the decline of *Gupta* power¹³ had further accelerated the process of granting land to those secular services.

The epigraphical and literary evidences have proved that in *Kamrupa* the *Brahmans* were the highest beneficiaries of both these types of land grants. The Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva states that the supreme administrative post of the state should always be held only by those learned *Brahman* in hereditary manner.¹⁴ Supporting this view another important references is also there in the *Kalika Purana* which states that king should appoint learned *Brahman* as the minister of his Kingdom.¹⁵ The treatise on the other hand has put forward another important information regarding the existence of some non *Brahmin* official to the burucratic set up in *Kamrupa* where it states that if any non *Brahmin* officials has made a conspiracy against the King, after detection that official should be killed, but if the conspirator

12. Ibid, p.41.

13. Jha, D.N. : *Economy and Society in Early India*, 1993, p.67.

14. Choudhury, P.C. : Op-cit, 1987, p.269.

15. K.P. 84/103.

is a *Brahman* he should not be killed rather banished him from the country.¹⁶

Thus, who ever might be beneficiaries, the 'land lords have generally wielded a political authority over their respective petty landed estates' and shouldered the responsibility not only to protect their subjects from any incursion but also to provide military assistance to the king at the time of his necessity and thus the land lords have the sufficient warring capabilities in their possession.¹⁷

One important feature that has found its explanation in many of these grants is that *the royal donors while giving away a piece of waste land, also makes a gift of an inhabited village or at least a certain number of peasant families to the same. so that, he can extract certain services from the villages for the development and cultivation of land concerned.*¹⁸ This has made an indication about the existence of a class of farming people who were *probably slaves or at least bound to the soil.*¹⁹ Besides performing their field work, these poor villagers (both male and female) have also to engaged in domestic works of their lords.

Apart from those land lords, another wealthier community in Kamrupa who seem to have dominate the society was the merchant community. *The situation of the towns like Pragjyotisha, Harupesvara, Kamrupanagara and Durjaya on the bank of Brahmaputra greatly facilitated commercial intercourse.*²⁰ Evidences

16. Ibid, 84/86.

17. Guha, A. : Op-cit, 1991, p.41.

18. Ibid, p. 40.

19. Ibid, p.41.

20. Choudhury, P.C. : Op-cit, 1987, p.353.

further inspired Choudhury to conclude that Kamrupa has enjoyed not only an intimate cultural and commercial relations with different parts of India, but it has an international trade linkage with different South East Asian countries.²¹ The matter has already been discussed extensively in earlier chapter (no. II), where we tried to highlight the importance of Madan-Kamdeva as a transit point of an international trade route starting from Margiana via Pataliputra, Kamrupa connecting upper Burma. *Merchants and wealthy people lived in the towns and moved in the streets on elephants and horses or carried on litters. Inscription mention towns and market with Vipanis and various kind of wares and jewellery. The road run through out the countrythe business centres attracted many people from outside which facilitates trading enterprises.*²² All these have normally inspired us to presume that along with the royal houses and the feudal lords there was an another important groups who had enjoyed the prestige of wealth in the *Kamupi* society. Thus, it was not only in Kamrupa but in entire India, the society was divided into two main classes rich and poor, *the rich lived in luxury with male female servant called Snanaka (or bath man who assisted in bathing), the Prasadhak or Prasadhika (or the male female toilette assistant) and the Srirandhri (the maid in waiting) to attend them and help them in their various engagement and duties.*²³

The sculptures of Madan-Kamdeva (paricularly the sculptural description available to the *narathara* section of the prime temple plinth) have revealed the existence of a prosperous

21. Ibid, pp. 356-358.

22. Ibid, p. 353.

23. Agarwal, U. : *North Indian Temple Sculpture*, 1995, p. 142.

community in *Kamrupa*. At the same time it also explain (however, in an indirect way), the condition of a poor section of people in the society who appeared to have survived at the mercy of their lords. Accordingly, there is a sequence, where three people in a row carried something together on their shoulder (fig. 19.2). The item they carried seem to be very heavy as they used both hands to uplift (possibly to maintain balance) the same. *Dress in ancient India was largely determined by the class to which one belonged*²⁴ but unfortunately, that line of determination is not possible in case of this sequence of our consideration because of the erosions on the smooth plastic texture of these sculptures. But still these three images appeared to be a replical representation of an attendant community of prestigious family in the society. The a prestigious family shown here to be engaged in *linga* worship with all sorts of formalities. The last consecutive sequence of the panel is also composed of three persons, two of them (probably men belonging to the same prestigious family who engaged in *linga Puja*), drink something by keeping a table like furniture in between them, while the third one seem to be an attendant, a masseur of those high class personal. Here the table probably made from a 'single piece of wood' (as shape suggest) can be regarded as an indicator of the high class status of the people in the society.

Throughout the ranges of sculptural description the artist had successfully depicted the life of a group of women who seem to have enjoyed an aristocratic life style in their exposure.

24. Chakraborty, S.: *Socio-Religious and Cultural Study of Ancient Indian Coins*, 1986, p.199.

Seated on cushion²⁵ their life being supported with male, female attendant. In some sequences, their female attendant have found their representation in a protecting posture where they stand straight on the side of their mistress by keeping their hands on their thigh. Though these attending women stand here with an unarmed standard, but still they supposed to have work as a minor protecting barrier when someone tried to approach her mistress with evil designs. The practice of women guard to the upper class personal was not new to Indian tradition²⁶ but the sculptural descriptions of Madan-Kamdeva have referred that with the passes of time, the tradition of women guard seem to have lost their original prestige in the country like Kamrupa by loosing arms in their hands. On the other hand, standard of those aristocratic women exposed to the use of items like stool, table, mirror etc along with their male female attendant. Women in most of these representations supposed to have belonged to the rank of *devadasi*, *rajdasi* or *alankaradasi* as proposed in earlier chapter.

Explaining the warring capabilities of those upper class people (probably of feudal lords) there are three sequences to the *narathara* section of the main temple plinth. In one sequence, a hero rides on a horse with open sword, while in other a man stands

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25. Women belonging to the richer class of the society are generally shown with female attendant the use of cushion is an another feature of explaining their aristocratic standard in the society. Agarwal, U. : Op-cit, 1995, pp.142-143.
26. *Kautilya's Arthasastra* has mention about the house hold guard of king (*Abhyagarika*) which said to have comprises of both male and female guard. Mookherjee, R.K. : *Chandragupta Maurya and His Time*, 1966, p.64.

with full armour (sword & shield) and in the third one, the hero subdued a person, probably the vanquished one, at the point of his sword. As explain in earlier chapter, the warring scenes have an auspicious beginning where a couple (probably the hero and his wife) shown to have engaged in performing some ritualistic work with pomp and grandour. The sitting posture as well as their costume suggested them as being the person belonging to aristocratic community. Similarly, the pro-active tradition of human sacrifice at the end of these warring scenes (as explained in earlier chapter) have made an indirect suggestion about the deplorable condition of a section of people, often suppressed, sometime even at the point of sword by those high class personal who ever care to use the service of those poor people both for benefit of their material and spiritual life.

Further clarification the fact of class distinction in the society, number of palatial sequences are there to the *narathara* section. This type of sequences are found specially in connection of representing erotic imageries, a man sit on a cushion with outstressed leg, while a woman probably a poor one, sitting on her toes in between two legs of the man (who supposed to be her master) as if she engaged in preparing his genital organ for an ultimate union. In an another sequence an aristocratic couple (in appearance)engaged in sexual orgies where one lying straight just above the ground level probably on *takhta* (wooden bed). An attendant in simple attire stand behind the couple as if in shy, that mean, there is a community who by dint of wealth extract some crude service from their poor attendant, even to the life of their ultimate physical pleasure. Similarly in depicting erotic

concept of fellatio, *vayantarata* etc, the artist have successfully depicted a pro-aristocratic set up in their representation to highlight class distinction in the society.

B) Position of Women :

The spirit of a civilization, its excellence and limitation can always be realized only with the history of the position and status of the women in it.²⁷ Regarding the position of women in ancient Assam, elaborate references are there, but they are all defective in a sense that most of them simply highlighted the life of the women in the *harem*, hence we have *an idealized picture rather than with actual fact concerning ordinary women folk of the middle or poor families.*²⁸

In case of sculptural descriptions of Madan-Kamdeva, we are however, fortunate enough as they have successfully portraits the life of the poor and innocent women along with the life of palatial or high class women. But the explanation of the position of women (on the basis of available sculptural evidences here at Madan-Kamdeva) is possible only with the conceptual elaboration of the ideal of *pardah* and the institution of marriage.

The system of *pardah* or curtain used by extension, stand here to mean the seclusion of women.²⁹ It is a well known dress code of Indian women, specially for the married one, through the ages. By this traditional dress code, the people belonging to aristocrate families tried to shield their women from the unpleasant

27. Choudhury, N.D. : *Historical Archaeology of Central Assam*, 1985, p.140.

28. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : *CHA*, Vol.1, 1990, p.224.

29. Thapar, R. : *A History of India*, Vol.I, 1966, p.345.

aspect of life, resulted an extreme seclusion and consequent emptiness in which amorous and sometimes political intrigue became a frequent phenomenon.³⁰ However, that does not mean that women could not move freely in the society. Only the ladies of the aristocrat families used to put on the veil on their face when they were out on a journey.³¹ Women of artisan and peasant communities seem to have enjoyed relatively more freedom in the society, probably because of their economic necessity.

Now, coming to the sculptural descriptions at Madan-Kamdeva, it is interesting to find that the depicted women folk to the *narathara* section of the main temple plinth, stand in favour of complete avoidance of any form of *pardah*. However, regarding this it should also be remembered that major section of these sculptural depictions are mainly concentrated to the life of the upper class women and to the provisions of their innermost apartments. With these in house representation, it is now quite difficult to ascertain whether they used *pardah* when they were in open aired conditions or not. But still, the sculptural depiction of musical women (if not in other times, but at least during the courses of their performances) as well as female attendants (who were normally the women belonging to economically backward classes) here at Madan-Kamdeva, have made no indication about the use of *pardah* in their exposure. Thus, the *pardah*, symbolizing a degraded position of women in the society, never appeared to be a popular dress code for the women of this region as in other parts of Indian subcontinent.

30. Ibid, p. 302.

31. Majumdar, R.C. & Altekar, A.S. : *The Vakataka Gupta Age*. 1967, p. 352.

The position of women in an Indian society can further be explained with the institution of marriage. *Marriage is an ancient institution which evolved in society to give it stability and order.*³² The Hindu *sastras* recognized eight modes of marriage and they are i) *raksaka* or *ksatra vivaha*, where the bride is carried off by force ii) *Paisaca* a secret elopement iii) *Gandharva*, a secret informal union by copulation iv) *Asura*, acquirement by purchase v) *Brahma*, where the bride is freely given to a worthy bridegroom with due ceremony vi) *Daiva*, where she is married to priest vii) *Arsa* in which the bride's father, in giving her away, received from the bridegroom a formal gift of a pair of oxen and viii) *Kaya* or *Prajapatya*, in which proposal comes from the side of bridegroom. In the law books first three of these modes are recognized as peculiarly appropriate to *kshatriyas*, fourth is allowed only to *Vaishyas* and *Sudras*, while the remaining four modes are regarded particularly suitable to *Brahman*.³³ Among these eight modes of marriage, it was only in the *Brahma* and *Prajapatya* form of marriage, the dignity of maiden was fully maintained in which she being recognized as equal partner in all religious and worldly undertakings of her husband.³⁴

While explaining the position of women, during the courses of their married life here at Madan-Kamdeva only two sculptural references are there to the *narathara* section of the main temple plinth, first, the well know *dampati* (Fig.10.2) of aristocratic appearance (as we have explain earlier), seem to have

32. Mishra, Y.K. : *Socio-Economic and Political History of Eastern India*, 1977, p.80.

33. Barua, B.K. : *Cultural History of Assam*, 1986, p.130.

34. Choudhury, N. D. : *Op-cit*, 1985, p. 140.

engaged in a grand religious ceremony where the latter half of the male counterpart seated on left hand side in a pleasant manner. Sharing the same *asana* in a cheerful mode, the woman here seem to have enjoyed equal status with her male counterpart. Their sitting position specially of the woman on the left hand side of the male has further suggested them as being a married couple who seem to have solemnized their relation either through the process of *Prajapatya* or *Brahma* mode of marriage or on the basis of equality.³⁵

But the second sequence of our concern has reflected something different to the concept of equality to the position of woman. In this sequence also the woman sits on the left hand side of her male counterpart. But this time the male is more rigid in appearance and the woman in her unique form of stance inclined more towards her left and in doing so she tried to maintain the balance of her inclining stance by keeping one of her hand around the right shoulder of the male counterpart. Her inclining stance with out stressed leg (Fig. 10.3) suggest as if she is in a defensive posture or in other word it can be said that something unnatural must have taken place between them. The age long erosion have made it now quite difficult to explain the exact situation in the sequence, but still two possibilities are there, either woman being instrumental one in creating an atmosphere of affection for any amorous play or she being forced here to have an illicit relationship with the male as she tried to refused the same with her inclining stance. Under such circumstances, there is a little bit of scope to

35. According to the Indian tradition, the Hindu married women should always be kept her position on the left side of their husband.

explain the couple as being a married one and if so the alliance might have taken place either through the *Raksaka* or through *Paisacha* mode of marriage for which forcible abduction or seduction by getting the girl intoxicated or by other means referred to be a genuine criterion.

Along with *Pardah* and marriage the institution of prostitution also exposed degraded position of women in a society. Both literary and epigraphical evidence proved that prostitution was an approved institution in central Assam.³⁶ In defining *Ganika* or prostitute, *Kamsutra* had stated that she should be proficient in sixty four art³⁷ including dance and music. At Madan-Kamdeva number of sequences are there with dance and musical representation. In all these sequences the women are the chief performer in companion of a musical party. In earlier chapter we have already made an elaborate discussion while identifying them (as to their sequential proceedings) as *rajdasi*, *alankaradasi* and *devadasi*. There is no doubt that women engaged with these institutions certainly have enjoyed high profile status in the society, but that is not sufficient to remove their degraded standard of life in the society. The matter became more clear as in every erotic scenes. The women have virtually found their representation only as a feeder group to appease the fantasy of the high born person in the society.

Thus, the position of women in Kamrupa did not appeared to be grave in nature. In a male dominated society³⁸

36. Choudhury, N. D. : Op-cit, 1985, p. 143.

37. Upadhyaya, S.C.(tr.) : *Kamsutra of Vatshyana*, 1961, p.80.

38. Bargohain, J.K. : *Asomar Sanskritik Itihas(As)*, 2007, p.222.

though the women folk being referred from time to time as the secondary item of their enjoyment, but in most of the cases society had paid their homage to the qualities of the women. After all it was a land of mother goddess *Kamakhya* where the women instincts are being worshipped thoroughly. Secondly, monogamy appeared to be well recognized concept to dominate *Kamrupi* family in which a married woman shared the status of equality with her husband in every sphere of life. But on the other hand, the erotic composition here at Madan-Kamdeva sensibly referred to a degraded position of woman in the society. However, regarding this it should also be kept in mind that this was a land where human natural instinct seem to be respected and it was probably because of that the treatise like the *Yogini Tantra* duly sanctioned all type of illicit relation except with mother. And that is why the *Ganika* or the dance girl had enjoyed a prestigious position in the society. There is no doubt that sometimes poor and innocent women suffered a humiliation at the hand of prosperous community, but this was not an uncommon phenomenon, even today also women suffered because of their physical and monetary weakness. As a whole, position of women in ancient *Kamrupa* was not so grim in nature where they have enjoyed relatively more freedom and prestige in society comparing to other parts of India.

c) Dress and Ornament :

Wearing of clothes and decking the body with ornaments have remind enduring passions of human beings in all ages since man developed the taste for clothes and ornaments. But the dressing of clothes and ornaments and the manner of wearing them have changed according

to the needs and geographical environment of society.³⁹ The literary and archaeological sources are the best form of evidences to reconstruct the history of dress and ornaments of our ancestor and of them the archaeological evidences are always considered to be more reliable in nature comparing to those of literary one as their descriptions of costume seem to be vague, exaggerated and confusing.⁴⁰

Among those archaeological findings, the sculptures and its reflections are always regarded as the best form of information, so to make an enquiry into the subject of people's costume of our age old time. However, in explaining the subject on the basis of sculptural evidences, we have to restrict ourselves within a specific parameter, line of which was drawn by one of the imminent scholar of Assam, Pradip Chaliha. According to him, majority number of sculptures found in Assam are mainly the icons representing different identities of our meta-physical world i.e. gods and goddesses, in making those icons, the sculptors have to follow the strict instructions of *Silpa Sastras*. Under such circumstances it is now difficult to believe that the costume endorsed to the bodies of the sculptures of our metaphysical world, have any implication on the costume of the people on the world.⁴¹ Despite of this restriction, there much have been some sharing inspiration between those professions i.e. among the sculptors, jewellers or the dress makers who shared their ideas to embellish their respective products. Apart from that, sculptures are the true

39. Mishra, Y.K. : Op-cit, 1977, p. 90.

40. Alkazi, R. : *Ancient Indian Costume*, 2003, p.XI.

41. Sarma, G.(ed.) : *Asomiya Jatir Itibrita*(As), 1996, p. 173.

exponent of the people's preference to have their costume only to some specific parts of their bodies. In other word, the sculptures have made due indication about those specific parts of a body around which people would normally like to use their ornaments and other costume. Accordingly the head, neck, waist, hands, legs are some of the most relevant parts of their bodies where ornaments are adorned eminently.

Now, if we tried to explain the subject on the basis of available sculptural product here at Madan-Kamdeva, the basic problem we have to confront first is that the majority number of sculptures have lost the smooth plastic texture of their bodies. Apart from that enquiry also have to be made here only on the basis of those sculptures which are of devine in origin as the other sculptures specially those assigned to the *narathara* section is now in a highly eroded state of condition.

Despite of all those restrictions, the sculptures of Madan-Kamdeva however, reflects the popularity of the use of two pieces of cloth, one to cover the lower portion of the body known as *Adhovastra* and other meant for the upper portion known as *Uttariya*. The *Kalika Purana* has already mentioned about the popularity of both stitched and unstitched cloth in *Kamrupa*.⁴² *Dhoti*, which is an unstitched item, appeared to be the most popular form of *Adhovastra* worn by the people of our age old time round the waist. In the early period, *Dhoti* was held tight round the waist with a sort of *Parivesa* which in our medieval period was *Kamarbandha* like modern belt.⁴³ The available sculptural evidences have made

42. K.P. 69/2.

43. Rajguru, S. : *Medieval Assamese Society*, 1988, p.173.

it quite difficult to differentiate the male female *Adhovastra* as the sculptures of both sex have showed their preference to use *dhoti*. Reflecting the nature of *Adhovastra* there is an unique sculptural representation which shows that the downtrodden people of the society were satisfied only with a simplified form of dhoti, more appropriately a *languti* covering the portion just above the knee to the waist (Pt.I, 1 & 2). Regarding *Uttariya* there is a general belief that these *were used specially by the higher classes. The male female sometimes used Kanchuki to cover their upper part, as known from some of the ancient sculpture.*⁴⁴ *Kanchuki*, as suggested by the sculpture of Madan-Kamdeva has taken the shape of diaphanous garment exposing the sensuous charm of the body of the sculpture. Along with diaphanous garment, the sculptures also showed the people's preference to have their upper part bear. The women engaged in dance performance seem to have used a special type of blouse where two ends of the same usually tied together between the two breasts(Pt.I, 3).

Like in other parts of India, the people of ancient Assam were also fond of wearing ornaments. Both literary and sculptural evidences proved the fact. As for example, the *Kalika Purana* has issued a long list of forty different type of ornaments⁴⁵ made either of gold, silver or other metal and worn by both men and women on different parts of their bodies– like, head, ear, neck, arm, waist, feet etc. Similarly, highlighting the popularity of ornament there is a reference of jeweller's shop in the city of Hadapesvara.⁴⁶ Again, the *Kalika Purana*, as stated earlier, also

44. Choudhury, N. D. : Op-cit, 1985, p. 146.

45. K.P. 69/18-23.

46. Borgaon grant vv.11,14.

made an instruction not to wear silver ornament just above the neck and to wear bell or iron metal ornament only on the lower part of the body. Thus, all these references have made an indication about the popularity of ornaments made out of different metal in Kamrupa.

The sculptures of Madan-Kamdeva also highlighted the importance of ornament and their exclusive use in the life of the people of ancient Assam. Starting with head, the sculptures of this great plastic centre have recommended not only to different type of hair style but also ornaments to it for both men and women. Accordingly, the most common form of coiffure of the women was a simple knot tied at the back, which was probably decorated with beads or flower (Pt.I, 5 & 6). Apart from that, their chignon sometimes tied at the top of the head, probably with a fillet of *Kiriti* type to keep their chignon in proper (Pt.II, 9 & 10). Like women, male also have long hair falling on both shoulders or back in long tresses;⁴⁷ sometimes the male hair was also tied in a knot at the back of the neck, but probably they were not decorated with flower or beads like women; sometimes, their knots were also goes to the top of their head. It is interesting to observe that the person who tied their knot at the top of their head (irrespective of men and women) have found an aristocratic appearance in their exposure (Pt.II, 11).

47. Even during the medieval period also, the male persons in Assam, except Muslims, *mariya*, *kaibarta* and *Hira* had long hair as cited in *Itihase Soaura Chashata Bachar*, Rajkumar, S., 2000, p.588 from Gait, E. : *A History of Assam*.

The head ornaments worn by ladies were of different types— one of them was the *Kesabandha* or fillet round the forehead (Pt.II, 10). The *Kesabandha* appeared to be more popular with the dancing women as the sculptures to the *narathara* section have described. Apart from that, there were different type of *Kiritamukuta* for both men and women. People worn head dress normally on auspicious occasion.⁴⁸ The sculptural descriptions of the *narathara* section of the main temple plinth have made due explanation of this fact.

The sculptures of Madan-Kamdeva have made an indication about the existence of two type of ear ornaments i) *Karnaphula*, ii) *Kundala*. The *karnaphulas* were almost like the modern top while the *kundalas* were like round rings or bali (Pt.II, 1,2,3,4). The *karnaphulas* were again of different types, some had divergent petals like flower (*Pushpakundala*) some other have 'd' like shape with rows of bud attached to it from top to bottom.

The sculptures of Madan-Kamdeva also reveals three different types of neck ornaments, of them, the first one is like a modern chain, clasp round the neck and sometime with a pendant to enhance its beauty. The second one was probably made of thick metals, like gold and silver on which the precious stone or pearl of different shape (normally rectangular or circular) studded in a flowery way. Thus it can better be said as *Ratnahara*(Pt.II, 8).. The third one is like *galpata* (neck plate) middle point of which indicates the rift between the two breasts in case of women (Pt.II, 5).

48. Majumdar, R.C. & Altekar, A.S. : Op-cit, 1967, p.353.

Armlets or *Keura* was also appeared to be a popular ornament for both men and women. The sculptures reveals the existence of two different type of armlets one is like a plain circular bands while the other have lofty designs more often with a crowning symbol(Pt.II, 6).

Kankana used on wrist, was also a common piece of ornament worn by both men and women of our age old time. Normally there is a sharp distinction between male female *kankana*, but the sculptures of Madan-Kamdeva referred only to a plain natured *kankana*, rounded up and left open on either side with a knob to beautify it (Pt.II, 7).

Katisutra was one of the most elaborated ornament used by both men and women. This ornament tied below the waist, hanging down almost to the knees. However, in case of the sculptures of Madan-Kamdeva, the age long erosions have already abolish the sign of this lustrous ornament except in case of the image of *Indra*, where the sign of *Katisutra* survived almost in a distinct manner. (Pt.I, 4).

Some of the most interesting point to note about the ornamentation are that no sculptures here at Madan-Kamdeva have showed the sign of *payal*. Secondly, almost all metaphysical identities are stand here with a *vanamala*, some of them also have the sign of *Upavita* but in case of majority number of sculptures this sign has already been erased out.

D) Music and Musical Instrument :

If not impossible, it would be very difficult, to find persons who do not like good music. Every age, past, present and future and

every country is fond of music. In early medieval period, both men and women joined together in musical concert which were often accompanied with dance.⁴⁹ The sculptures of Madan-Kamdeva, mainly the sculptures to the narathara section are the best prove exponent of this fact.

The classification of Indian musical instrument is yet to be done in detail. So far, the general grouping of musical Instrument is four fold one—*Ghana*, *Avanaddha*, *Sushira* and *Tata* as explained by Bharata.⁵⁰ The sculptures of Madan-Kamdeva clearly indicates the popularity of these four types of musical instrument, here in Kamrupa. According to the sculptures of Madan-kamdeva there were two types of *Ghana Vadya*, they were the *Gong* (*Bar Kah* in Assamese) and *Manjira* (Pt.III, 3). (popularly known in Assamese as *tala*. They are of two types—*khutitala* and *Bartal*). Similarly, regarding *Avananddha* type, there we have found the reference of three instrument, one was like *mridanga* or *dholak*, *dhol*, creating sound however, from one side only and *khol*, a popular Assamese instrument of Vaisnavite culture (Pt.III, 2 & 4). Flute and its Assamese version *Pepa* were two of the other instrument of *Sushira* group of musical instrument (Pt.III, 7). Lastly, like in other parts of India, the *Vina* appeared to be the most popular *Tata* or string form of instrument in ancient Assam (Pt.III, 1). It was popular not only with Goddess *Saraswati* but the people on the earth, probably the eminent musician of the court always used *Vina* in their performance and the sculptural representation are there to explain the fact (Fig. 12.6, 12.8).

49. Agarwal, U. : Op-cit, 1995, p.156.

50. Deva, B.C. : *Musical Instrument of India*, 1978, p.3.

E) Economic Condition :

*Man's attempt to meet the primary necessities of life or his attempt to feed and cloth himself and his family led to the development of his economic life.*⁵¹ But unfortunately while referring to the economic life of the people of Kamrupa, no direct sculptural reflections are there to observe at Madan-Kamdeva and all the deliberations have to be made here only on some indirect evidences.

Accordingly, the sculptures of Madan-Kamdeva, affix mainly to the *narathara* section of the main temple plinth have successfully projected the life of a high born people in the society. Like in other parts of India, the ideal of feudalism worked as a catalyst behind the existence of these aristocrate people in the society of Kamrupa. The basis of feudalism is an agricultural society, features with *penal servitude, house slaves, purchased entertainer of all sorts and harem slaves.*⁵² In the country like Kamrupa, the kings tried to accelerate the process of cultivation by donating waste land to the newly migrated *Brahman* who had equipped with advance technique of agriculture. The extensiveness of cultivation work under the supervision of feudal lords is proved when *the areas of all donated land are expressed in term of the measures of paddy* that they produced.⁵³ In other word it can safely be said that though the sculptures of Madan-Kamdeva have reflected nothing to the agricultural structure of the society, but still the life depicted here, certainly have some link with agricultural economy of the country.

51. Agarwal, U. : Op-cit, 1995, p.161.

52. Kosambi, D.D. : Op-cit, 1994, p.24.

53. Choudhury, N.D. : Op-cit, 1985, p.235.

Giving more wider dimension to the country's agricultural set up, number of sculptural reflections (though indirect in nature) are there at Madan-Kamdeva, which virtually refers to the existence of different village and cottage industries in Kamrupa as a subsidiary modes of country's economy. The evolution of industries or the growth of craft is always directly proportionate to the prosperity of a country. Throughout the period of history, Assamese industrial products and their craftsmen have enjoyed a great deal of reputation in India and abroad⁵⁴ which is nothing but a signal of an overall economic prosperity of a country.

Among the industries, textile was the most proficient industries of Kamrupa at one time. Number of literary references are already there to prove the existence of a professional group engaged with this weaving industries.⁵⁵ Supporting all those clauses of literary evidences, the sculptures of Madan-Kamdeva have showed the preference of different kind of cloth.⁵⁶ Among them, mention should be made about the diaphanous or

54. Barua, B.K. : Op-cit, 1986, p.103.

55. Kautilya refers to the varieties of fibrous garment known as '*patronna*' and of them the product hailed from *Suvarnakundya* of Assam considered to be the best.

Barua, B.K. : Op-cit, 1986, P-104.

Among the presented item that Bhaskar Varman sent to Harsha there was a piece of silken cloth which was as smooth as birch bark. Goswami, J. (tr.) *Harshacarita*, 1996, p.110)

The *Kalika Purana* has also refers four varieties of cloth in Kamrupa, namely *Balkalong*, *Kokhajang*, *Shanang*, *Romajang* (K.P.68/12).

56. Dress and ornaments according to sculpture always have a question mark because Indian sculpture in execution have always followed the rules of the *Silpa-Sastras*.

transparent garments, as indicated in the earlier chapter of our study.

For all type of textile production (Whether thin, painted or embroidered) normally three stages are there i.e. spinning, weaving and lace making. That means, textile industries in Kamrupa might have flourished in combination of three different type of professionals—spinner, weaver and lace makers. Along with that two other important vocations are there to survive with the professions of cloth makings and they are dyeing and embroidery. In ancient Assam, there was a group of professional known as *Rajak* who had earned their bread and butter by using colour made out of the staff of flower (*Kusumba*) to the cloths.⁵⁷ Supporting this the *Kalika Purana* has made number of indirect references where it asked worshipper to use different coloured cloths for the use of different deities. As for example, lord *Siva* and *Vishnu* need to be worship with red and blue colour cloth respectively.⁵⁸ Eminent scholar Pradip Chaliha while referring to the list of present dispatch by Kumar Bhaskar Varman of Kamrupa to Harsha of Thaneshwar, tried to state that the pillow as smooth as the skin of a deer, might be a product covering with silken cloth of dyed thread.⁵⁹ Along with that literary evidences are also there to prove the existence of an embroidery professionals. This time also the *Kalika Purana* serve as the best available literary evidence to support the cause for the existence of this profession in Kamrupa as it directed the Worshipper to make gift of embroidery clothes to their respective deities.

57. Chaliha, P. : *Purani Axamor Karikori Khilpa*(As), 1998, p.115.

58. K.P. 69/9-15.

59. Chaliha, P. : *Op-cit*, 1998, p.114.

However, it is now quite difficult to assess the matter of these allied professions of textile industries on the light of available sculptural evidences here at Madan-Kamdeva as the age old erosion have already abolished the smooth plastic texture of the sculptures. Only few sculptural exuberance supported the cause for the suppose existence of embroidery and dyeing professions in Kamrupa.

Tailoring was an another important subsidiary profession of textile industries. While describing the life of the people of Kamrupa as well as gracious presence of divinity, the sculptor here at Madan-Kamdeva found to be very much selective in choosing the dress code for their product. In doing this, the sculptor certainly have beared some inspiration from the actual work of a professional dress maker, or in other word, it can be said that there must be a group of professionals who were expert in cutting and sewing an artistically woven cloth and thus convert it into a fashionable item of that time to appease the taste of the people, specially of the high class personnels in the society. These tailors were expert in making different type of head-gear out of cloth for kings, queens, rich men and women in the society.⁶⁰

Second important sculptural reflection is about the existence of a group of professionals who had earned their livelihood by making articles of every day's use probably of different metal like copper, tin, brass, bell, lead, iron, gold, silver etc. Regarding the proficient tradition of metal industries in Assam, Jean Baptist Tavernier had stated that *This kingdom is one of the*

60. Agarwal, U. : Op-cit,1995, p. 162.

*best countries of Asia for it produces all that is necessary to the life of a man.... There are mines of gold, silver, steel, lead, iron and much silk.*⁶¹

The metal workers in broader sense of term can be divided into three categories as accordingly to the metal that they use i.e. blacksmith (*lohakara*), coppersmith (*tamakara*) and goldsmith (*hiranyakara*). Among them, the blacksmiths were the most proficient professionals who produced not only house hold utensils and implements of agricultural need, but a small section of them were also employed in manufacturing war implements.⁶² It was from the 5th century A.D., Assam entered into a phase of periodical expansion of its political power which necessitated the abundant supply of war head to its army. Highlighting the popular use of different type of iron instruments, mainly the war head, number of sculptural sequences are there to the *narathara* section of the main temple plinth where the sculptors in terms of explaining the life and activities of a specific community, blatantly executed warring scenes with the use of different type of war head like sword, shield, knife, dagger etc. (Pt.IV, 1,2,3). Again, the majority number of *ayudhas* of the divine images are also hailed from the list of the war head. Thus, the whole matter of iron made war head can be summerised in the following words that the spirit behind these execution of weapon certainly have their root to the works of the blacksmith on the earth. The prosperous existence of this vocation in ancient Assam later constitute as a distinct guild (*khel*) known as *Tiruwal* during the Ahom rule.⁶³

61. Cited by Chaliha, P. : Op-cit, 1998, p.16.

62. Sarma, S.N. : *A Socio-Economic and Cultural History of Medieval Assam*, 1989, p. 312.

63. Chaliha, P. : Op-cit, 1998, p.17.

Along with iron, bell is an another important metal which provide economic subsistence to a group of people through the period of the history of Assam. An alloy of copper and tin, the bell metal is popularly used in making different household utensils like dish (*Kahi*), cup (*bati*), water jug (*lota-ghati*) wash basin (*chariya*) etc. of an Assamese family. The people of Assam always considered those bell metal utensils as the pride of their family.

The bell metal workers are popularly known as *Kahar* or *Kamsyakara*.⁶⁴ It is generally believe that in between 7th to 9th century A.D., the art of making bell utensils have entered in Pragjyotisha–Kamrupa⁶⁵ and from that time onward, it slowly emerged as an inseparable item for the pride of an Assamese family. Highlighting the traditional popularity of bell metal utensils in Assam, there is an interesting reference in the *Yogini Tantra* which emphasized the use of bell metal cup (*bati*) while preparing alcohol for the *Kshatriyas* and the *Vaishyas*.⁶⁶ Apart from making household utensils, the bell metal is also used in making *ghana* or *aghati vadya* like *ghanta* (bell), *napur*, *talam* etc. Referring to a great tradition of making musical instrument from bell metal in Assam, number of references are there in the *Kalika Purana*.⁶⁷

64. Sarma, S.N. : Op-cit, 1989, p. 311.

65. Chaliha, P. : Op-cit, 1998, p.6.

66. Nārikelodakñ Kāñsne Kshatriysna Barānane ||
Baisysna Makhikanñ Proktanñ Kāñsnastañ Barbarñine ||
(Y.T. 1/6/35)

That means when the juice of coconut is kept in bell metal cup, the juice becomes the alcohol for *Kshatriya* and when honey is kept in bell metal cup it becomes the alcohol for *Vaishya*.

67. Chaliha, P. : Op-cit, 1998, p.46.

Regarding the profession of coppersmith *in early Assamese literature, we have often come across the word tamrapatra in religious function.*⁶⁸ As for example the *Kalika Purana* has stressed the need for the use of *tamrapatra* while offering *naivadya* to *devi*.⁶⁹ Similarly, the Bargaon copper plate grant has made an important reference about the existence of a copper mine in Kamrupa (*Kamalakara*)⁷⁰ The inscribed plate made out of copper also highlighted the popularity as well as abundant availability of this metal in Kamrupa. Thus, it can be said that at least from the 7th century A.D (ie the date of earliest available land grants inscribed on copper in Assam), the coppersmith emerged to be an important profession in Kamrupa.

Now, regarding the sculptural evidences of all these professions, no such concrete reflections are there at Madan-Kamdeva to support their existence, except some indirect instances like three women in a procession carrying bell like object (fig. 12.6), man with a cup in his hand while taking alcohol (fig. 19.2), an woman (man?) poured water on *Siva Linga* from a *Kalasa* like object (fig.19.2) etc. There is another interesting sculptural description in which an woman hold a mirror in one of her hand as if she prepared herself for any occasion⁷¹(fig.14.4). These *darpana* in ancient time generally made out of copper (metallic mirror) were the highest achievement of the coppersmith.⁷²

68. Sarma, S.N. : Op-cit, 1989, p. 312.

69. KP 70/49-50.

70. Choudhury, P.C. : Op-cit, 1987, p. 346.

71. The high sense of erosions have made it now quite difficult to confirmed the matter and under such situation, this proposition is only because of her sitting and hand posture.

72. Agarwal, U. : Op-cit, 1995, p.162.

Along with all these profession, the art of making ornament in gold and silver was an another important profession of a group of people in ancient Assam. A small section of those jewellers also engaged in making ornament out of precious stone or beads. Sculptures are always regarded as the best form of evidences while making an enquiry over the question of people's ornamentation. Different type of ornament affix to the bodies of the sculptures duly highlighted the proficiency of this industries in Kamrupa. As mention earlier, number of literary evidences are already there⁷³ the sculptures here simply strengthen the cause of those literary references.

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73. Gold was found almost in all rivers of Assam like *Suvansiri*, *Dikhau*, *Dihong*, *Bharali*, *Dhansiri* etc. and according to Tezpur grant even the river *Lauhitya* also brought gold dust from the gold bearing boulders of the *Kailasa* mountain (Choudhury, P.C. : Op-cit, 1987, pp P 345-46)

The *Kalika Purana* also mention about the existence of a gold bearing river in Assam – *Suvarnasiri* (K.P. 80/17-18)

Highlighting the prosperous existence of a jeweller community in ancient Assam there is a list of royal present from Bhaskara to Harsha in the *Harshacharita* of *Banabhatta* which includes— one *Abhoga Chatra* (Umbrella) with golden ribs, *Suramoni* (Headgear), Shining necklace etc.

Bargaon copper plate grant also refers about the existence of a jewellers market v. 14

The *Kalika Purana* also mention a list of ornament which seem to be popular in Assam at one time (K.P.69/17-23/33). Similarly the *Purana* also instructed that the head gear should be made of gold and silver ornament should never be use above the neck (K.P. 69/26). These instruction seem to be followed by the people of Assam. All these are supporting evidences of the prosperous existence of a jeweller community in ancient Assam.

SECTION : 5.2**Religion or Religious Condition :**

Study on religious belief of an ancient society and their explanation on the light of surviving aesthetic products always proved to be a challenging task to achieve. Thus, to avoid complicity in explaining the facts regarding the religion or the religious belief of the people of Kamrupa on the basis of available aesthetic product here at Madan-Kamdeva, we would like to go through the quarries which are genuinely come to the mind of any serious visitors who visits this famous archaeological site of our concern.

A) Sun Worship :

Accordingly, the discoveries of large number of *Surya* icons almost in every trances at Madan-Kamdeva compelled the visitors to think about the possible existence of any Sun temple in this ruinous temple site. So to have a comprehensive solution of this problem we tried here with a quick look on the antiquity as well as the tradition of Sun worship in Assam through the ages.

It is known to all that, our ancestors were the worshipper of nature. Different natural phenomenons like wind, strome, rains even the occurrences of day and night etc. had sufficiently astonished the mind of our ancestor as these manifestations at that time were simply beyond the range of their understanding. Mystery of those natural occurrences, specifically the power that they enumerates, had created a sense of respect (made out of fear) in the mind of our ancestor and thus, each of those identical natural phenomenon became the emblem of their worship with the passes of time.

One such phenomenal natural object was the Sun, his daily appearances and disappearances, most importantly he as being a natural provider of light and heat had duly created a high sense of impression in the mind of our ancestor which ultimately made him an object of their worship. Regarding the emergence of Sun worship there is however a general suggestion that it was from the time of Neolithic period, when farming economy have gained its momentum, Sun became an important object of their Worship, in other word *farming economy appears to have played leading role in the origin of Sun Worship.*⁷⁴ It was from the time of early Vedic period i.e. (at least) from 1500 B.C. to -1000 B.C, the written form of Sun worship emerged in India in the form of *Gayatri mantra.*⁷⁵ The *Gayatri mantra*, composed in respect of Sun or *Surya*, is the soul of the Veda⁷⁶ By using *Gayatri mantra* one should paid homage to *Surya* in each of the seven *prahara* (division) of a day.

*During the Vedic and Sutra period, the rising Sun (Vivasvat), the setting Sun (Savitri, also connected with the rising Sun), the nocturnal Sun (Varuna) and the Sun of the day (Mitra) were Worshipped. The Agnihotra and Samdhyopasana also represented forms of Sun Worship. Various names of the Sun (Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Amsa etc.) represent different aspects of Surya. The twelve Aditya came to represent the twelve month of the year.*⁷⁷ That means, emphasis being given to the naturalistic character of Sun god during this period.

74. Srivastava, V.C. : *Sun Worship in Ancient India*, 1972, p. 341.

75. Ibid, p. 343.

76. Bardoloi, N.P. : *Surya(As)*, 2000, p.6.

77. Agarwal, U. : Op-cit, 1995, p. 74.

On the other hand, its anthropomorphic form certainly be a derivation of later Vedic period when the fertility aspect of Sun god had received utmost importance.⁷⁸ And accordingly, by the time of the two epics he emerged in a complete human being with increasing number of his family members.⁷⁹ This process of humanization of the Sun god had received a new boost with the coming of Iranian Magis to the Indian subcontinent. The first wave of these people entered in India along with Achemenian invasion during the 5th century B.C.⁸⁰ The importance of their appearances to the Indian soil lies to the fact that they brought with them a concrete anthropomorphic concept of Sun god to India.⁸¹ At the initial phase, the Magian culture failed to received any acceptance from the orthodox Hindu society, but with the passes of time specially after 5th century, A.D. their tradition had slowly found their recognition to the fold of Indian culture.⁸² The chronological sequence of the writing of the *Puranas* are the best prove evidence of this fact. Accordingly, in the earlier *Puranas* like the *Vishnu*, the *Viyu*, the *Markendeya*, the *Brahmanda* etc. (which seem to be written in between 3rd to 5th century A.D.), the Sun god being referred simply as an atmospheric god (purely Vedic in nature) while in the later *Puranas* like the *Samba*, the *Bhavishya* etc. the concept of *Surya* image being highly apploudged⁸³ probably because of conceptual amalgamation of Indo Magian culture. That

78. Srivastava, V.C. : Op-cit, 1972, p. 346.

79. Ibid, p. 350.

80. Ibid.

81. Bardoloi, N.P. : Op-cit, 2000, p.40.

82. Srivastava, V.C. : Op-cit, 1972, p. 351.

83. Bardoloi, N.P. : Op-cit, 2000, pp. 39-40.

means, as the time went on the *Surya* or Sun cult have attained a new composite form where both Vedic (atmospherics) and anthropomorphic Megain concept mingled together to provide a new horizon to the cult of our discussion.

i) Surya Upasana in Ancient Assam :

Regarding the Sun Worship in ancient Assam, eminent historian P.C. Choudhury had stated that it was the gift of the Magies and their culture *who were also largely responsible for the growth of the cult and planetary worship* in this remotest corner of Indian subcontinent.⁸⁴ Pragjyotishpur, the very name of ancient Karmupa often referred to be a land of planetary works specially because of its end term *Jyotisha*. *Jyotisha* is a popular word used to mean astrological works. The *tradition of astrological studies remain intimately connected with the cult of Worshipping Surya and graha*.⁸⁵ Supporting the conclusion regarding the hoary tradition of planetary works in Kamrupa there is an interesting description in the *Kalika Purana* which states that *Parampita Brahma*, creator of the universe, had created stars by encamping himself here in Pragjyotishpur.⁸⁶ This description of the *Kalika Purana* had further inspired Gait to call Pragjyotishpur as *the city of eastern astrology*.⁸⁷ From the time immemorial *a distinct system of astronomy for calculating the almanac has been developed in Kamrupa. This system is called Kamrupiya Nibandhariya Khandasadhya. A tretrise*

84. Choudhury, P.C. : Op-cit, 1987, p. 406.

85. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p. 325.

86. *Āsya Madhyastito Brahmā Prāṇa Nakhyatram Sasarjah
Tatah Prāḡjyotsākheyñ Puri Śatrupurīsamā.* (K.P. 38: 119).

87. Gait, Sir E.A. : *A History of Assam*, 1992, p.15.

on this system has been composed by one Mihira in and about 665 A.D. a manuscript of the same are found in large number in the district of Kamrupa.... Some scholar attributes this tradition of planetary worship of ancient Assam to Iranian influence people of Alpine stock, speaking an Aryan language of Paisachi variety and proceeding from Iran, migrated into eastern India and defused there a culture long before the advent of Vedic Aryan influence.⁸⁸

However, there are some scholars who tried to state that the term Pragjyotishpur has nothing to do with astrology as the term simply stand to mean a land of early appearances of the light.⁸⁹ Wherever the controversy may have concluded, the matter may be sum up in the following word that the term Pragjyotisha might not have any conducive linkage with the practice of *Jyotishsastra*, but still the planetary work practiced even today also by some astrologer as their family profession at *Navagraha*, *Kamakhya*, *Gandhia* etc. places certainly have enough weightage to prove a hoary antiquity of the tradition of almanac calculation in Assam centering around *Surya*.

Highlighting the popularity of Sun worship in Assam the *Markendiyā Purana* has introduced us with the name of two important places in Kamrupa as *Mahasaila* and *Guruvishala* where Sun being worship in a popular manner.⁹⁰ Here *Guruvishala* was later identified by P C Choudhury as *Garudachala*, a place of

88. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p. 325.

89. Ibid., p. 323.

90. *Tadetya kriyatāñ zena Bhānuh Pr̥timupāṣyati !*
Tasmād Gurubiśālākhyāñ Banañ Sidwniṣebitama !!
Kamrupe Mahāsāile Gakhyatāñ Tatra Bāi Laghu !
Tamminnārādhan̄ Bhānoh Kriyātāñ Sasamāhitāh!! (Mar P. 109:57-59).

religious importance near modern Hajo of Kamrup district (rural) of Assam.⁹¹

Similarly, some stray references available to the pages of the *Kalika Purana*, have also highlighted the existences as well as popularity of Sun cult in ancient Assam. First of all lord *Vishnu* described Kamrupa (on the occasion, when the lord tried to explain the peculiarities of Kamrupa to his son *Naraka*) as a sacred place where *Chandra Surya* always live together along with *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Maheshwar*.⁹²

The *Purana* has also mention the name of two important places in Kamrupa where Sun was worship in a ceremonious way. One of this place was *Rabikshetra* (*Mahakshetra*)⁹³ and other was *Prakparvat*⁹⁴ popularly known as *Citrasaila*. Here *Rabikshetra* being identified as *Surya Pahar* of modern Goalpara district of Assam.⁹⁵ At the same time the *Purana* has also described *Citrasaila* as being a centre of worshipping nine *graha* or *navagraha*, depending on which it was later identified as *Navagraha* hill in the city of Guwahati.⁹⁶

The archaeological remains, primarily the discovery of *Surya* images, *Surya Chakras* etc in *Surya Pahar* and the system of *navagraha* worship as well as the practice of astrological work still continued in the *navagraha* temple premises in Guwahati,

91. Choudhury, P.C. : Op-cit, 1987, p. 407.

92. A'tra Swayaṅ Mahādevo Brahmā Cāhaṅ Byabastitaḥ
Chandrah Sūryasca Satatṅ Basatohatra ca Putraka || (K.P. 38/117)

93. Rabikshetraṅ Zatra Deva Aditya Satataṅ Stitāh | (K.P. 78/41)

94. KP 79/121.

95. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p. 324.

96. Aban Citra Śāilare Pūjayitwa Navagrahaṅ (K.P. 79:142).

have further strengthen the description of the *Kalika Purana*. Apart from that the *Kalika Purana* has also instructed some rules and regulation that one has to follow on the occasion of a *Surya Puja*.⁹⁷ All these description in the *Kalika Purana*, thus have stand in favour of a popular legacy of a Sun cult in ancient Kamrupa.

Like the *Kalika Purana*, the *Yogini Tantra* another important treatise for the history of ancient Assam has also provided some valuable information regarding the popular existence of Solar cult in Assam. Accordingly, first there is an interesting reference of the existence of a *Surya Kunda* on the eastern side of *Urvasi Kunda*.⁹⁸

The location of this *Surya Kunda* later being identified as in between *Urvasi*⁹⁹ and *Bhasmakuta*¹⁰⁰ hills in Kamrupa¹⁰¹ Highlighting the popularity of *Surya* cult in Kamrupa this Tantra also described in details the procedure of *Surya Puja*. Thus the *Markendeya Purana*, the *Kalika Purana* along with the *Yogini Tantra* have provided us some beautiful information regarding the extensiveness of *Surya* cult in Kamrupa.

However, the inscriptional evidences regarding the prevalences of the Solar cult in Assam is not so encouraging in

97. A beautiful descriptions of two handed *Surya* image is there along with a description of *Surya mandala*, *angamantra*, *bij mantra* etc.. (K.P. 78/43-54).

98. *Tsyāh Pūrbbe Cārkḍhanuh Azutañśnatathaparañ !*
Sūryatīrthamiti Kshyātañ Devanāmapī Durllabhañ !! (Y.T. 2:5:58).

99. The *Kalika Purana* referred that *Urvasi Kunda* was situated on the southern part of *Bhasmakuta Parvat* (K.P. 79/ 35,38).

100. B. K. Barua identified *Bhasmakuta* with *Bhasmacala*
Barua, B.K. : Op-cit, 1952, P-20.

101. Sarkar, I, *Aspects of Historical Geography of Pragjyotisa Kamrupa*, 1991, p.218.

nature.¹⁰² Still, there are some scholar like Hoernle who tried to define the term *Aditya bhattaraka* of Indrapala's Guwahati grant as being a term used to mean the popularity of Sun god in Kamrupa. P. N. Bhattacharya in his famous book *Kamrupasasanvali* redefined the term on the basis of its syllabul *bhattaraka* simply as a scholar.¹⁰³ Out of these two extreme opposite views eminent Scholar M. M. Sarma has put forwarded a composite conclusion regarding the meaning of the term *adityabhattaraka* that it either to mean Sun god or the name of a Brahmin pandit called *aditya*¹⁰⁴ Among all these considerations, another probability still survived in which one can consider *Aditya* simply as a designation of a scholar of *Daivagya* community, who would like to call themselves as *Suryavirpa*. This is because of the fact that they were originally the Sun worshipper,¹⁰⁵ known popularly in the Assamese society as *Ganak*. Even today also some of these second categoried *Brahman*¹⁰⁶ have maintained the tradition of their planetary practices. The increasing popularity of the anthropomorphic form of *Surya* as well as dimensional expansion of planetary work are two of the primary contribution of these people to the Indian culture as a whole.¹⁰⁷

102. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p. 324.

103. Bhattacharya, P.N. : *Kamrupasasanavali*, 1338, p. 129.

104. Sarma, M.M. : *Inscription of Ancient Assam*, 1978, p. 192.

105. Sarma, S.N. : Op-cit, 1989, p. 62.

106. Ibid.

107. According to *Brihaddharma Purana*, the *Daivagya* as a caste originated from a *Sakadvipya Brahmin* (Sarma, S.N. : Op-cit, 1989, p.62). They might have some distant linkage with the Iranian Magis. Scholars attributes the planetary worship of ancient Assam to Iranian influence.

Barpujari, H.K. (ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p. 325.

Thus, the whole matter regarding the popular existence of *Surya* cult in Assam may be sum up in the following word that whatever might be the original status of *Surya* cult in Assam, it was at least from the time of king Indrapala (960 A.D.–990 A.D.), this cult by dint of *Suryabonshi* or *Adityabonshi Brahman* had successfully attained much waited royal patronization. In other word, the age old tradition of Sun worship in Kamrupa have entered into a new phase of life by the time of 10th century A.D. The *Kalika Purana*, a product of 10th century A.D.,¹⁰⁸ with number of descriptions relating to *Surya* and its worship are the best supportive evidences of this presumption.

Regarding the question of its extensiveness R.D. Choudhury has stated that *it was probably due to the fact that some of the Sena kings of Bengal were the devotees of Surya and possibly this caused the popularity of this cult in Assam.*¹⁰⁹ It is true that some of *Sena* rulers were the ardent worshipper of the *Surya* and two of them namely Kesavasena and Visvarupasena even declared themselves as being the *Paramasaura* in their inscription¹¹⁰ But, that does not mean in any way that the popularity of Sun cult in Assam was a gift of a specific dynasty of a Bengal. Assamese culture have beared the tradition of *Surya* cult far beyond the ranges of those *Sena* rulers in Bengal. The best prove illustration of this fact may be referred to a sculptural arrangement of a door lintel of famous Dah-Parvatia temple at modern Tezpur in Assam. In this arrangement, a *Surya* image look to have taken the place of *Vishnu*

108. Sarma, M.M. : Op-cit, 1978, p. .09.

109. Choudhury, R.D. : *Archaeology of the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam*, 1985, p. 18.

110. Srivastava, V.C. : Op-cit, 1972, p. 358.

as the panel composed of two other images identified as *Brahma* and *Siva* on the two side of the *Surya* image. Thus, the replacement, even to one of the primary god of famous Hindu trinity, certainly be considered as one of the true example of the popularity of Sun cult in Assam at least from the time of later Gupta period (the temple is a product of Sixth century A.D.) Depending on this peculiar sculptural arrangement Nirmal Prabha Bardoloi, even dared to designate Dah-Parvatia as being a *Surya* temple.¹¹¹ Thus, from all corners, sufficient number of evidences are there to prove the extensive popularity of *Surya* cult in ancient Kamrupa.

ii) Nature of Sun Cult :

The discussion will remain incomplete without having few lines on the very nature of Sun cult in India as a whole. The popularity of Sun cult in India was so extensive in nature that it attracted people to its fold from all section of society irrespective of class, creed and religion.¹¹² With the passes of time, the Sun cult though have attained a sectarian character of its own but it often crossed its own sectarian obligation in terms of enjoying respect from all major religious sects of Indian society at that time. As for example, Mañatunga a Jaina poet of 7th century A.D. praised the Sun god in his book *Bhaktamarastrotra*.¹¹³ Similarly, Buddhist also regarded *Surya* as one of the intimate friend of Gautam Buddha.¹¹⁴ Thus, the non sectarian existence more specifically its

111. Bardoloi, N.P. : Op-cit, 2000, p.118.

112. Srivastava, V.C. : Op-cit, 1972, p. 351.

113. Ibid. p. 356.

114. Bardoloi, N.P. : Op-cit, 2000, p.112.

inborn secular approach to all section of people in the society (irrespective of class, creed and religious divergences) is the main secret of its long lasting prevalences in India. Regarding this it should also be remembered that the period starting from 7th century A.D. to the end of Hindu period i.e. upto 12th/13th century A.D. was the richest period of Sun cult in ancient India.¹¹⁵ That means, it was during this period the solar cult had enjoyed not only the patronization of the royal court but also the support of different individuals probably of the feudal lords and other high class identities of Indian society at that time.

Like in other part of Indian subcontinent Solar cult in Kamrupa also survived with a non sectarian approach and by the time of 10th century A.D. it seem to have emerged as one of the prominent deity to the life of the people of Kamrupa. But, because of overwhelming impression of Tantric culture on the mindset of the people of Kamrupa, here also it failed to attain its supremacy. In other word, solar cult in Kamrupa had enjoyed a subsidiary status under the acute pressure of the Sakta-Tantric dominancy, as we have the illustration regarding this in the *Yogini Tantra*.¹¹⁶ Under such circumstances, to enhance their acceptability in the society, more appropriately, as a possible means of their endurance (under the popular pressure of Tantric ideologies) the worshipper of this cult have successfully incorporated some Tantric features like *mudra*, *nyasa*, *abhicara bija* etc. to the very process of his *upasana*. The *Agani Purana* (ch 73) and the *Kalika Purana* have provided the best possible illustration of this fact. Regarding the

115. Srivastava, V.C. : Op-cit, 1972, p. 353.

116. Kāmrupi Tathā Devi Pujā Sarbhottama Smita.
(Y.T. 2/6/151).

impression of Tantrism in *Surya Upasana* it should however be remembered that *only outwardly the Sun cult was influenced by tantric cult* as some of the fundamental principal of Tantrism like the association of female principle with male was totally absent even to the later development of Solar cult.¹¹⁷

iii) Popular Aesthetic Explanation:

With this brief discussion all about the possible nature and extension of Solar cult in India as well as in Kamrupa, when we tried to have the solution of our prime queries regarding the reason behind the discovery of large number of *Surya* icons at Madan-Kamdeva, the first important point to observe is that like in other Indian temple sculpture, a decorative insignia is a primary characteristic feature of all available sculpture of this famous archaeological site. The term decorative insignia used here to mean that all those available sculptural product of this site have their exposure only to the surfaces of the architectural blocks. In other word, architectural stone blocks (most of them are now in a broken state of condition) are the primary ground for the all possible exposition of sculptural products here at Madan-Kamdeva. The artist while joining those architectural stone blocks though have to work according to the prescribed direction of Indian *Silpa* cannon, but still, their primary objective was to satisfy first the religious sentiment of their patron, secondly to produce their product as the best matching one with the popular religious mood of that society where the shrine exist and then only they tried to work on their own aesthetic urge according to the schools of their belief.

117. Srivastava, V.C. : Op-cit, 1972, p. 361.

Whatever might be the fact, uptill now not a single *Surya* icon is there to find among the excavated materials whom can officially be affixed to the *garbhagriha* of any temple. Normally, icon confirmed to the *garbhagriha* sought to be composed of two basic characteristic features i.e. he or she either be in stella or round in form. These qualities are totally absent to the all available *Surya* sculpture here at Madan-Kamdeva. But the matter will remain different if the *Surya upasana* was to be performed in a symbolical form in any of these temples at this site, but in the context of easy availability of sculptural product, the scopes for the same appeared to be too low to consider. The excavated *Surya* icons at Madan-Kamdeva failed to impress us in considering the matter about the possible existence of a Sun temple anywhere around this famous archaeological site. However, the matter still remain open, because of on going excavation work (time to time) but at present we have no other alternative but to wait for any further discoveries to make concrete assumption about the existence of any *Surya* temple at Madan-Kamdeva.

Now, regarding the reason behind the existence of large number of *Surya* icons, the explanation may have on the light of the concept of Indian *Vastupurusha* or *Vastupurusha mandala*. *Vastumandala* is the plan on which the architecture rest.¹¹⁸ Or, in other word, it is the ground plan, whatever may be the variation of a temple, it is always analogous to *Vastupurusha mandala*.¹¹⁹ Though the *Vastupurusha mandala* is mainly concern about the ground plan of a temple but *prakritinca tadakritam*¹²⁰ means *the body*

118. Kramrisch, S : *Hindu Temple*, Vol.I, 1996, p. 31.

119. Ibid., p. 80.

120. A.P. 61/25.

(*akriti*) of a temple is the *Prakriti*.¹²¹ That means, walls are the translated form of the ground plan of a temple.¹²² Thus, the sculptor while confirming their product to the wall of a temple must have to keep in mind the directions of *Vastupurusha mandala*.

Surya along with other is one of the main constituent divinities of the body of *Vastupurusha* and it has occupied the cardinal direction on the eastern side of the *mandala* (fig.21.1). Now the question regarding the existence of large number of *Surya* icon can be explained in the following words that Madan-Kamdeva is a land of a group of temples. The Directorate of Archaeology, Assam, has already excavated more than twenty temple plinth in and around this archaeological site. If we consider at least one *Surya* icon to each of these temple (or to the walls of those temple) there would be not less than twenty *Surya* icons as according to the directions of *Vastupurusha mandala*. Thus, the discovery of large number of *Surya* icons is not a strange phenomenon in consideration of the directions of *Vastupurusha mandala* and under such circumstances these discoveries can hardly be sighted in favour of the existence of any Sun temple in this locality.

Now the reason behind the existence of divergent varieties of *Surya* icons can be explain with explicit concept of trade linkage that Kamrupa had enjoyed at one time as being a part of an international trade route, starting at Margiana via Pataliputra, Kamrupa to upper Burma provinces as discussed extensively in earlier chapter no. II. The concept of better road connectivity led us to presume Madan-Kamdeva as an important

121. Kramrisch, S. : Op-cit, Vol.I, 1996, p. 300.

122. Ibid.

socio-economic transit point on the way to the capital city of Kamrupa. The visitor (mainly the royal personnel, merchants or traders) from different corners of India, who intended to visit Kamrupa, certainly have come in contact of this transit point and impressed with the beauty of this hilly tract of land on the bank of river *Swaswati*. This impression normally inspired those capable visitor to do something here (as a genuine human tendency) as a fond memory of their visit to this tract of land and if possible to have some religious merit out of that. The merchant had always made their visit to the remotest corner of their destination in group or wagons. The wagon of a merchant accompanied by persons of different professional communities even by the artisan of specified artifact. These accompanied persons were the true bearer of aesthetic ideologies of different regional school which impressed the sculptural product now available at Madan-Kamdeva. Thus, the professional skill of those artisan as well as the patronization of the merchant in combine certainly have played a primary role in creating the place like Madan-Kamdeva with the exposition of divergent regional varieties. However, not only the merchants royal, dignitaries of different localities who had made their visit to Kamrupa or to its capital city Kamrupanagara have also played major role while developing this famous temple *nagari*. The discovery of different varieties of *Surya* sculpture can be considered as the best prove illustration of this fact.

Among those varieties the existence of a group of pro south Indian *Surya* sculpture is the most interesting aesthetic item available here at Madan-Kamdeva. While explaining the reason behind those availability the first point which attract our attention

is about an untraced effect of the famous tripartite struggle between *Rashtrakuta*, *Pratihara* and the *Palas* for the mastery over Kanauj during 9th/10th century. This prolonged war, on one hand created an atmosphere of instability in the north Indian politics and on the other hand it also have created an environment of frustration for the artisan as well as other person whose normal livelihood more or less depend upon the political stability of their respective countries. Under such circumstances some of those frustrated artisans even from the remotest region like the *Rashtrakuta*, come here to Kamrupa, a land peace¹²³ whenever they got an opportunity and ultimately settled here. One such opportunity was on the occasion of a matrimonial alliance between *Kamrupi* king Indrapala (960-990 A.D.) and the *Rashtrakuta* princess Rajyadevi.¹²⁴ The matter look to be more appropriately handled by Rajmohan Nath when he referred that *the people of the Deccan who came to Assam during the Pala period either as temple labours, job seeker or as retinue to the royal princes who were gradually naturalized and became Assamese*¹²⁵ In explaining the fact the scholar has further stated

123. Throughout the history of ancient Assam, Kamrupa was relatively a peaceful country comparing to that of the other north Indian states. It is historically proved that time to time though Kamrupa had to obeyed imperial or other north Indian suzerain subjugation, these are not permanent in nature. Internal turmoil and the increasing threat from outside, at one time might have compelled the *Kamrupi* king to shift their capital to further east near Tezpur during 9th/10th century (Bargohain, 2007, P-255) but when the situation return to normalcy they again return to their original capital site with an improved security measure and the royal houses of this land had constructed the new capital like Durjaya, Kamrupa Nagara.

124. Gachal, C.P. v. 22.

125. Nath, R. : *Background of Assamese Culture*, 1978, p. 45.

that the stone masons were called *Kal-Tatons* (Tamil-Kalku, Kal-Stone, Taton-Worker) and they probably from the Kalta or Kalika community by taking into their fold other allied artists, carpenters and metal workers. The inhabitant of the Chola country were known as *Cholias* and they now use the designation as a family title in the form of *Choliha*. The Durga worshipper *Kakatiya*, *Kshatriyas* of Andhra Kingdom who come to this country as job seekers became hereditary scribes and their race name now been turned into record keepers family title signifying the hereditary profession. The royal families of Orissa who brought to Kamrupa by Sri Harshadeva continued to use the title of *Dubaraj* (*Jubaraj-Prince*) as a memento of their past dignity and this had now been transformed into *Duara* or *Dowearah* after undergoing transformation to *Dubarai*, *Dubara*.¹²⁶

Though the authenticity of those explanation of Rajmohan Nath yet to be ascertain, but still number of other primary references are there which further consolidate the idea about the reality of Kamrupa's relation with south India. One such reference is available in Bargaon copper plate grant which states that king Ratnapala of Kamrupa was a terror not only to the *Saka*, *Gurjaras* and *Gauda* monarch, but also to the rulers of *Kerala*, *Vahikas* and *Tajikas* as well as to other *Dakhinatya* kings.¹²⁷ However, regarding this description scholars have now come to the conclusion that it was a mere *political fancy or exaggeration on the part of the author of the record*. The basis of such claim was sometimes even the receipt of a present through any source e.g. visiting traders, relating to a particular country.¹²⁸ Whatever might be the political exaggeration

126. Ibid., pp. 45-46.

127. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p.144.

128. Ibid., pp. 144-145.

in those descriptions, both Gachtal and Bargaon copper plate grant served as the prima facy to establish Kamrupa's relation with rest of India.

Thus, the whole matter may be sum up in the following word that the people (both political and non political identity) came here to Kamrupa on different occasion and many of them settled here to enrich the Assamese culture. P. N. Bhattacharya in connection of *Karnata* women and *devadasi* using *camaras* has already stated that Kamrupa had maintained an intimate relationship with extreme South and the roof of the world.¹²⁹ Under such circumstances there is every possibility that some of those south Indian aesthetic views travelled to Assam and got their exposition to the sculptural product of this giant centre of plastic activities at Madan-Kamdeva. At last it can be said that though the evidences regarding the possible existence of *Surya* temple here at Madan-Kamdeva are not so encouraging in nature, but still the discovery of the large number of *Surya* icons have instructed a new boost to the prospect of the popularity of solar cult in Kamrupa.

B) Tantrism :

1) Its Concept and Nature :

With the proud possession of mother goddess *Kamakhya*, Kamrupa was the hub of the Tantric culture in eastern India. This well known concept has normally inspired us to examine all possible fitness of the aesthetic product of Madan-Kamdeva, to the facets of Tantric ideologies.

129. Bhattacharya, P.N. : Op-cit, 1338, p. 64.

With these objective in mind first we would like to have a brief discussion about the basic characters of Tantric ideologies through which only we can explain the matter of our concern. Accordingly, the term Tantra simply referred to a specific type of *Sastra*, primarily deals with a well organised scientific process of worship through which one could realized the ultimate truth of the universe i.e. *moksa*.¹³⁰ In search of the meaning of Tantra, B. Bhattacharya has referred to a concept put forwarded by H. Sastri that Tantra means the worship of Sakti or female energy. The female energy is worship in conjunction with male energy. The union of male and female is the essence of the tantra.¹³¹ In actuality, the Tantra has instructed a short cut method towards *moska* or liberation. Instead of laborious path of asceticism, moral discipline and mortification, they make use of magical and psychological aids which help the *Sadhaka* (aspirant) to achieve quickly the goal of self realization.¹³² There are three primary elements in the performance of any Tantric rituals and these are muttering of *mantra* (mystic syllables), drawing of *yantra* (mystic drawings) and the use of five *ma-karas* ie *matsya* (fish), *mansa* (flesh), *madira* (wine) *mudra* (mystic symbol shown with finger) and *maithuna* (sex),¹³³ Apart from that *vija*, *nyasa*, *bhutasuddhi*, *kriya*, *maya*, *yoga* etc are some of the auxiliary but important rituals invariably performed during the courses of any Tantric form of *sadhana*.

130. Sarmadoloj, H.N. : *Asomat Sakti Sadhana Aru Sakta Sahitya*, 1998, p.62.

131. Bhattacharyya, B. : *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism*, 1964, p. 53.

132. Desai, D. : *Erotic Sculpture of India*, 1985, p.114.

133. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : CHA, Vol. P.317.

Thus, depending on the procedural obligation or observation there are seven different mode of Tantric *sadhana* and *sadhaka*, as the famous *Kularnava Tantra* has mention about. While making reference about seven varieties of *sadhaka* or *sadhana*, interestingly this famous Tantra has organised them in a sequence of an ascending order in respect of their qualities i.e. from lower to the highest degree of *sadhana* and accordingly their sequential organizations are as followed—*Vedasara (vedasari)* <*Vaishnavasara (vaisnavasari)*<*Saivasara (saivasari)*<*Dakshinasara (dakshinasari)*<*Vamasara (vamasari)* <*Siddhasara (siddhasari)* <*Kaulasara (Kaulasari)*.¹³⁴

Thus, in terms of quality, the *Kaulasara* or the *Kaulasarin* was the most honoured group of all Tantric sect, but that does'nt mean to its popularity, as the people's acceptability was mainly in favour of the *Vamasara* or *Dakshinasara* procedures.¹³⁵ Here the *Vamasarins* are those Tantric followers who strictly emphasized on actual performances of five *ma-karas* while the follower of *Dakshinasara* procedure of Tantric *sadhana* like to restrict themselves only to the *yoga* and *bhakti*.¹³⁶ Along with the *ma-karas* the performance of *sathakarma* was another important feature of *Vamasara Sadhana*. The *Kalika Purana* has beautifully describe a story (in connection of sage Vasistha's curse

134. *Sarbbebhyascottmā bedā bedebhyo bdisṇawañ mahat !*
Bāisnwāduttmañ Śāibwañ Śāibwāddakhiṇmuttma !!
Dakshināduttmañ bāmañ bāmāt Siddhāntamūttamam !
Siddāntadūtmañ kāulañ kāulat Paratrañ nahe !!
 (Kul Tantra 5th Section).

135. Sarmadolo, H.N. : Op-cit, 1998, p.100.

136. Thapar, R. : *Early India*, 2002, p. 486.

to goddess *Kamakhya*, *Ugratara*, lord *Sadasiva*, in other word to the entire ritualistic observation that was to followed in Kamrupa) which significantly inspired us to call Kamrupa as a hot or a highly favoured zone for the *Vamasarin*.¹³⁷

Along with that, the *Pasupata*, the *Kapalika*, the *Kalamukha*, the *Kaula*, the *Nathpanthi*, the *Sahajiya*, the *Ganapatya* etc. are some of the other important medieval Indian sect associated with Tantrism.¹³⁸ Attainment of non duality i.e. to identify a worshipper with the worshipped, in other word, to identify individual soul with supreme soul, is the common goal, for all these sects. To have the same i.e. to attain their ultimate goal these sects advocated different means *ranging from Sexo-Yogic technique of arousing kundalini to aghore or horrible practices such as eating food out of kapala, the sacrifices of human being to goddess etc.*¹³⁹ While making road to the attainment of their ultimate objectives some of the psychological and medical ingredients like *mantra*, *yantra*, *mandala* etc are common to all these sect except to the *Sahajiyas* (the Buddhist and the Vaisnavas) who protested against the formalities of the life and religion and regarded human nature itself as the best available aids in realising the ultimate truth.¹⁴⁰

All these above mention major Tantric sects have some specific characteristic features of their own. As for example, *bindusiddhi* i.e. control of semen during the sexual intercourse and *kayasadhana* i.e. *the yogic practices for making the body strong*

137. K.P. 81/1-30.

138. Desai, D. : Op-cit, 1985, p. 120.

139. Ibid.

140. Ibid.

and fit for higher realisation¹⁴¹ are two of the elementary concept while referring to the ultimate realisation of truth for the *Nathpanthi Sadhaka*¹⁴² For the same the *Nathpanthi* have showed their preference to the technique of *hatha yoga*¹⁴³ and the use of *Rasayana*. Similarly the *Kapalikas* ideal of salvation was to become like *Siva* and enjoy the pleasure of love with a consort as beautiful as *Parvati*.¹⁴⁴ The *Kaula* believes in *trikmata* ie the free use of wine, meat and the worship of *Siva* with wine in the company of a female partner sitting on the left during the rites.¹⁴⁵ Elaborating the life of the *kaulasara*, the follower of the most respected Tantric procedure, to an another extend the *Yogini Tantra* has made some beautiful descriptions accordingly, first it has stated that the success of the survival of the *kaula* depends upon the regular use of the good quality wine.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, regarding the general menu of the *kaulasarin*, the *Tantra* has prescribed a list of their food- which include wine, fleshes of birds and fishes.¹⁴⁷ Regarding *Maithuna* the *Yogini Tantra* has further stated that a *Kaulasara* or *kulasari sadhaka* can establish sexual relation with all women irrespective of class, creed, caste except his own mother.¹⁴⁸

141. Dasgupta, S. : *Obscure Religious Cult*, 1995, p. 92.

142. Desai, D. : Op-cit, 1985, p. 120.

143. Regarding *hatha yoga* it should be remembered that *the most important thing common to all school of esoterism is the culture of the body or kayasadhana through the process of hatha yoga*
Dasgupta, S. : Op-cit, 1995, p.197.

144. Desai, D. : Op-cit, 1985, p. 120.

145. Ibid.

146. *Mahāmadyaṅ Binā Kāulah Khayaṅādūrddarṅ Natīṣṭati*
Y.T. 1/6/17.

147. *Paṅstikādīni Sarbbāṅi Madyāni Tashya Sānbhabwi*
Matshyaṅ Mānsaṅ Tashya Devwi Jalabhūcara Khecaram
(Y.T. 1/5/43).

148. *Mātriyoninaṅ Parityajya Māithuṅ Sarbbazonisu* (Y.T. 1/5/44).

Above all these description most importantly, the *Yogini Tantra* has made a picturesque description of *kaulatadarsis* or *kaulasarins* and accordingly they are like the *Bhairava* not only in quality but also in appearances.¹⁴⁹

On the other hand, *kalamukha* and *kapalika* were the most terrifying or fearful (*aghorī*) Tantric sect of Indian subcontinent at one time.¹⁵⁰ Among them the *Kalamukha* were known as *Mahabratadhara*, who besmeared their bodies with ashes of the burn corpses, keeping *danda* and *madira* (wine) *patra* in their hand, wearing *rudraksha* and also have the mated hair as their identity.¹⁵¹ According to the *Kalamukha* tradition every man, irrespective of caste and creed can attain *brahmatva* by following some strict rules and regulation.¹⁵² Like *Kalamukha*, the *kapalika* also have besmeared their body with the ashes of the burn corpses, they also have the mated hair but they were the follower of the human sacrifice, strict performer of the five *ma-kara* in which their prime concern was to have the *kamasadhana* (sex worship) in the company of beautiful *kapalini*.¹⁵³

Now, regarding the *Pasupata* and the *Ganapatya*, two other medieval Tantric sects, it is interesting to note that the former tried to have their *moksa* with the help of *yogasadhana* while the later indulged in using wine and sex during the courses of their rituals.¹⁵⁴

149. *Sebwite kulatattwe Tu kulatattwa Sudarsīnaḥ Jayate Na Bhḍirawāste Beshyāstyasamadarsīna* (Y.T. 1/5/57).

150. Desai, D. : Op-cit, 1985, p. 121.

151. Bardoloi, N.P. : *Siva*, 1997, p.70.

152. Ibid.

153. Ibid, pp.66-69.

154. Desai, D. : Op-cit, 1985, p. 112.

The discussion about Tantrism will remain incomplete unless and until we have a quick look on a very important aspect of the ideal of Tantricism i.e. about the question of femine potency and its natural justification to the other half or in other word, the simultaneous justification of the male counterpart of the femine one. In actuality, a combine effort of the male female principles, is the primary basics of all Tantric ideals. Thus, to represent the combine effort, number of divine pairs like *Siva-Sakti*, *Vishnu-Laksmi*, *Brahma-Saraswati* etc. are there and of them the first pair have enjoyed the highest amount of respect from all corners of the society. The combination of *Siva* and *Sakti* is so acute in nature that it often appeared to be a difficult task to differentiate the main stream ideals of Saivism with that of the spirit of Tantrism. It was probably because of that inseparable identity of *Siva* and *Sakti*, some of the well known Saivite stream of worship, mainly the *Pasupata*, *kapalika* and *kalamukha* have their simultaneous identity as three of the popular Tantric sect of medieval India, as stated earlier. While trying to elaborate the matter on the light of the philosophy of Saivism, there were two primary stream of *Siva upasana*, one of them was known as Kashmiri Saivism which was in actuality, a cheer synthesis of the idealistic, realistic, voluntaristic, absolutistic and mystic tendencies of the thinkers of that land of beauty, and the other was the *Lingayat*, follower of which have refused to accept the idealistic concept of Kasimiri Saivavad, along with the ideals of Veda and Brahmanism.¹⁵⁵ Apart from that there was another stream of Saivism of Tamil origin,

155. Sarmadolo, H.N. : *Asomat Saiva Sadhana Aru Saiva Sahitya*, 2003, p.68.

known as *Saiva Siddhanta*, based on traditional concept of *Siva upasana*. Referring to the chronology of their development, they can better be assigned to a period starting from 9th century A.D. to that of 14th century A.D..¹⁵⁶ All these three Saivite stream of philosophy though have sharp distinction to each other but still, they all recognized the inseparable status of *Siva* and *Sakti*.¹⁵⁷ The *Pasupata*, *Kapalika Kalamukha* etc were the subordinate development of the main stream concept of *Siva Upasana* and of them, the *Pasupata* had ultimately paved the road for the development of *Kapalika* and *Kalamukha* mode of worship.¹⁵⁸ The follower of the concept of *Lingayat* and *Kalamukha* were conservative in nature and their primary emphasis was to worship *Siva* in his *linga* form, while the *kapalika* were the worshipper of *Bhairava*, the most ferocious representation of Lord *Sadasiva*.¹⁵⁹

Over and above the principles of *Tantrism*, so called after its composition, the *tantras*, influenced the practices of virtually every older religion.¹⁶⁰ The emergence of Tantric Buddhism, popularly known as Vajrayanism was the best prove example of such influential development of *Tantrism*. The Tantric Buddhism is a concept which emerged out of the incorporation of the principle of *Sakti* with that of the Mahayana form of worship.¹⁶¹ In actuality, it was a queer mixture of monastic philosophy, magic and erotic with little addition of Buddhist ideals in them.¹⁶² Buddhist Tantrism is

156. Ibid., pp.68-69.

157. Ibid. p.69.

158. Ibid, p.70.

159. Ibid.

160. Thapar, R. : Op-cit, 2002, p. 485.

161. Choudhury, P.C. : HCPA, 1987, p.422.

162. Winterniz, M. : *History of Indian Literature*, Vol.II, 1927, p. 388.

*constituted of three elements, Tantra, mantra and vajra stands for divine energy, identified with intelligence and its followers ultimately attain prajnaparamita (perfect truth). Vajra also stands for the linga as Padma for yoni. Two interpretations are applied by the right and left handed worshippers, the latter conceives vajra according to Saiva pattern and the former is related to Vedantist or Yoga tradition. The left handed worship was a Buddhist adoption of Saivism or rather Saktism, in order to realize divine nature, the followers had to perform the rites of union with a demon, but the purification of body and mind before such enjoyment constituted the Tantrik-Vajrayana of right handed worship.*¹⁶³

The existence of this form of Buddhism though normally be assigned to a period starting from 7th century A.D. onward, but often, the overwhelming popularity of Sakta-Tantrism have confused the matter of their existence, specially when we tried to have any sharp distinction between the Brahmanical and Buddhist deities and their practices.¹⁶⁴ Whatever might be the fact, it is true that ancient Assam was a great centre of the later form of Buddhism and their impression was so vigorous in nature that some of the *Pala* line of Kings, came forward not only to patronized the system but also became convert and attained the status of a preceptors.¹⁶⁵ In spite of their suppression in Assam by the Vaisnava reformer of 15th century A.D. *the Vajarayanist, who believed in theory of liberation only in the union of two sexes, still continued their practices under the name of Ratikhowa (practisers at night) as the followers performed their rites in secrecy at night.*¹⁶⁶

163. Choudhury, P.C. : Op-cit, 1987, p.422.

164. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p.336.

165. Choudhury, P.C. : Op-cit, 1987, p. 427.

166. Ibid.

ii) Aesthetic Explanation of Tantric Ideal at Madan-Kamdeva :

With this brief discussion, let us now examine the matter about the all possible aesthetic explanation of Tantric ideals to the available sculptural product here at Madan-Kamdeva. Before initiating discussion, one has to remember the following points, first, there are two categories of art in relation to Tantrism i) the genuine Tantric art consisting of *mandala*, *yantra*, symbolic union of male female principles, divine couples etc. which are all functionally related to Tantric *sadhana* ii) art influenced by Tantrism without being functionally related to it like sexual orgies and human couples.¹⁶⁷ Secondly, it should further be mentioned that *art has voiced the truth and values of India's endless metaphysical quest.*¹⁶⁸ Accordingly, there are some sculptures in the medieval period which have duly exposed the prime metaphysical truth of Tantrism i.e. *unity in duality* in the name of the combine effort of male female principle, however, of divine standard (as stated earlier) like *Siva-Parvati*, *Dhyani Buddha-Prajnaparamita*, *Manjusri-Tara* etc.¹⁶⁹ All these divine representation are of *mithuna* in nature. This concept of unity in duality, has another aspect in term of the *maithuna* sculpture of human nature where couple are normally in a self absorbed stage of mind, that means, they abstain themselves completely from the world of activity, in other word they are in a stage of illusion or *Mayasakti* which is the prime essence of Tantrism.¹⁷⁰ Thirdly, the Tantric concept of unity in

167. Desai, D. : Op-cit, 1985, p. 144.

168. Mukherjee, R.K. : *The Cosmic Art of India*, 1965, p. 45.

169. Ibid, p. 44.

170. Ibid, p. 41.

duality had an another meaningful aesthetic exposure in terms of the *antipodal principles and aspect of life* as exposed in combine efforts of tender fierce, sweet dreadful, serene–tumultuous etc.¹⁷¹

Thus, whatever might be the criteria of Tantric exposition, here at Madan-Kamdeva our virgin sight was attracted simply to a concept of negativity, in a sense that no such major Tantric representation (in terms of *mithuna* and *maithuna*) are there to execute prominently, except the divine couple in the *garbha griha* of the main temple. This observation is only because of our humble consideration that *mithuna* (Characteristically divine in nature) and *maithuna* (mainly the yogic natured one) are two of the elementary aesthetic items which beared the optimum scope for any major Tantric explanation. The reason behind this negative application can better be explained to a well known fact which referred Kamrupa as one of the most celebrated land for any Tantric performances of ultimate standard. Tantric observations, (mainly the extreme natured one) are always sought to be esoteric in nature. Thus, the sculptors and their patrons who were born and brought up in a pro-Tantric atmosphere here in Kamrupa, must have beared a deep sense of respect to those secret Tantric observation which in turn inspired them to refuse any pro-Tantric elaboration to the walls of their prime constructions. That means

171. Ibid., p.42.

As for example *Siva* on one hand, embodies sexuality, fertility and the abundance of nature, but on the other, he represents the great ascetics, whose sexual passion are completely sublimated (Stutley, M.: *Illustrated Dictionary of Hindu Iconography*, 2003, ix). Similarly the lord has a clam and contemplative mood, but at the same time, he had a fierce appearance with lord *Bhairava* and Vice-Versa.

negative appreciation¹⁷² here at Madan-Kamdeva, was nothing but an effort on behalf of the sculptors and patrons, by which they tried to show their utmost sincerity to the concept of Tantric esoterism. However, regarding this it should further be remembered that the least possible exposure of Tantric ideals as we observed is not an unique phenomenon only to temple ranges at Madan-Kamdeva, but it found to be the best preferred aesthetic principle of this region,¹⁷³ probably in the name of paying homage to the highly favoured concept of Tantric esoterism. In other word, the concept of negative aesthetic sensation seem to be a technique used here to express gratitude to the popular ideal of secret Tantric culture at Madan-Kamdeva.

Along with that, sculptor here at Madan-Kamdeva tried to express their gratitude to the Tantric ideals in terms of another important metaphysical concept of Tantrism i.e. 'unity in duality' in their overall execution. In aesthetic, different type of formulations have been applied to explain the concept of unity in duality or the antipodal aspect of life. And among these formation *mithuna* and *maithuna*, representing a concept of unity in the male female principles found to be the most popular one.

172. We tried to apply term negative here not to mean that the sculptures of Madan-Kamdeva strictly avoided all type of Tantric depiction but to make it clear that the sculptor here, selected those section of the temple for pro-Tantric elaborations which are not easily visible to the visitor in their first sight.

173. Even to the wall of the famous *Kamakhya* temple, the epicentre of Tantric culture, no such elaboration in terms of *mithuna* or *sexo-yogic maithuna* sculptures are there to observe.

Fortunately, we have found both *mithuna* and *maithuna* type of sculptures here at Madan-Kamdeva. The *mithuna* sculptures of this site are mainly of divine in nature and they are all blatantly exposed to the visitors, comparing to those of the *maithuna* sculptures. As stated earlier, the deity in the *garbha griha* of the main temple plinth at Madan-Kamdeva is in a *mithuna* formate of *Uma-Maheswar*. Apart from that, two other *mithuna* sculptures are there, one of them in relief form attached to the *narathara* section of the surviving temple plinth while the other is now conserved to the site museum almost in a broken state of condition. Except the couple to the *narathara* section, other two have showed a divine bondage in their exposition and accordingly they can be referred as two of the ideal product of genuine Tantric art.¹⁷⁴

Regarding the execution of *maithuna* sculptures, it is interesting to note that *Tantrism was one of the major factors in bringing about the transformation in the depiction from mithuna to maithuna.*¹⁷⁵ Along with that people's belief in the magical efficacy of sex and its increasing social acceptability (to the depiction of sex) with the passes of time, were two of the other causes to work behind this conversion.¹⁷⁶ Whatever might be the cause of their conversion, it is true that both Hindu and Buddhist Tantric considered *maithuna* as their ultimate essentiality, without which no Tantric *sadhana* ever be complimented as successful one.¹⁷⁷ *Mithuna* and *maithuna* are the culminating point of the observations of five *ma-karas* along

174. The genuine Tantric arts are those aesthetic product which have practical use in any Tantric form of *sadhana*.

175. Desai, D. : Op-cit, 1985, p. 145.

176. Ibid.

177. Kakati, B.K. : *Purani Kamrupar Dharmar Dhara(As)*, 1955, p. 95.

with four others, namely as *madya*, *mina*, *mamsa* and *mudra*. Here the term *mudra* can be explained with different meanings i) as symbolic hand gestures, ii) as fried rice, iii) a female partner in Tantric rites, iv) as a particular posture of congress in Tantric rites and v) as attitudes or positions of the body in *hatha yaga*, through which a *sadhaka* tried to control nerves and muscles of a particular region of a body.¹⁷⁸ *Maithuna* and *mudra* in terms of a particular posture of sexual union are intimately connected with each other. In explaining the fact it is interesting that – Buddhist and different schools of Hindu *Tantrics*, considered semen as their ultimate *bija* and so they never like to flow it out, and thus with the *hatha yogic* practices of *mudra*, *bandha*, *asana* and *pranayama*, they would normally tried to check the flow of their semen at the time of their ultimate performance of *sadhana*.¹⁷⁹

Unfortunately, we have found no such yogic natured *maithuna* sculptures at Madan-Kamdeva. Sexual orgies that are available mainly to the *narathara* section of the main temple plinth have beared an aristocratic appearance in their exposure (as explained in earlier chapter). In other word, while referring to the composition of sexual orgies, no such major Tantric sentiment is there to observe, except the scope for the exposition of the concept of fertility in their execution. That means, on the line of sexuality, no such acute Tantric explanation is possibly to those sculptural

178. Desai, D. : Op-cit, 1985, p. 235.

179. Sacrifice of semen to the fire or to the deity is an another aspect of some of the school of Hindu Tantrism. Thus, the *maithuna* mainly of the yogic natured one can better be considered as an art produced under the overwhelming influence of Tantrism.

composition at Madan-Kamdeva. This was possible for the shake of extreme esoteric concept involved with the performances of *maithuna*.

Thus, though not at the edges of sexuality, the influence of Tantrism to the sculptural composition of Madan-Kamdeva however, be referred to some other explanation. Accordingly, there are some sculptures which have clearly reflected a Tantric concept *in combination of attributes of charming and demonic i.e. the miracle of interplay of antipodal aspect of life – tender and fierce, sweet and deadful, serene and tumultuous.*¹⁸⁰ in their composition. As for example, the sculptures of *Vaikuntha Vaisnavi* with her serene beauty being represented in demonic character as she sit on a dead man whose body has been eaten by a fox and birds from two sides. Similarly, the deity identified as *Tritia Tripura*, may also be explained as combine effort of a charming beauty and a demonic character specially when we observed that this beautiful deity being adorned with a *naramundamala* (which is nothing but an explanation of her malicious character) around her waist portion. The existence of these type of deities have normally highten the importance of this locality with Tantric modalities.

Apart from that, the sculptures of Madan-Kamdeva have also successfully highlighted some other important features of Tantrism. Best among them is the concept of fertility. Normally, the erotic representations are referred in appropriation of a magico– religious concept of sex i.e. the fertility. But, at Madan-Kamdeva, the erotic representations have conveyed an aristocratic or palatial character in their exposition and thus offering us a limited scope to have

180. Mukherjee, R.K. : Op-cit, p. 42.

any explanation of the concept of fertility. Still, there are representations, specifically the scenes of bestiality and pair of pigs in which one mate with other from the rear, with whom we can safely assigned the concept of fertility.

As stated earlier, it was from eight century A.D., Tantrism has slowly gained its ground throughout the Indian sub continent and ultimately every older religion lost *itself in the maze of mysticism and engulfed by host of mudra, mandala, kriyas and charyas*.¹⁸¹ Indian aesthetics while serving as the reflector of different social values have normally tried to expose all these changing social modalities in their presentation. The available aesthetic products at Madan-Kamdeva are the best prove example of this fact. Accordingly, on the way to explain the possible aesthetic appropriation of Tantric culture here at Madan-Kamdeva, another identical composition of eight pateded lotus *chakra*, scattered to the entire ranges of this famous archaeological site, have attracted our attention (fig. 18.5). There is no doubt about it that these are all the broken part of temples. But still, the nature of their execution, more appropriately, their composing similarity with a specific description of the *Kalika Purana* have tempted us to call them as *Surya chakras* or an attempted derivations of *Surya mandala*.¹⁸² Though they are not in complete *bartualakar* shape, but still the two lump, one above the other, with eight symmetrical divisions in the centre and their *astadala* composition have the special significance to note. As we all know, Tantra prescribed a short cut route to *moksa* or ultimate liberation with the help of

181. Majumdar, R.C.(ed.) : *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, 1993, p. 259.

182. *Bartulan Mandalan Casya Astapatrasamanitam* (K.P. 78/48).

some magical and psychological aids and of them *mandala* and *yantra* are two of the prominent aids for any Tantric sadhana along with *mantra kavachas* and *mudra*.¹⁸³ *Each mandala is associated with certain rites and ceremonies for worshipping deities or propitiating the evil spirit.*¹⁸⁴

That mean, *Surya* or Sun also appeared to have enjoyed a Tantric affection here in Kamrupa. However, that affection was exposed not to his any other aesthetic representation but, only in consecrating his *mandala* to the walls of the temple and thus to save them from the sight of the evil spirits. Again in assigning these *Surya chakra* with Tantric affiliation it is interesting to find that these identical representation have beared the similarity with the *Vasikarana Yanta* of *astadala* formation (Fig. 21.2). Normally, *mandala* and *yantra* consists of two concentric parts, one formed by the eight central petals of the lotus and other by triangles as it appeared almost in all major *yantras* like *Devi Yantra*, *Sri Yantra* etc.¹⁸⁵ This has further strengthen our presumption, specially when we tried to assimilate the identity of these *Surya chakra* with a Tantric subscription. Despite of all these identical representation, Madan-Kamdeva however, can never be explained as a product of genuine Tantric art as their product have beared a decorative insignia in installation. However, in creation, these type of aesthetic product certainly have raised some amount of inspiration from peculiar Tantric formulations. That means, though these are not the product of genuine Tantric art but still they can be referred as the product of Tantric inspiration.

183. Desai, D. : Op-cit, 1985, p. 114.

184. Majumdar, R.C.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1993, p. 264.

185. Douglas, N. : *Tantra Yoga*, 1971, Pic.

Apart from that, there is an unique sequence to the narathara section of the main temple plinth which has represented a concept of a subsidiary Tantric culture, practiced in Kamrupa at one time. This sequence represented a scene of human sacrifice in front of a peculiar type of deity. Regarding human sacrifices it should be remembered that the pro-Tantric treatises, like the *Yogini Tantra* have issued due recognition to the concept of the sacrifice of human blood.¹⁸⁶ The continuous courses of the sequences of the *narathara* section of the main temple plinth at Madan-Kamdeva, have suggested that in this specific representation a war captive being sacrifice in front of a unique deity.¹⁸⁷ The deity before whom the captive being sacrificed appeared to have a special identity not only because of his pot bellied *Ganesh* like appearance but also because of his *ayudhas* that he holds in his two hands i.e. a small knife in his right hand and a bowl in his left hand from which he drink something with the help of a straw like article. Thus, his overall appearance inspired us to call him as being an image of *Agnibetala*, the Tantric form of lord *Ganesh*.¹⁸⁸ Whatever might be the fact, *naravali* or human sacrifice is an age old tradition of human civilization which being systematized here in Kamrupa at least from the time of 11th/12th century A.D. i.e. from the probable date of the initiation of the *Kalika Purana*. This tradition was continued, though not in vigorous manner, in the eastern part of Kamrupa till the reigning period of great Ahom

186. Sarmadolo, H.N. : *Asomat Sakti Sadhana Aru Sakta Sahitya*(As), 1998, p. 192.

187. The *Kalika Purana* has made due recognition to the system of sacrificing war captive : 67/106-107).

188. KP 79/100-101.

king Gaurinath Simha. In introducing this tradition of *naravali* with a Tantric inception it should further be remembered that with the passes of time, the Tantric practices became mixed with *Kapalika*, *Aghori*, *Nathist*, *Saivite* and *Shakta* rite and also with more primitive tribal and animist influences and thus coup up a concept of sacrifice in its fold.¹⁸⁹ Again, the term Tantra implies a system, of practices, specially the magical one, if it is systematic should better be termed as Tantric by nature.¹⁹⁰ Thus, the discussion has made it clear that the *Kamrupi* society was bit more frequented with the heinous tradition of human sacrifice, which is nothing but a magical concept of Tantric initiation, practiced purely in search of fertility, as we have explained in our earlier chapter.

Apart from that there are some other sequences to the *narathara* section of the main temple plinth which have represented some pro Tantric social activities like the production of alchemy, existence of *Guru*, *Devadasi*¹⁹¹ etc. All these exposition normally led us to conclude, all along the line of proposition put forwarded by Directorate of Archaeology, Assam that Madan-Kamdeva was an important centre of Tantric mode of worship. Regarding this we would simply like to add that no such acute Tantric exposition is there to find among the available aesthetic products at Madan-Kamdeva. This is because of an obligation or respect to the concept of Tantric esoterism. Despite of all negative

189. Douglas, N. : Op-cit, 1971, p. 13.

190. Ibid, p.3.

191. The institution of *Devadasi* might have developed in Assam under Tantric influence as described in the *Yogini Tantra* Choudhury, P.C. : HCPA, 1987, p. 326.

sensation, the influence of Tantrism reveal here in terms of expressing the unity in the antipodal aspect of life along with the concept of fertility and some other social activities popularly referred in association of Tantric culture.

On the light of these exposition of Tantric influences if we tried to have the solution of an another important question regarding the specific sectarian obligation that the aesthetic product have beared with any of those medieval Tantric sects of our earlier discussion, again the problem of negativity stand on the way of our assessment. But still, the majestic presence of *Uma Maheshwar* in *Yugal* form in the *garbha griha* of the main temple, along with some sequential representations to the *narathara* section exposing the tradition like using of wine even by the womenfolk on the occasion of the performance of *linga puja* as well as scene representing to the tradition of preparing *rasaysana* etc. have inspired us to make some unrest proposition that almost all Tantric tradition like the *Kapalika*, *Kalamukha*, *Nathpanthis* are highly pro-active in the *Kamrupi* society. The tradition of *hatha yoga* or *kaya sadhana*, one of the primary item of all Tantric sects certainly have enjoyed popular respect from the people of Kamrupa but, they in the name of their respect to the ideal of Tantric esoterism, never stand in favour of depicting them to the walls of their respective temples.

C) Saivism

i) Tradition of Siva Upasana in Assam :

Saivism was one of the most popular religious philosophy of India. Like in many other parts of India the *Worship*

of Siva prevailed in Assam from a remote period and it was one of the popular form of religion amongst the aboriginal and Aryanized people.¹⁹²

Highlighting the fact of its antiquarian popularity—the *Kalika Purana* has stated that Kamrupa was the domain of lord Sadasiva, where he kept himself under a veil of a secrecy.¹⁹³

Naraka, the famous mythological king of Kamrupa, in one of his confessional statement stated that Lord *Sambhu (Siva)* was worship in secret manner in his capital Pragiyotishpur.¹⁹⁴

Illustrating the popularity of Saivism in Assam the *Kalika Purana* has made another significant reference, this time about Sonitpur, an important kingdom at the proximity of Pragiyotishpur, where a great Saivite King, *Bana*, contemporary of *Naraka*, had maintained his rule during the last part of the *Dvapara* era of the mythological period.¹⁹⁵

Depending on the descriptions of the *Kalika Purana*, B. K. Barua has stated that there were fifteen sacred places in Kamrupa with whom lord *Siva* had found his association in one-way or others.¹⁹⁶ The *Yogini Tantra*, another important source book

192. Barua, B.K. : A Cultural History of Assam, 1986, p.161

193. Sa ca Deśaḥ Swarājyārthe Pūrbañ Guptaśca Śambhuna
(K.P. 38/36).

194. Explaining the statement B.K. Barua has suggested that the Aryanised conqueror (Naraka was popularly regarded as the founder Aryan culture in Kamrupa) at the initial phase of their rule tried to keep this religion of aboriginal under a ban (Barua, B.K. : Op-cit, 1986, p.162)
Śambhūranta Gurptah Sa Me Pūre (K.P. 39/68).

195. Tretāyañca Byatitāyāñ Dwāparashya Tu Śesatah
Abhabacchoṇitpure Bāno Nāma Mahāsura
Tashyāgni Dūrgāñ Nagarañ Sa Ca Śambhūsakho Batī. (K.P. 39/2-3) .

196. Barua, B.K. : Op-cit, 1986, p. 162.

for the history of Kamrupa, has mention the name of 108 different Saiva *Pitha* throughout the Indian subcontinent and of them nearly about 15 abode of Siva appeared to have in Kamrupa.¹⁹⁷ All these have proved that ancient Assam had a great tradition of the worship of lord *Sadasiva*.

*Siva invariably came to be associated with his female energy and thus the sharp distinction between the two sects considerably narrowed down.*¹⁹⁸ The description of the *Kalika Purana* and the *Yogini Tantra* have duly recognized the fact. Accordingly, the *Kalika Purana* has made a significant statement that here in Kamrupa lord *Siva* always live with *Parvati*, and one can achieve goal immediately after worshipping *Siva* and *Parvati* in combine.¹⁹⁹

Similarly, the *Tantra* while mentioning the name of hundred and eight Saiva tirtha, further stated that in all these *tirtha Devi Parvati* always stayed with lord *Siva*.²⁰⁰

There is another beautiful reference in the *Yogini Tantra* which had indirectly stated that the people of Assam enjoyed the worship of lord *Sada Siva* in his linga or phallic form.²⁰¹

197. The name of other *Siva tirtha* in Assam are- *Nataka, Nilachala, Vasmacala, Chandrakuta, Asvakraṅta, Sri-Saila, Manikuta, Godanta, Brahmaputra, Vishasaila, Chitrasaila, Urvasi* etc.-the very name of these places itself suggested that they are in Kamrupa).Y.T. 2/4/2-21.

198. Sarma, S.N. : *Socio-Economic and Cultural History of Medieval Assam*, 1989, p.191.

199. *Sadā Sannihitastatra Parbbattya Saha Śaṅkaraḥ |
Nacirat Pūjeto Debastammin Pithe Prasīdati ||* (K.P. 51:64).

200. *Astotraśataṅ Stānaṅ Mayāte Parikirttitam
Zatra Bāi Mama Sānnidhyāṅ Nityanttu Taba Subrate* (Y.T. 2/4/22-23).

201. *Kotilingasamāhṛṇa kāmākhyā kalpaballibi
Ttateja Sā Tu Saṅdīpttā Manobhabaguhā Sadā* (Y.T. 1/11/36)
That means even the abode of Goddess *Kamakhya, Manobhava* cave, encircled by millions of linga, thus highlighting the popularity of the worship of *Sadasiva* in Phallic form in Assam).

Again it was from the pages of the *Kalika Purana*, it appear that Saivism in Assam imbibed some of the characteristic of *vamacara rites of Saktism*.²⁰² The treatrise beautifully described a story when sage Vasistha cursed *Sadasiva* to be worship here in Kamrupa with Vamacara procedure and that too by the *mlechchhas* only.²⁰³ Highlighting the gravity of the worship of lord *Sambhu* with *vamacara* procedure, in the *Kalika Purana* there are also the references of two other deadful incarnation of *Siva* viz *Kapala Bhairava* and *Smasana Bhairava* who seem to have received their worship only with this procedure.²⁰⁴

Depending on the description of the *Kalika Purana*, Sarma has further stated that there were atleast two sects of *Saivas* in Assam viz. the *Kapalika* and the *Pasupata*, the former being more terrible, used to perform gruesome and abominable rites.²⁰⁵ The *Yogini Tantra*, a work of 16th century A.D.,²⁰⁶ on the other hand, confirmed the existence of two other Saiva sects in Assam viz *Avaddhutas* and the *Kaulas*.²⁰⁷ These two sects used to perform dual worship of *Siva* and *Sakti*.²⁰⁸ Thus, we have found the existence of four different Saiva sects in ancient Assam viz *Kapalika*, *Pasupata*, *Avadhuta* and *Kaulas*.

202. Sarma, S.N. : Op-cit, 1989, p. 191.

203. KP 81/20-22.

204. Sarma, S.N. : Op-cit, 1989, p. 191.

Kapāle Bhāirabastesāṅ Devah Pūjyasttu Nityasah
Śmasāna Bhāirabo johasāu jo Mahābhāirahwaya (K.P. 35/16)

205. Ibid.

206. Ibid.

207. Ibid.

208. Ibid.

Apart from that, epigraphically evidences also endorsed the popularity of Saivism in Assam, and provide a beautiful chronological sequence about the intensity of Saivism through the period of our history. The real political history of Kamrupa begins with the foundation of the *Varman* dynasty.²⁰⁹ The inscriptional evidences have made it clear that there are eleven rulers from this dynasty to rule in Kamrupa as the predecessors of Kumar Bhaskar Varman. All of them except Bala Varman were to be the worshipper of lord *Sadasiva*.²¹⁰ The Doobi copper plate grant of Kumar Bhaskar Varman started with an invocation to lord *Sadasiva* which described him as being an ardent follower of Saiva doctrain.²¹¹ Similarly, his Nidhanpur Copper plate grant also started with a salute to lord Sambhu.²¹² The tradition of the worship of *Siva* was continued during the tenure of *Salastambha* rule. We have the information about the erection of a great *Siva* temple of lord *Hatakasulin* (another name of lord *Siva*) from the Parbatiya grant of great Vanamaladeva of *Salastambha* dynasty.²¹³ King Vanamaladeva was a great Saiva, this fact is proved by the description of Nagaon grant where he being remembered as the follower of *Bhava*.²¹⁴

Saivism in Assam reached the next grade of its popularity during the tenure of great *Pala* king Ratnapala who *studded the earth with sword and white washed temples of enshrining Sambhu* as it being described in Gauhati grant of

209. Choudhury, P.C. : Op-cit, 1987, p. 128.

210. Sarmadolo, H.N. : Op-cit, 2003, pp.90-91.

211. Choudhury, P.C. : Op-cit, 1987, p. 417.

212. Sarma, M.M. : *Inscription of Ancient Assam*, 1978, p.50.

213. Ibid, p.122.

214. Ibid, p.217.

Indrapala.²¹⁵ It is also interesting to find that the same grant of Indrapala opens with an invocation to *Sambhu* and *Pasupati* along with his consorts *Gauri* and *Ganga*.²¹⁶ It was from the age of another *Pala* king Dharmapala Saivism supposed to be came under the influence of Tantric Buddhism as there is a term referring to *the embodiment of two underlying principles—Ardhayuvatisvara* in the Khonamukhi and Subhankara Pataka grant of the same king.²¹⁷

Apart from that, epigraphical records also provide valuable information regarding the highly pronounced system of assimilation of *Siva* and *Sakti*. It is known to all that on the road to its development Saivism went through the process of an assimilation with Saktism. In Assam, this process was started with the coming of great Vanamalavarmadeva (835 A.D. –865 A.D.) to power during 9th century A.D., as we *have for the first time there is a reference of a term Srikamesvara-Mahagauri* in his Tezpur grant. Explaining the fact M. M. Sarma has stated that *Mahagauri* and *Kamesvara* are the goddess *Kamakhya* of the Nilacala hill and her associate *Siva* which in combine might have suggested that *earlier there was predominance of Saiva cult alone in Kamrupa. By the time of Vanamala the Sakta cult gained some importance. In the Guwakuchi C.P. grant the term i.e. Mahagauri is mentioned earlier*²¹⁸ which means, started from 9th century A.D. the process of assimilation has attained its final shape during 11th century A.D., with the culmination of Saktism.

215. Choudhury, P.C. : Op-cit, 1987, p. 417.

216. Ibid.

217. Ibid.

218. Sarma, M.M. : Op-cit, 1978, p.202.

ii) Its Popular Aesthetic Explanation at Madan-Kamdeva :

On the light of above discussion, when we tried to explore the scope for the explanation of the popularity of Saivism on the basis of available aesthetic products at Madan-Kamdeva, our virgin perception inspired us to proposed that majority number of temples of this site are dedicated to lord *Sada-Siva*. This proposition is based on two primary observations, first, number of dispersed temple lintel scattered to the temple range have beared at their centre a square arch with an image of lord *Ganesh* in it (fig. 18.3). This type of composition of temple lintel is a fundamental characteristic feature of the *Siva* temple.²¹⁹ The second observation is about the surviving temple plinth of the site. Accordingly, it is interesting that majority number of these plinth survived here in attachment of the remains of *Siva lingas*, in many occasions these, plinth even has taken the shape of the basement of *Siva linga* i.e. the *Yoni pitha*.

Apart from these two primary observations, the popularity of Saivism here in this locality has found its appropriate illustration to the *narathara* section of the main temple plinth where we have found two sequential representations of *linga puja* as described in earlier chapter. These two representations duly exemplified the concept of *linga puja* in accompaniment of musician as to the prescribe direction prescriptions of the *Kalika Purana*²²⁰

Along with that, the *narathara* section of the main temple plinth has also represented number of dancing scenes where the womenfolk have enjoyed an overwhelming participation.

219. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p.335.

220. KP 55/1-2.

This type of representations have further strengthen our presumption regarding the popularity of Saivism in Assam, because, the temple women or prostitute have always been referred as an unique feature of *Siva* temple.²²¹

However, the most interesting indication that we have to consolidate our presumption regarding the popularity of Saivism is the name of a small hillock situated in the very arena of the temple range, known as *Jalpesvara*. People of this locality believed that at one time there was a great *Siva* temple. Today the hillock is full of jungles and it is quite difficult to make entry into this area. Under such circumstances, we can make only a partial survey of this hillock which exposed to us with some scattered remains of a temple. Whatever might be the relics, our main concern is the name of the locality as it remind us a great mythological story about the erection of a great *Siva* temple *Jalapesvara*. *Jalpesvara* was one of the famous mythological king who introduced Saivism in early Assam.²²² The same king also said to have founded a *Siva* temple known as *Jalapesvara Siva* at *Jalapaiguri*.²²³ Both *Kalika Purana* and the *Yogini Tantra* have made number of references about this temple. P.C. Choudhury tried to state that the ruler who had constructed this temple was *Prithu*.²²⁴ If it is so, there is every probability that *Jalpesvara Siva* temple was some where near *Madan-Kamdeva* instead of in *Jalpaiguri*. Thus, the matter can be summarized in the following word that if not the said temple, at

221. Kakati, B.K. : *Mother Goddess Kamakhya*, 1989, p. 20.

222. Ibid. p.12.

223. Barua, K.L. : EHK, 1966, p. 162.

224. Choudhury, P.C. : Op-cit, p. 256.

least the name *Jalpesvara* is enough to indicate the popularity of Saivism and Saivite culture here in this locality.

Above all, Saivism, most importantly, nature of its aesthetic exposition here at Madan-Kamdeva have further strengthen our presumption regarding the date of construction of these famous temples. The available aesthetic product has referred to a stage of assimilation when the concept of *Siva* and *Sakti* combine together. The said process of assimilation started at least from the time of 9th century A.D. as stated earlier. The architectural evidences that we have about the existence of number of *Siva* temple, have referred to a stage of dominancy of Saiva cult. At the same time, three female deities of *Tripura* group have found their position in such corner that they appeared to have protected the main temple plinth (fig.21.3). That means, only with a protecting power of *Sakti*, Saivism has enjoyed a dominant position. Lastly, the existence of a *yugal murti* in the *garbha griha* of the main temple plinth has referred to a stage of complete assimilation. Regarding this, it should further be remembered that the combination of male-female principles is the basic ingredient for any Tantric mutation. Thus, the aesthetic product of Madan-Kamdeva have referred three different stanges of Saivite evolution right from the age of its prominancy ie from 9th century A.D. to the stage of Tantric formulation ie to the period A.D. of 11th/12th century. In other word, the aesthetic evidences in support of the popularity of Saivism, have duly made an indication that the construction procedure of the temples at Madan-Kamdeva starts from 9th century A.D. which was continued till the end of 11th/12th century A.D.

D) **Buddhism :**

i) **Evolution and Its Popularity in Assam :**

There are some aesthetic item at Madan-Kamdeva which led us to go through a brief discussion about the evolutionary history of Buddhism and its popularity in Assam. The rise of Gautam Buddha and his philosophy was the most prolific religious development of the history of India. Immediately after his death controversies starts mainly over the questions of interpretations of the sayings of great master. These controversies continued for nearly about six centuries and ultimately in 2nd century A.D., this great religious philosophy evolved into two fractions. These two fractions known to the history as the Hinayana (orthodox fraction) and the Mahayana (redical fraction).

The orthodox fraction i.e. the *Hinayana* group believed in the attainment of *Arhathood* or final liberation through the strict ethical discipline and the process of *Jhana* while the redical fraction i.e. the *Mahayana* group believe in the attainment of Buddhahood or the ultimate stage of knowledge through the different stages of Bodhisattvahood.²²⁵ This concept of Bodhisattvahood has prepared a ground for the incorporation of some magical elements to the province of *Mahayana* Buddhism. The incorporation of magical element had received further elaboration after 7th century A.D., when the *Mahayana* cult started in admitting a *whole new pantheon of god* and goddesses of dazzling beauty.²²⁶

With these pro-Tantric ingredients, *Mahayana* cult entered into a new phase of development, know to the history as a

225. Dasgupta, S. : Op-cit, 1995, p.15.

226. Kosambi, D.D. : *A Cultural and Civilization of Ancient India*, 1994, p.179.

phase of Tantric Buddhism. This phase of Tantric Buddhism can be discussed under the customary division of three different schools viz. *Vajrayana*, *Kala-Chakrayana* and *Sahajayana*.²²⁷ Among these three school of Tantric Buddhism the last one, i.e. the *Sahajayana* being often referred as the most matured phase of Tantric Buddhism and after 8th century A.D. it became famous, particularly in eastern India.

Regarding the popularity of Buddhism in Assam, the first point to remember is that the epicentre of Buddhism in India was Magadha and Uttar Kosala.²²⁸ Geographically, Pragjyotisha-Kamrupa was very near to the epi centre of this great religion which naturally made it prone to the influences of the teaching of great master.

Tibetan historian Taranath had stated that one *Arya Dhitika*, a Buddhist monk of 3rd century B.C was responsible for the spread of Buddhism in Kamrupa.²²⁹ He further reiterated that the Buddhist monk *Asvabhava* was the first preacher of the *Mahayana* philosophy in this remote corner of Indian subcontinent whose date has been fixed in and around 600 A.D.²³⁰

Similarly, *Rajtarangini* of Kalhana also explained the popularity of Buddhism in Kamrupa in connection of a story referring to the construction of a great stupa by a princess of Pragjyotisha, *Amritprabha*, married to a Kashmiri king *Meghavahana*. The age of Meghavahana was 5th century A.D. and

227. Dasgupta, S. : Op-cit, 1995, p.24.

228. Barua, K.L. : Op-cit, 1966, p.96.

229. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p.323.

230. Hazarika, P. : *Charyapada(As)*, 2005, p.64.

thus Amritprabha appeared to be the daughter of king Balavarman of Kamrupa.²³¹ From Kalahana, it may be deduced that Amritprabha might have brought to Kashmir a Tibetan Buddhist *guru* who was a preceptor of her father and got a *Vihara* constructed in the territory of her husband and under the supervision of the said *guru*.²³²

It was in the early half of 7th century A.D. the famous Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang visited Kamrupa. He, in his account states that it was during the time of his visit the law of Buddha did not have wide range of recognition.²³³ *Whatever Buddhist there were in it, performed their acts of devotion secretly.*²³⁴ But on the contrary, the activities and the respect that was shown by Kumar Bhaskarvarma, then king of Kamrupa, to this great scholar, have normally instructed that by the time of the visit of Hiuen Tsang, the king of Kamrupa, though not became the ardent followers of the law of Buddha, but they might have beared a deep sense of respect to the teaching of the great master.

Despite of all these references, still it is quite difficult to ascertain the facts regarding the early prevalence of Buddhism in Assam prior to 7th century A.D.. But after 7th century A.D., there exist convincing evidences about the popularity of later form of Buddhism in Assam.²³⁵

M Neog, in reference to *Sadhanamala* had stated that there were four *pithas* for the Tantric Buddhist, and of them

231. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p.335.

232. Ibid.

233. Choudhury, P.C. : Op-cit, p. 403.

234. Watter, T.(ed.) *On Yuan Chwang's Travel's in India*, 1996, p.186.

235. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p.336.

Kamakhya and *Sirihatta* were evidently in Kamrupa while the other two, *Purnagiri* and *Odiyana*, if not in Kamrupa, but just at the outskirts of the country.²³⁶ *Kamakhya* and *Sirihatta* possibly the main centres of dissemination of *Vajrayana* doctrines.²³⁷ Thus, Kamrupa emerged to be the best preferred land for both Hindu and Buddhist Tantra-*sadhaka*. Lama Taranatha had stated that there was a great *chaitya* in Kamrupa.²³⁸ Identifying this *chaitya* as being at Hajo, P.C. Choudhury has stated that *Hajo attained a great celebrity in Mahayana Buddhism and the Buddhism of the Tibetan affiliation and might have contained some relics of Buddha, most likely of the saint Padmasambha of the 7th century A.D., who probably died at Hajo and a shrine was built over his ashes. This is supported by the mystic syllable, mani padme hum, mani standing for the Buddha and padme for Padmasambha. The sanctity of the place is also borne out by the fact that some monastery of Tibet is believed to have been built with clay of earth from Hajo.*²³⁹ Padmasambha was a powerful apostle of Tantrism, he was called as *guru Rinpoche* and thus have enjoyed the first place as the preceptor of Buddhism in Tibet.²⁴⁰ These have further heighten the scope to call Kamrupa and more specifically Hajo, as one of the cosmopolitan centre of Tantric Buddhism.

Apart from that, *Charyapadas* are another form of evidences to explain the popularity of the later form of Buddhism in Kamrupa. It is generally believed that- there were eighty four

236. Neog, M. : *Religion of North East*, 1984, p.64.

237. *Ibid.*, p.64.

238. Hazarika, P. : *Op-cit*, 2005, p.8.

239. Choudhury, P.C. : *Op-cit*, p. 402.

240. Banerjee, A.C. : *Aspects of Buddhist Culture from Tibetan Sources*, 1984, pp.28,41.

Siddha Acharya who in one way or others have their association with Kamrupa and twenty three of them composed the Charyapada.²⁴¹ One such composer of *Charyapada* was Luipada of 9th/10th century A.D., said to be the most prominent *Siddhacharya* hailed from the bank of Brahmaputra ie from Kamrupa. Like the Luipada, Sarahapada was another prominent *Siddha-acharya* of 10th/11th century, often referred as being a person belonging to the *Sudra* community of Kamrupa.²⁴² *Nagarjuna* a famous physician, associated with Kamrupa for his Tantric activities, was one of the prominent deciple of *Sarahapada*.²⁴³

Similarly, Minanatha and Macchidranatha, were the two other famous *Siddhacharya* belonging to the *Kaivarta* community of Kamrupa.²⁴⁴ Along with that Darikpada, Kahnupada, Mahindrapada were some of the other *Siddhacharya* of Tantric Buddhism who, in one way or other have found their association with Kamrupa.

Apart from that, two famous *Pala* kings of Kamrupa, Ratnapala and Indrapala, said to have beared deep sense of respect to the cause of this later form of Buddhism and ultimately became the ardent follower of this Tantric philosophy.²⁴⁵ This, in comparison of the descriptions of Hieun Tsang, can better be explained in the following words that the king of Kamrupa, though remain as the real exponent of Brahmanical faith in their public life but in private

241. Hazarika, P. : Op-cit, 2005, p.41.

242. Ibid, p.45.

243. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p.341.

244. Kakati, B.K. : Op-cit, 1955, p.100.

245. Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : Op-cit, 1990, p.342.

life, some of them dared to be the receiver of the pro Buddhist Tantric *diksha*.

Thus, it can be said that Buddhism in Kamrupa survived specially in collaboration of Tantric ideal and ultimately the country emerged to be a strong hold of this later form of Buddhism when *no sharp distinction remained between the Brahmanical and the Buddhist god.*²⁴⁶ Buddhism in Kamrupa survived under the growing dominancy of Pauranic Hinduism and in doing so it had lost its basic character and remained as a fraction of Pauranic Buddhism.

ii) **Its Popular Aesthetic Explanation :**

On the light of above discussion, when we tried to examine the exact intensity of Buddhism in Kamrupa according to the reflections received from the available aesthetic product of Madan-Kamdeva, the first product of attraction is the lintel which have beared in its centre a *chaitya* arch type nich with an image of unidentified status (fig. 18.2). *Chaitya* arch itself referred to an influence of Buddhist art tradition to exist here at Madan-Kamdeva. Along with that, an image in *dhyana mudra* has further explain the popularity of Buddhism in this locality (fig.20.2). Though the facial part of the image is now totally damage to make its identity bit more difficult in nature but still, the way of its execution is enough to confirm it as being an image of a deity of Buddhist origin. Similarly, the door sills where two lions protected a semi circular cylinder (Symbolise probably a container with the ashes of any Buddhiest or prominent philosopher), an ideal

246. Choudhury, P.C. : Op-cit, 1987, p. 404.

representation of *Sakya Simha* Buddhism of Pre Kushana period(fig. 18.4). Again, an icon identified as *Vasudeva Lokeshvara* has further indicates the popularity of Buddhism in this region.

The most interesting aesthetic item which can be regarded as a symbol of popularity of Buddhism at Madan-Kamdeva is a broken part of a stella. Unfortunately, it now survived only with three pair of feet placed just above the full blown lotuses (fig.20.1). In its present state of condition, though it is now quite difficult to ascertain its identity, but still nature of execution left for us a scope to think about it as being the pairs of feet of a Buddhist deities.

In support of these aesthetic items, the ethnic remains in and around Madan-Kamdeva, have also exposed the scope for the popularity of later form of Buddhism in this region. The village *Alipub*, at the vicinity of the temple complex is inhabited by *Hira* community which might have remote semblance with the popularity of later form of Buddhism in this temple complex. However, it is quite early to confirm the fact. The aesthetic item at Madan-Kamdeva primarily indicates the dominancy of Pauranic form of Hinduism. This provides limited opportunity for the popular aesthetic exposition of Buddhism at Madan-Kamdeva. Thus, in present state of condition we have no other alternatives but to regard survival of Buddhism in this locality in a popular fashion of pro-Puranic exuberance.

