

## Chapter VII

### Culture: Legitimacy and State Formation.

Transition of the chieftdom to a state and concentration of political power into a small section of the tribal community had raised the questions of legitimacy of wielding such power. In regards to the state power, the term legitimacy is generally used to explain and justify the existence of concentrated sociopolitical power wielded by a portion of the community.<sup>1</sup> So Legitimacy is 'such a situation in which the rulers and the ruled shared the conviction that rules of the government is right'.<sup>2</sup> The state justifies its new institutions, hierarchy and subordination by introducing new cultural ideas and maintaining the traditional believe system.<sup>3</sup>

#### 7.1. Internal Legitimacy

Maintenance of law and order of the state by a small section of the tribal community (as has been highlighted in the chapter VI) alone was not sufficient to justify the tribal rule in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley .So the Koch state generated a specific cultural order that legitimized the rule of the tribal community. Surajit Sinha argues that it was a synthesis of 'multi- ethnic local or regional culture and caste-cultures which had been universalized by the tribal states of Northeast India to generate that order'.<sup>4</sup> Like other Northeast Indian tribal states, the Koches, since the beginning of their state formations had stressed on the adoption and diffusion of the non-tribal culture and modification of their primordial believe-system which brought a homogeneity in the culture of the ruled and ruler in the internal domain of the state.

Adoption of non-tribal culture by the ruling tribe was an 'adoption from below'<sup>5</sup> and its promotion by the state was a 'diffusion (*sanskritization*) from above'<sup>6</sup> which were significantly linked with the legitimization of tribal rule. And this process eventually resulted into the new social formation i.e., *vaishnavization* (promotion to the *Vaishnava* culture) and *Hinduization* (elevation to the status of the Hindus from non-caste identity).

##### 7.1.1. Adoption of Vaishnavism.

The cultural value with a new view of social equality propagated by the Vaishnava saints had drawn the attention of the Koch rulers for the adoption of non-tribal culture essentially for legitimizing their political formation. Because the

Vaishnava saints particularly Sanakardeva had desired to evolve a simple and easily practicable religion irrespective of caste, social status and educational attainment to make a popular and common religious form of the region.

Sankardeva was born and brought up in a *Bhuiyan* family at Alipukuri in Baradowa (present Nawgaon district of Assam) belonged to the Ahom state. His Vaishnavism was seriously suffered when Suhungmung Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.), the Ahom King, had adopted an anti-Bhuiyan policy even he killed the followers and relatives of Sankardeva.<sup>7</sup> So with his followers and relatives Sankardeva left the Ahom territory and took shelter at Patbousi village in Barpeta of Lower Assam under the protection of the Koch state. A matrimonial relation was established between the Koch ruling family and the family of Sankardeva.<sup>8</sup> This marriage proved to be positive in future for bringing a cultural homogeneity in the Koch state.

The popularity of Vaishnavism had to face antagonism from the Brahmins of the Koch kingdom as it propagated the value of equal social status to its followers which was contrary to the traditional form of the caste oriented Brahmanical Hinduism where the Brahmins had top position in the social hierarchy. So the Brahmins lodged false complaint to Nara Narayan that Sankardeva was propagating such a religion that is humiliating the customs of the traditional Hinduism<sup>9</sup>. But Chilarai (an ardent follower of the Vaishnavism and the Koch general) had saved the life of Sankardeva from the antagonism of the state. Sankardeva, however, won over the Brahmins of the court of King Nara Narayan and the king became so admirer of Sanakardeva that he granted him the *mahal* of Barpeta.<sup>10</sup> Chilarai, together with his wives became his disciple<sup>11</sup>. State support to the new cultural ideas made the task easier for its rapid expansion within Koch state.

### 7.1.2. Adoption of Hinduism

Besides the Vaishnavism, the Koch kings also paid their adequate attention to the adoption of culture of the Brahmanical Hinduism. It was a common phenomenon of the tribal states of Northeast India that the Brahmins had popularized the ruling tribe as the *kshatriya* to legitimize the tribal rule<sup>12</sup> (as described in the table 7.1). Visvasimha initiated the adoption of caste-culture of the Hinduism and brought the Brahmins from different places of Eastern India and placed them in the state with land and honour<sup>20</sup>. The Brahmins on the other hand, conferred him an extra ordinary origin of his

kingship. Unlike the pre-Koch rulers of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley, genealogical link of the Koches had been connected with the popular male deity of the region like -- Shiva. The *Yogini Tantra*, a 16<sup>th</sup> century Sanskrit work on the *tantricism*, has vividly illustrated the birth of Visvasimha from the union between Shiva and Hira, a Koch wife of Haria Mech<sup>14</sup>. Subsequent genealogies, chronicles and official history, composed in the Koch state, continued the fabricated drawing of linkage between Visvasimha and Shiva. The link was constructed in such a way that the popular myths of Northern India have been utilized as the logic of interpretations of divine link.

“The sons of Sahasrarjuna, a king of Haihay dynasty of Moon race, being afraid of Parshuram, ‘the destroyer of the *kshatriyas*’; left their country and took shelter at Chikina hill of Lower Assam, particularly among the Mech people. They gradually assimilated with the tribal-culture. But one Mech chief’s (Haria Mandal) wife named Hira, had an intercourse with Lord Shiva for which a child was born who became famous as Visvasimha”.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 7.1:** Comparative table of genealogical link of the tribal states of pre-colonial Northeast India.

State	Deity	Myth(s)
Ahom	Indra	Indra, being cursed by Bashishtha, had an intercourse with a tribal woman of the Ahoms and its outcome was the birth of the founder king of the Ahoms.
Koch	Shiva	Shiva had an intercourse with a Koch woman, named Hira and the founder king of the Koch dynasty was born from their union.
Jayantia	Jayanti	One Garo chief had a marriage relation with a tribal girl who was the proxy of the goddess Jayanti. From the name of Jayanti the tribe began to be called as Jayantia.
Chutia	Kuber	The wife of the Chutia chief, Rupamati had a relation with Kuber that led to the birth of the Chutia king (Gauri Narayan)

‘This super-structured construction of divine link of the founder ruler of the Koch kingdom was a by-product of state-patronage to the Brahmins’. At the same time the Koch kings adopted the caste-culture in their coronation and adopted the *kshatriya* name<sup>16</sup>. So the Brahmins<sup>17</sup> theoretically elevated Visvasimha to the status of a Hindu ruler, i.e. *kshatriya*.

In spite of their reverence and patronage to Sankardeva and his *Vaishnavism* Nara Narayan and Chilarai had showed their interest to the Brahmins and their culture. They

invited the Brahmins from the contemporary centers of Sanskrit learning like-Mithila and Gauda. Subsequent Koch rulers- Raghudeva Narayan, Lakshmi Narayan, Bir Narayan and Prana Narayan had continued the policy of adoption of caste-culture through patronizing the Brahmins. It reached to the climax in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century when Satananda Goswami, a Brahmin from Murshidabad, was selected as *Raj Guru* (spiritual guide of the King).<sup>18</sup>

So the imports of the Brahmins became a common phenomenon throughout the Koch rule. It raises two questions, (i) why the Brahmins were invited? And (ii) why did the Brahmins attend the courts of the tribal state emerged from tribalism? First is the question of legitimacy of tribal rule that could be achieved only by the creation of a tradition of extra-ordinary (*kshatriya*) origins of the king. So the Brahmins were invited by the Koch rulers to elevate their social status from tribe to the *kshatriya* because the 'Brahmins had the sole right to determine the caste status of any community who practice the Hinduism'. Secondly lucrative land-grants, remuneration, services and prestige offered by the Koch kings had allured the Brahmins to settle in the tribal land. The Brahmins at the same time were encouraged to 'diffuse the caste-culture from above'.

## **7.2.Diffusion from Above and Distribution of Concentrated Surplus.**

Customs and rituals of the non-tribal society adopted by the ruling section of the tribe had been diffused by two major ways which enhanced the social control of the state over the subject. Redistribution of accumulated surplus through the building of universally beneficial institutions including temples of popular deities with *sanskritized* form was the first step. Second step was the diffusion of secrets of the sacred scriptures (*shastras* and *puranas*) through the vernaculars to accelerate the process of social change i.e., transition of the tribe to caste.

### **7.2.1.Construction of Roads and Tanks.**

Building of universal institutions for material benefits at the cost of the surplus concentrated by the state was a major step in the process of state formation.<sup>19</sup>Construction of roads and tanks were two major area of surplus redistribution for material benefits of the subject. A road extended from the Western Duars to Narayanpur called *Gohain Kamal Ali* had been constructed by Nara Narayan as mention in the chapter IV.This road and other roads constructed by the Khena

rulers<sup>20</sup> had been maintained by the Koch kings throughout their rule which facilitated the easy movement of the militia during the warfare and essay commercial transports. 'Chilarai Dighi' (Tufanganj), 'Banesvar temple tank' and others tanks constructed by the state<sup>21</sup> had public utility particularly in the socioeconomic life of the people of the region.

### 7.2.2. Diffusion of . : Neo-Vaishnavism

The neo-Vaishnavism was based on the principles of *bhakti* (devotion) contained in the *Bhagavata Purana*. According to Sankardeva, the divine service to god can be best performed by *sravana* (listening the name of the god), *kirtana* (chanting the name of god), *smarana* (recollection the name of the god), etc.<sup>22</sup> The simplistic principles of the neo-Vaishnavism and its democratic and humanistic outlook had a universal approach to the heterogeneous people of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. So all communities including the Koch, Kalita, Kayastha, Chandal, Garo, Ahom, Bhutia, Miri, Muslim and even the Brahmins had embraced Sankardeva's Vaishnavism.<sup>23</sup> Madhava Deva and Damodar Deva, disciples of Sanakardeva, reached to the heart of the heterogeneous communities of the region through their religious teachings and made the neo-Vaishnavism a popular cult of the region.<sup>24</sup>

**Table 7.2.** State sponsored important *satras* of the Koch kingdom.

Patron (King)	Satras
Nara Narayan/ Chilarai	1. Madhupur Satra (Madhupur). Founder: Sankardeva. 2. Ramrai Kuthi or Satrasal (Dhubri). Founder: Ram Ray. 3. Kakatkuta and Vela Satras (Cooch Behar, now extinct). Founders: Sankardeva and Madhav Deva. 4. Fulbari Satra (Tufanganj, Cooch Behar), Founder: Madhava Deva. 5. Bhitrua Satra (Baikunthapur). 6. Barpeta Satra (Barpeta). 7. Raghunath Pravu Satra (Dhubri), etc.
Lakshmi Narayan	8. Baikunthapur Satra (Baikunthapur). Founder: Damodardeva. 9. Nakarkhana (Buxirhat) 10. Jhingaparni (Cooch Behar).
Raghudeva Narayan	11. Shyamrai Satra (Golokganj, Dhubri).

Neo-Vaishnavism had and still has two organized institutions like-*satra* (monetary) and *namaghara* (chanting house or prayer hall), which established a social domination of the Vaishnavism over its followers<sup>25</sup>. Table 7.2 shows that Nara Narayan and Chilarai had encouraged the foundation of several *satras* in present Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts of West Bengal and Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpata and other

districts of Lower Assam. Lakshmi Narayan, Raghudeva Narayan, Parikshit Narayan and Bir Narayan had continued the state support to the building of the *satras* in the state. Prana Narayan (1632-1665 A.D.) was also a great patron of the *satras* particularly of Madhupur Satra. The *charita puthis* have mentioned the existence of large number of *satras* in the Koch state (although most of them are now extinct as mentioned in the *Appendix E*), which brought the bulk of the people into the direct control of the Vaishnavism. The Koches, those who embraced the neo-Vaishnavism (*smaran*), came to be designated as *Smarania Koch*. The *namghar* as the center of regular meeting in villages and *satras* as a center of huge gathering had developed a kind of social cohesiveness among the Vaishnavas with a common identity and ideology. So the building of the institutions of the neo-Vaishnavism at the cost of the state had indirectly enhanced the state control over the 'vaishnavite subjects' through the Vaishnavism. But at the same time the neo-Vaishnavism had its influence on the state. Even the Koch rulers assumed their title on the Vaishnava style such as *Narayan* and their coins came to be known as *Narayani Tanka*.

### 7.2.3. Diffusion of Hinduism

The state had a large expenditure on the construction and maintenance of temples. Few historical sources claim that the ruined Kamakshya temple of Nillachal Hill was discovered by Visvasimha.<sup>26</sup> But the temple was constructed by Nara Narayan and Chilarai.<sup>27</sup> They appointed the Brahmins as priest of the temple with *brahmattar* land (land donated to the Brahmins) and granted huge amount of *devottar* land (land donated to the temple) and arranged the expenses of its daily worship<sup>28</sup>. Nara Narayan and Chilarai had great reverence to the Shaivism too. The temples of Chhoto Mahadeva at Nakkati Gachh (Tufanganj), Bara Mahadeva at Baro Kodali (Tufanganj), Banesvar Shiva temple in Cooch Behar were built by them and arranged their regular expenditure.<sup>29</sup>

Raghudeva Narayan (1587-1604) had rebuilt the famous Hayagriva Madhav temple at Manikut and endowed with *devottar* and *brahmattar* land.<sup>30</sup> Lakshmi Narayan although paid heavy tribute to the Mughals but his patronage to the temple building remained unaltered. He even started the construction of the temple of Lularkesvar at Benaras, which was completed by his successors.<sup>31</sup>

King Prana Narayan (1632-1665 A.D.) also paid adequate attention to the building of new temples at the state's expenditure. Accordingly, he constructed the present temple of Kamatesvari at Gosanimary<sup>32</sup> and Jalpesvar Shiva temple at Jalpes and granted *devottar* land for its maintenance.<sup>33</sup> King Rup Narayan (1693-1714A.D.) and Dhairendra Narayan also continued the policy of patronage to the building of temples of popular deities

**Table 7.3.:** Notable temples built by the Koch kings.

Patron(s)	Temple	Deity	Priest	Grant(s)
Nara Narayan/Chilarai.	Kamakshya (Guwahati)	Kamakshya	Brahmin	140 <i>paiks</i> , villages, Rs.25000 and huge <i>devottar</i> land.
..	Bhairav Nath (Goalpara)	Shiva	..	-----
Nara Narayan	Banesvar (Banesvar, Cooch Behar)	..	..	Endowed with daily worship and <i>devottar</i> land.
Chilarai	Bara Mahadeva and Chhato Mahadeva (Tufanganj)	..	..	Endowed with daily worship and <i>devottar</i> land.
Raghudeva	Hayagriva Madhava (Hazo)	Vishnu	..	<i>Brahmattar</i> and <i>devottar</i> land.
..	Pandu Nath	---	---	-----
Lakshmi Narayan	Lolark Kunda (Benaras)	Shiva	Brahmin	-----
Bir Narayan	Chaturbhuj (Cooch Behar)	Chaturbhuj	..	Daily worship maintain by the state
Prana Narayan	Jalpesh (Maynaguri)	Shiva	..	Daily worship and land endowment.
..	Kamatesvari (Gossanimari)	Gossani	..	..
..	Shiddeshvai	..	..	..
..	Harihar	Shiva	..	-----
Moda Narayan	Jalpesh	..	..	The king granted 23 <i>jotes</i> of land as <i>brahmattar</i> .
Rup Narayan	Madan Mahon (Cooch Behar)	Vishnu	..	Daily worship

The worship of traditional Vishnu got its foothold in the kingdom since the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.. Since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, building of the temples of Madan Mahon (Vishnu) in the capital and different *parganas* of the state had been given

priority by the state<sup>34</sup>. So the worship of the traditional Vishnu gradually became a strong feeling in Cooch Behar particularly with the introduction of *Rash Mela* (a fair in connection with Lord Sri Krishna's divine love with beloved Radha and other *Gopinies*).<sup>35</sup>

Grants of lands to the temples, priest and other servants of the temples became a common phenomenon of the Koch kingdom. Lucrative grants had allured the Brahmin priest from outside to settle in the region. At the same time 'the *Kamrupi Brahmins*' were also employed in the services of the Hindu deities and temples. Land endowment was so high that it became a 19% of the total land revenue production of 1872.<sup>36</sup> However, percentage of *brahmattar* land was much higher than that of *devottar*. The statistics of later period (prepared by the British officials) of Cooch Behar<sup>37</sup> district shows that out of 66194 *bighas* of total rent -free land, 40022 *bighas* were *brahmattar* land (60.46%). It was largest in capital Cooch Behar and its vicinity. The *devottar* land, however, was only 4823 *bighas* that was only 7.28% of the total charitable land. Although the figure of *devottar* land, granted to the Kamakshya temple, Hayagriva Madhava temple and Jalpesh temple (roughly 23685 *bighas*, 54300 *bighas* and 44 *jotes* respectively) but *devottar* land was much less in the capital and its vicinity where *brahmattar* land was much higher (15.63% of the total charitable land) due to the large settlement of the *Panchagram Brahmins* (Brahmins endowed with five villages).<sup>38</sup>

**Table 7.4.:** Comparative table of charitable land in *bighas* (1870).

Pargana	Devottar	Brahmattar	<i>Pet Bhata</i>	Pirpal	Lakheraj	Total
Mekhliganj	154	4220	10321	--	721	15416
Mathabhanga	1458	2248	3293	--	262	7261
Lal Bazar	30	14741	30	--	246	15047
Dinhata	842	6241	193	---	531	7807
Cooch Behar	2247	10347	2289	84	879	15846
Tufanganj	92	2247	2500	--	--	4817
<b>Total</b>	4823	40022	18628	84	2639	66194

The state followed the policy of non-interference over the *brahmattar* and *devottar* land. The priests of Kamakshya and Kamatesvari were successful to impose

restrictions to the state by creating myths which disqualified the ruling family to visit these temples. The myths and anecdotes retained in the chronicles, genealogies and oral traditions describe that

Kendu Kalai, the Brahman priest, used to perform the daily worship of Kamakhya. Kamakhya being satisfied to the musical services and submission of the priest, used to dance being naked. The king aspired to watch it. But the deity became so angry that she cursed that if Nara Narayan and his family visit this temple, the dynasty of the Koch kings and the Brahmin priest would be destroyed<sup>39</sup>.

Nara Narayan, Chilarai and their successors like--the Koch kings of Darrang, Koch kings of Beltala and Cooch Behar royal family had strictly followed these restrictions. Similar myth has also been attached to the Kamatesvari temple of Gosan̄imari built by Prana Narayan:

“The king heard that Ratikanta Jha, a *Maithili Brahmin*, due to his extra ordinary musical performances could directly talk to the Kamatesvari. Accordingly, the king requested to the priest to meet him with the goddess. But Kamatesvari appeared in the dream and alarmed that if the priest and the king do so than their dynasty would be destroyed”.<sup>40</sup>

Since then, King Prana Narayan and the subsequent Koch kings followed this restriction.

While the post of the priest became hereditary in both the cases, the rulers lost their right to visit the temples. ‘It was a kind of establishment of brahmanical hegemony over the state-sponsored religious institutions.’ It became more prominent when restrictions were also imposed on the women, *Shudras* and even on the Brahmin-widows to see the image of Kamakhya<sup>41</sup>. It was a kind of Brahmin control over the *Shakti* temples built by the state.

But visiting the temples of Shiva, which were numerous in the state, have never been restricted for the kings and the laymen. Shaivism had its deep-root in the land prior to the rise of the Koch kingdom. Prominent and popular tribal deity called **Bathou** is identical with the Shiva of the Hindu pantheon. Moreover, fictitious genealogy of Visvasimha is connected with Shiva. So accessibility of Shiva as a deity of worship was beyond doubt. Although the Koch coins have been circulated as

*Narayani Tanka* due to the influence of the *Vaishnavism* but these are bearing the legend -*Shiva charana kamala madhu karasya* (by the honey bee of the lotus feet of Lord Shiva) in obverse with very rare exceptions. Coins of Raghudeva Narayan bears the testimony of his homage to *Hara -Gauri* or *Shiva-Durga* in the legend- *Sri Sri Hara Gauri charana kamala madhu karasya*<sup>42</sup> (by the honey bee of the lotus feet of Sri Sri Hara-Gauri). Coins of Bir Narayan were only exception where the king stressed on the *Krishna charana kamala madhu karasya*.<sup>43</sup> 'So Shiva' was the chief deity closest to the Koch kingdom.' Construction and maintenance of the Shiva temple in the state (as mentioned in the Table 7.3) had contributed to the rapid development of the Shaivism. At the same time appointment of the Brahmin priest in the Shiva temples began the process of *sanskritization* of the tribal Shaivism (*Bothouism*). Moreover, appointment of tribals as *Deori* (servant to the temple), in the temples built by the state<sup>44</sup> had reinforced the process of *sanskritization*.

#### **7.2.4. Adoption and Diffusion of Non-tribal Language and Literatures.**

Most fruitful means of *sanskritization* of the tribals and upgradation of their social status was the abandonment of tribal culture and adoption of non-tribal cultural marker like-language.<sup>45</sup> The adoption of non-tribal languages by the state for easy communication with other tribal and non-tribal states had influenced the indigenous languages and led to their linguistic *sanskritization*. The Koch kings adopted the contemporary standard vernacular (language) of Eastern India i.e. Bengali, which gradually became the language of the state. It was, however, not confined to the administrative level only. The state-sponsored intellectual communities like-the Brahmins and the *Kayasthas* were also encouraged to diffuse the teachings and knowledge of the classical literature through the vernaculars.

##### **7.2.4.1. Linguistic Sanskritization.**

Adoption of exogenous culture i.e., Hinduism, significantly linked with the Sanskrit language and literatures; led the Koch kings to create the environment of cultivation of Sanskrit language and literatures. Nara Narayan and Chilarai were well versed in the Sanskrit, as they were educated at Benaras, the famous center for traditional Sanskrit learning.<sup>46</sup> Their teacher Brahmananda Sannyashi had trained them in the *Vedas*, grammar, *puranas*, and *smritis*. The *Raja Vamsavali* composed by Ripunjay Das in the mid-19th century claims that Nara Narayan had compiled a

dictionary of Sanskrit language entitled *Malladevi Avidhan*<sup>47</sup> although no manuscript copy yet been noticed. However, acquaintance with the Sanskrit language and literature became a prerequisite for the servants of the court of the Koches in the mid 16th century A.D.<sup>48</sup>

Purushottam Vidyavagis, at the instance of king Nara Narayan and his queen, had composed a Sanskrit grammar called '*Prayoga Ratnamala*'<sup>49</sup>. In the introduction of this work he (Purushottam) says-

*Sri Malladevashya gunaikasindharamani Mahendrashya jatha nidesham.*

*jatnasa Prayoga Rantanamala bitanyate Sripurushattamena.*

(Translation: As directed by the king Malladeva (Nara Narayan), who is the combination of different qualities; Sri Purushottam has composed the *Prayoga Ratnamala*, very carefully). This grammar had been in extensive use in the Tista-Brahmautra valley even after the annexation of the Eastern Koch kingdom by the Ahoms. It was the primary grammar for general education including the kids of the royal family.<sup>50</sup> Beside the language and grammar compilation and translation of the *smritis* (law books) in the court of Nara Narayan particularly by Pitambar Siddhyantavagis had considerable influence over the newly *hinduized* people.

Bir Narayan, inspite of his less contribution to the political affairs of the state, largely contributed to the development of education in the kingdom. He established many schools for education of the royal family, sons of the Brahmins and sons of the royal servants<sup>51</sup> (both tribals and non-tribals). The Sanskrit literatures and grammar also got patronage from Prana Narayan. Jay Krishna Bhattacharyya had written treatises on the *Prayoga Ratnamala* grammar of Purushottam Vidhyavagis<sup>52</sup>.

The Sanskrit as the literary language was impracticable as *lingua franca* and standard official medium. So the Koches, instead of tribal language(s) like- Mech /Bado, Koch /Rabha to whom the emergence of the Koch state is associated; had adopted the contemporary standard of Eastern India i.e. Bengali. The earliest specimen of the Bengali prose literatures so far known is the letter of Nara Naryan dated 1477 *Saka* (1555 AD) sent to the Ahom king with an embassy.<sup>53</sup> The standard was continued by the subsequent Koch kings and got modified form during the reign of Prana Narayan. His diplomatic exchanges with the Ahom king shows the character of prose Bengali of the 17th century used in the Cooch Behar court as the official

language<sup>54</sup>. Bengali became the common language for diplomatic and official exchanges in Cooch Behar and even in Bhutan.<sup>55</sup> The Adoption of standard non-tribal vernacular by the Koches in its offices, courts and foreign affairs, led the tribal people to be acquainted with the Bengali language, which had its influence in the colloquial language. So *linguistic-sanskritization* had been accelerated by the state's patronage to the non-tribal (standard) language.

#### 7.2.4.2.Literature:

Linguistic *sanskritization* was not confined to the adoption of the standard language only. The state showed its active interest to spread the teachings and values of the non-tribal culture (adopted by the state) through the contemporary standard vernacular of the region i.e., *Bengali* and *Kamrupi*. Accordingly the *puranas*, epics and other classical literatures had been translated into the vernaculars at the court of the Koch rulers to popularize the non-tribal culture among the non-ruling section of the tribals.

#### Translation of the *Puranas*

Numerous *puranas* have been translated into the vernaculars under the patronage of the Koch kings to popularize the teachings of these texts among the masses. The translator of the *Markandeya Purana*, Pitambar Siddhantavagis says that he translated this *purana* at the instance of Prince (*Yubraj*), Samarsingha (Chialarai) to diffuse the secrets of the sacred scripture<sup>56</sup>. He also translated the *Dasham Skandha* (10<sup>th</sup> canto) of the *Bhagvata Purana*<sup>57</sup> while his contemporary scholar Kalap Chandra Dvija had translated the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> *Skandha* (canto) of the same *Purana*.<sup>57</sup> Another scholar of Nara Narayan's court was Sharbabhauma Bhattacharayya who translated the *Bhabishya Purana*.<sup>59</sup> Subsequent Koch kings also continued their patronage to the translation of the *puranas*. Gabinda Mishra, under the Patronage of Lakshmi Narayan, had translated the *Bhagavat Geeta* that was the only complete translation the *Geeta* in the region during that period.<sup>60</sup> *Naradiya Purana* another popular text in the Sanskrit, had been translated by Dwija Narayan at the instance of Upendra Narayan (1714-1763 A.D).<sup>61</sup> Largest numbers of *puranas* were translated in the Cooch Behar court during the reign of Harendra Narayan (1783-1839 A.D.), which is beyond the scope of present study. The translation of the *puranas* in the vernaculars led to the opening of the treasury of

secrets of the *puranas* among the newly *hinduized* people who were not acquainted with the Hindu scriptures. It was one of the steps of *sanskritization* from above.

**Table 7.5:** Translation of the *Puranas*.

Scholar	Patron	Work(s)	Description.
Pitambar Siddyantavagis	Visvasimha, Nara Narayan and Chilarai.	<i>Markandeya Purana</i>	It was free version of the Skt. <i>Markandeya Purana</i> in the vernacular.
”	”	<i>Bhagavat Purana</i> (10 <sup>th</sup> canto)	Translation.
Sarbabhauma Bhattacharyya	Nara Narayan.	<i>Bhabishya Purana</i>	”
Kalap Chandra Dvija	”	<i>Bhagavat Purana</i> (4 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> cantos)	”
Gobindra Misra	Lakshmi Narayan.	<i>Bhagavat Geeta</i>	It was a complete translation of the <i>Geeta</i> .
Dvija Narayan	Upendra Narayan.	<i>Naradiya Purana</i>	Translation.

**Table 7.6:** Translations of the *Mahabharata*.

Scholar(s)	Patron(s)	Work(s)	Description
Pitambar	Visvsimha, Nara Narayan and Chilarai	<i>Nal Damayanti Kahini</i> .	Translation from the Skt.
Ananta Kandali	Nara Narayan	<i>Savitri Upakhyan</i>	”
Ram Sarasvati	”	<i>Mahabharata</i>	Complete translation
Kavindra Paramesvar	”	<i>Kirata and Virata Parva</i>	Translation
Kamsari	”	”	”
Vipra Visarad	Lakshmi Narayan	<i>Virata and Vana Parva</i>	”
Kavi Shekhar	Bir Narayan and Prana Narayan	<i>Kirata Parva</i> .	”
Srinath Brahmin	Prana Narayan	<i>Adi Parva and Drona Parva</i>	”
Dvija Kaviraj	Moda Narayan	<i>Drona Parva</i>	”
Dvija Ram	Mahindra Narayan.	<i>Visma Parva</i>	”

**Table 7.7.:** Cultivation of the *Ramayana*.

Scholar	Patron	Work(s)	Description.
Sankardeva	Nara Narayan	<i>Uttarakhanda</i>	Translation.
Ananta Kandali	”	<i>Sri Rama Kirtan</i>	A narrative of the <i>Ramayana</i> in the <i>kirtana</i> style.
Kalap Chandra Dvija	”	<i>Ramayana Chandiaka</i>	”

## Epics

Translations of the Indian epics, particularly the *Mahabharata* became a fashion for the Koch kings since the beginning of their political formation. Pitambar Shiddhantavagis had taken the task of translation of the *Nala-Damayanti* episode of the *Mahabharata* at the suggestion of Prince Samarsimha (Chilarai).<sup>62</sup> In the initial stage of translation of the epics, 'episodes' of particular canto or a full canto got the priority among the court poets. Ananta Kandali had composed the *Savitri Upakhyam*<sup>63</sup> and the *Rajasuya* section of the *Mahabharata*.<sup>64</sup> The painstaking labour of poet Ram Swarasvati had produced several cantos of the *Mahabharata* like *Vana Parva*, *Visma Parva*, *Virata Parva*, *Karna Parva*, *Udyog Parva*, *Ashvamedha Parva*, etc. Poet Kabindra Paramesvar and Poet Kamsari (of the court of Nara Narayan) had also translated several cantos of the *Mahabharata*.

Lakshmi Narayan continued the state support to the translation of *Mahabharata*. Poet Vipra Prasad had translated the *Virata Parva*, *Bana Parva* and *Karna Parva* in the vernacular. Similarly Kavishekhar had translated the *Kirata Parva* at the instance of Bir Narayan.<sup>65</sup> Translation of epic got a special attention during the reign of Prana Narayan (1632-1665 A.D.) due to the political and economic prominence of the kingdom. Court poet Srinath Brahmin says that he has translated the *Adi Parva* of the *Mahabharata* at the instance of Prana Narayan.<sup>66</sup> He also translated the *Draupadi Swayamvar* episode of the *Mahabharata*.<sup>67</sup> In the introduction of this work he says that he had translated the *Draupadi Sayamvar*, originally written by Vesdeva in the Sanskrit language, to spread the teaching of this text in the vernacular which is not known to the people of the region.<sup>68</sup> Translation of *Drona Parva* is another attempt of Srinath Brahmin which he could not finish and finally completed by Dvija Kaviraj<sup>69</sup> who was the court poet of King Moda Narayan (1665-1680 A.D). Dvija Ram Sarasvati at the instance of Mahindra Narayan (1682-1693) had translated the *Visma Parva*, another important episode of the *Mahabharata*<sup>70</sup>. Like the *Puranas*, *Mahabharata* became a popular subject of translation in the court of King Harendra Narayan. The translation of different cantos of the *Mahabharata* into the vernaculars at the cost of the state had contributed to the popularization of the epics among the non-ruling section including the tribals and newly *hinduized* people. Unlike the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* was less popular as a subject of translation. Sankardeva, Ananta Kandali and Kalap Chandra

Dvija composed few verses of the *Ramayana* in the vernacular particularly in the form of the *kirtana* (see table 7.7.).

### **Vaishnava Literature.**

While the Brahmin scholars for diffusing the secrets of the classical literature have translated the *epics* and the *Puranas* into the vernaculars, neo-Vaishnavism introduced by Sankardeva also produced several literatures on the neo-Vaishnavism. It has been already stated that Sankardeva got a special place in the court of Nara Narayan as the religious reformer who initiated the process of cultural homogenization in the region. Like Sankardeva, his disciples Madhava Deva and Demodar Deva also produced several literatures in the contemporary standard vernacular of Lower Assam.

Sankardeva began his writings with the *Harish Chandra Upakhyan* and *Rukmini Upakhyan*<sup>71</sup>. His *Nimi Narashiddhi Samvad* is a doctrinal treaty based on *Book XI* of the *Bhagavata*.<sup>72</sup> His *Bhakti Pradip* and *Anadi Patan* were based on *Garuda Purana* and *Bamana Purana* respectively. Sankardeva denounced the worship of deities in preference to *Krishna bhakti* (devotion to Krishna) in his *Bhakti Pradip*<sup>73</sup>. The *Anadi Patan* deals with the with the cosmology, philosophy and theology.

*Kirtana* (the act of chanting prayer of narrative poem) became a special attention to Sankardeva. To him, it is one of the best forms of devotion (*bhakti*) to god.<sup>74</sup> His *Gunamala* is the composition of six *kirtanas* in the jingling verses while *Kirtana Ghosha*<sup>75</sup> is the collection of 24 *Kirtanas* deal with the different episode and character of the *Bhagavata*.<sup>76</sup> Most popular form of devotional literatures composed by Sankardeva was the *Baragit*. In the *Baragit* he expressed his exalted moments with music. It became so popular that Sankardeva's disciples had continued its composition.

Sankardeva and his disciples had adopted the mono-act play called *ankiyanat* as the medium of propagation of the Vaishnavism. All kinds of popular entertainment like –dance, music, song and drama had their equal presence in the *ankiyanats*. The *Chinnajatra*, *Rukmini Harana*, *Parijat Harana*, *Kaliya Daman*, *Patni Prasud*, *Rasahkrira* and *Kamgsa Vada* dramas were the composition of Sankardeva in the form of *ankiya nat*. Madha deva had composed the *Pimpora*, *Guchowa*, *Chordhara*, *Dadhi Mathan*, *Katova Khela*, *Bhusan Bhanjan*, etc<sup>77</sup>. Although language of the *ankiyanat* was the *Brajavuli* but these had mass appeal and became so popular that the modern

Assamese music ,drama and the theatre can not deny the contribution of the *ankiyanats* in their formations <sup>78</sup>.

Sankardeva's disciples got active support from Lakshmi Narayan after the death of Nara Narayan. Birupakshya Karzi, a minister of the Koch kingdom, had great support for Madhava Deva.<sup>79</sup> Madhava Deva had started his writings with the *Janma Rahashya* or a small poem on the creation and destruction of the world based on the *puranic* theory .His *Bhakti Ratnabali* was the translation of Sanskrit work of Bishnupuri Sanyashi. The narrative poem *Nama Ghosha* contains his philosophical teachings. Madhava Deva had continued the compositions of the *Baragit* (devotional songs) and *ankiyanats*. His *Nama Malika* (translation) and *Adikanda Ramayan* have been produced at Cooch Behar <sup>80</sup>.

**Table 7.8.:** Vaishnava literatures produced under the patronage of the Koch kings.

Scholar	Patron(s)	Work	Description/content
Sankardeva	Nara Narayan	<i>Harishchandra Upakhyan.</i>	Ethical story of Hrishchandra.
..	..	<i>Rumkini Upakhyan</i>	Love affairs of Lord Sri Krishna and Rumkini.
..	..	<i>Bhakti Pradip</i>	It denounces the worship of other deities in preference to Krishna.
..	..	<i>Kirtana Ghosha</i>	<i>Kirtana</i> songs
..	..	<i>Gunamala</i>	<i>Kirtana</i> in jingling verses.
..	..	<i>Bali Chhalan</i>	A parable on King Bali.
..	..	<i>Bargit</i>	Devotional ballad.
..	..	<i>Ankia nat</i>	Mono-act plays composed in the <i>Brajavuli</i> .
..	..	<i>Bhatima</i>	Panegyrics in praise of Lord Krishna.
Madhav Deva	Lakshmi Narayan	<i>Nama Ghosha.</i>	Treaties on philosophy of the Viashnavism.
..	..	<i>Bhakti Rantanvali</i>	
..	..	<i>Bhatima and Bargit</i>	Panegyrics in praise have Lord Krishna and a devotional ballad.
Ananta Kandali	Nara Narayan	<i>Vaishnava Amrita</i>	About the Vaishnavsim
..	..	<i>Geeta Govinda</i>	Translation
Damodar Deva	Lakshmi Narayan	<i>Bargit</i>	Devotional songs

The Vaishnava literatures under the patronage of the Koch state had also flourished due to the significant contribution of Ananta Kandali, a Brahmin disciple of

Sankardeva. Ananta Kandali had completed the unfinished *Dasham Skandha* (10th canto) of the *Bhagavata Purana* started by Sankardeva.<sup>81</sup> His poetical works- *Mahiravan Badha*, *Harihar-Yuddha*, *Vrittisur Badha*, *Bharat-Savitri*, *Kumar Harana Kavya* and *Khatasura Badha* were produced in the court of Nara Narayan. As a disciple, he further carried out the objectives of Sankardeva to propagate the messages of the Vaisnavism into the popular level. In the 10th canto of the *Mahabharata (Madhya Dharam)* he said 'although well versed in Sanskrit, he is translating the ultimate knowledge (from the Sanskrit) to carry out the messages into the popular level including the women, *Shudra*, non-caste and other marginalized people<sup>82</sup>. Ananta Kandali also composed the *Vaishnavamrita* (the nectar of the *Vaishnavism*) and translated the *Geeta Govinda* of Jaydeva from Sanskrit into the vernacular.<sup>83</sup> However, he recognized the patronage of the state in the translation<sup>84</sup>.

The Vaishnava literatures produced under the patronage of the Koch kings were not confined among the literates and the state-officials. It had great appeal to the masses too. The propagation of messages of the Vaishnavism through the *kirtana* (chanting), *sravana* (listening), *baragit* and *ankiyana*t significantly contributed to the diffusion of the non-tribal cultural values among the masses.

#### **Miscellaneous Literature:**

The Koch kings also patronized the scholars to compose the non-religious literatures like-- biography, history and literatures for practical uses. Bhusan Dvija, a court poet of Nara Narayan, composed the *Guru Charita* (biography of Sankardeva). Similarly, Ram Ray (father-in-law of Chilarai), had produced the biography (*Gurulila*) of his *Guru*, Damodar Deva. Construction of history, at the cost of the state, also got a special attention from Prana Narayan (1632-1665 A.D). Kaviratna had composed the *Rajakhandha* (*A history of the Koch kingdom*). But this work is not available now.<sup>85</sup> Another work, *Visvasimha Charitam* (biography of Visvasimha) had been composed by Srinath Brahmin during the reign Prana Narayan. It was a kind of history that linked the genealogy of the Koch rulers with the most popular deity of the region. The *Kan khaowa*, a cradlesong by Ram Sarasvati (a court poet of Nara Narayan) is an exceptional type of literatures. *Guptamani* of Madhav Deva deals with the theory of mind and its relations with the environment<sup>86</sup> while Sridhar's *Jhotisha* was work on astronomy.

**Table 7.9.:** Miscellaneous literatures of the court of the Koch kingdom.

Scholar(s)	Patron(s)	Work(s)	Contents/Comments
Ram Sarasvati	Nara Narayan	<i>Kankhaowa</i>	Cradle song
Bhushan Dvija	„	<i>Guru Charita</i>	Life sketch of Sankardeva.
Ram Ray	Nara Narayan and Chilarai	<i>Gurulila</i>	„
Sridhar	Nara Narayan	<i>Jhotisha</i>	Astronomy
Bakul Kayastha	„	<i>Lilavati and Bhumi Pariman</i>	Mathmatics
Madhava Deva	Lakshmi Narayan	<i>Guptamani</i>	Deals with the history of mind and its relations with the environment.
Kaviratna	Prana Narayan	<i>Rajakhanda</i>	Original ms. is not available.
Srinath Brahmin	„	<i>Visvasimha Charitam</i>	Biography of Visvasimha.

#### 7.2.4.3. Literature: and Sanskritization.

The forgoing survey on the literatures shows that the state-sponsored stalwarts had mainly translated the classical (Sanskrit) literature in the vernaculars and composed *smritis* (law books) and Sanskrit grammar for educational development, which accelerated the ‘process of *sanskritization* from above’. This had several outcomes in the sociopolitical life of people of the region.

The ‘ruling section’ of the tribe was *kshatriyized* theoretically at least in the literatures produced under its patronage. In the court literatures, the Koch kings have been propagated as the protectors of the kingdom and savoir of the Brahmins, cows, Vaishnavas and intellectual class. Hence legitimate rulers.

Social influence of the literary activity was most significant. The tribals, newly *hinduized* tribals and the non-tribal laymen got the taste of the secrets of the classical literatures because of their translation into the vernaculars. At the same time it influenced the language of the tribal people because non-tribal vernaculars became the medium of religious teachings. So the Koch language has been extinct from North Bengal at least from the *Vaishnavite* and ‘detribalized Koches’. ‘So linguistic change was a by-product of the diffusion of the non-tribal culture by a tribal state which is equally linked with the legitimization aspect of the state formation.

**Table 7.10.:** Literatures and *sanskritization*.

. Item	Description	Result(s)
<i>Puranas</i>	Translations into the vernaculars.	Popularized the secrets of the Sanskrit (classical) literatures.
Epics	Translation into the vernaculars.	Popularized the epics and developed the Bengali language in the popular level.
<i>Vaishnava</i> literatures	Translation and composition.	Cultural homogeneity and developed the Assamese language and literature.
<i>Ankiyanat</i>	Composition.	Developed the theatre, music and songs.

### 7.3.Primordial Culture: Modification, Synthesis and Continuity.

Like other tribal states of Northeast India <sup>87</sup>and secondary states of elsewhere <sup>88</sup>, the Koch state inspite of its adoption and patronage to the non-tribal cultural ideologies had conserved the primordial culture. Although the ruling section of the tribe had adopted the non-tribal cultural marker including language and the religious ideologies but the tribals beyond the ruling section, particularly of distant hilly land had maintained the primordality, where the state-sponsored religious ideologies and literatures had less influence. More over, the rulers could not avoid the tribal support in the warfare. So the *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* refers that 'the worship of the Shiva, solely with the Vedic rituals, was antagonized by the tribals and Nara Narayan allowed their traditional way of worship with animal sacrifices and offering of country beer (*chakat*) with colourful tribal music and dances.<sup>89</sup>The Kacharis, Meches, Koch and other tribes of northern side of the *Gohain Kamal Ali*, extended from Cooch Behar to Narayanpur, were allowed to maintain their own cultural form with their own priests and rituals while the tribals of the of southern side of the said rout adopted non-tribal culture <sup>90</sup>. So the maintenance and conservation of the older believe system can nullify the hypothesis of full fledged *hinduization* of entire Koch tribe in the initial stage of their state formation erroneously propogated by some scholars in the 1950's.<sup>91</sup>

Still the Koches, Meches and Rabhas are continuing their tribal style their religious lives .<sup>92</sup> The Rabhas and Koches have their traditional male deity called *Rishi* (Mahakal) and female deity known as *Jog*. The rituals of the chief deities are performing by the *Deoshi/Deodhai/Huzi* (tribal priest) who is assisted by the *Deories*. The Meches are also the follower of the *Bathouism* i.e. worship of Bathou (Shiva) who

is also known in many others names. The priest is not employed from any particular family. Any one can achieve the qualities of priesthood. There are many other tribal deities in the belief of the above-mentioned tribal communities .Two daughters of the chief male deity (Rhishi / Bathou) are common among them. The Rabhas called them Rountak and Basek while to the Meches they are called Alai Khungri and Bilai Khungri. Rountak is the synthesized form of goddess Kali and goddess Lakshmi of the Hindus. The Meches have a similar female deity called Mouthansri or Lakshmi. So it appears that the tribal culture had been exist in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley with its primordial form. But there were extreme differences between the cultures of two opposite section of the same tribe i.e., Koches in the top of the political power and Koches of the tribalism of remote periphery.

**Table 7.11:** Traditional tribal deities of the Tista -Brahmaputra valley.

Tribe	Chief male deity	Chief female deity	Other deities	Priest	Special attraction.
Koch	<i>Rhishi</i>	<i>Jog</i>		<i>Huzi</i>	
Mech	<i>Bathou/ Mouria Bourau</i>	<i>Aai Kamakshya</i>	<i>Aaileng</i> (cowherd of the Bathou), <i>Agrang</i> (general of the Bathou), <i>Alai Khungri</i> and <i>Bilai Khungri</i> (daughters of the <i>Bathou</i> ), etc.	Deodhai	<i>Kherai puja, Deodhai dance.</i>
Rabha	<i>Rhishi</i>	<i>Jog</i>	<i>Rountak</i> and <i>Basek</i> (daughter of the Rhishi) .	Deoshi	<i>Hangai Sani dance</i>

### 7.3.1.Modification and Continuity.

Synthesis and modifications of tribal culture were inevitable for the juxtaposition of primordial and *sanskritized* cultures among the tribals of the same region particularly in the middle segment of the tribe. This segment is the mixture of the *sanskritised* ruling section and the tribals of the distant land and its culture was a by-product of the 'sanskritization from above' and the morphological modifications of the tools of production. Peasantization of the tribals had accelerated the process of cultural synthesis of the Koches of our study (as explained in the chapter V).

The Koches, after their *sanskritisation* through the abandonment of certain items of traditional food habit adoption of the cultural ideology of the Hinduism; have been largely transformed into the status of the *Rajbanshi* or *Koch-Rajbanshi* in North Bengal and Assam. But they are still maintaining the tribal traditions with modified forms in their religious practices and beliefs which are basically related to their livelihood. Their

practices of religious festivals and beliefs related to the agriculture and other means of livelihood have been analyzed in the next section of the chapters.

### ***Roagara puja or Gocharbona.***

Celebration of first transplantation of paddy called *roagara* or *gocharbona* was and still is a common practice among the Rajbanshis of North Bengal and Lower Assam<sup>93</sup>. With the beginning of rainy season in May-June or June-July, the cultivators observe this practice to satisfy the mother earth. It is a practiced without priest. Any family or villages perform it. It is not different from the *Hangai-Sani* (musical dance) of the Rabha tribe of Sub-Himalayan Bengal. *Hangai Sani* is practiced in time of showing paddy by the tribe.

### ***Lakhi Dak.***

*Lakhi Dak* or call to Lakshmi (the deity of wealth) is practiced by the Koch-Rajbanshis when the paddy field is about to the stage of flowering and ear are out. The owner of the land or cultivators held the *puja* of the paddy field (*dhan bari*) in the last day of the Bengali month *Aswin*. He offers a handful of mustard cake (*khail*) to the paddy field and set light in a jute stick. The cultivators call the *Lakshmi* to grow more paddies for him as he offering the inorganic manure (mustard cake) for the field. So the *Lakhi dak* was the symbol of more production of paddy, which was the major crop in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley.

### ***Dhankata Puja***

When the paddy is ripe, the peasant family performs a ceremony before cutting paddy. Senior most woman of the family performs the ceremony by cutting a handful of the ripe paddy ears.<sup>94</sup>

### ***Hudum Deo.***

When there is drought and no rainfall during the rainy season, the Rajbanshi women observe a special *puja*. They chose a distant paddy field to satisfy the deity of the rain called *Hudum Deo*. One plantain tree symbolizes the *Hudum Deo*. No man is allowed to see this *puja*. They believe that their prayer and abuses would satisfy the rain god and rain will fall. The concern for the better cultivation of paddy led the women to propitiate *Hudum Deo*.

**Table 7.12:** Principal festivals of the Koch-Rajbanshis.

<b>Festival</b>	<b>Season</b>	<b>Perticipants</b>	<b>Related to</b>
<i>Baishakhi and Ashadi Seva</i>	From the month of <i>Baishakha</i> to <i>Ashada</i> of B.S.(May-July)	Men	Agriculture
<i>Gram Thakur</i>	<i>Jaishtha</i> and <i>Ashada</i> (June-July)	„	„
<i>Gachibona</i>	„	„	„
<i>Tistabudi/ Mechini</i>	<i>Baishakha</i>	Women	Agriculture and river.
<i>Lakhi Dak</i>	<i>Aswina</i>	Men	Agriculture
<i>Bishahari</i>	<i>Naga Panchami</i>	General	Snake worship
<i>Bhandani</i>	<i>Ekadashi</i> , after the emersion of the <i>Durga</i> . (October-November)	„	Shakti worship
<i>Hudum Deo</i>	<i>Jaishtha</i> (June -July)	Women	Rainfall and agriculture
<i>Madan Kama</i>	<i>Baishakha</i> (May-June)	Men	Woship of tree and fertility
<i>Satyapida</i>	<i>Baishakha –Jaishtha</i> (May-June)	„	Cultural synthesis
<i>Paglapida</i>	<i>Falguna</i> (March)	„	„
<i>Jiga Thakur</i>	Anytime	Women	Worship of tree and fertility
<i>Naya Khai</i>	<i>Agrahayan</i> (November-December)	General	Agriculture
<i>Pushna</i>	<i>Paush-Sankranti</i> (January)	„	„
<i>Siyal Puja</i>	„	„	Animal worship
<i>Salesvari</i>	<i>Falguna-Chaitra</i> (March)	„	Worship of Forest
<i>Gorakhnath</i>	„	Men	Agriculture and livestock
Shiva and his companions	<i>Shiva Chaturdhashi</i>	General	Chife male deity
<i>Dharam Thakur</i>	<i>Baishakha</i>	„	Cultural synthesis
<i>Garima and Chadaka</i>	<i>Bishub Sankranti</i> (April)	Men	Agriculture and Magical rites
<i>Bishua</i>	„	„	Agriculture
<i>Kali Thakur</i>	<i>Dipanvita</i> (October-November)	„	Chief female deity

### ***Mechini Khela***

River, particularly the *Tista* as one of the great river of North Bengal is worshiped by the peasantized Koch-Rajbanshis in every village. The *Tista* is considered as sacred since ancient period. The *Kalika Puran* in its *Chapters 77 and 78* has given a detailed account of the sacred rivers of Kamarupa including the *Tista*, the *Jatoda*, the *Karatoya*,

the *Subarnamanas*, etc. The *Tista* is worshiped by the Koch–Rajbanshis, Meches and other communities in the month of *Baisakha* of the Bengali calendar, which is called *Mechni khela* or *Tista Budi puja*. The image of the *Tista* is like a white old woman. The *puja* is performed by their own priest called *Adhikari* or *Deosi*. The *Hari* and *Mali* castes (Lower caste Hindus) are also entitled to perform the worship.<sup>95</sup> Pigeon, duck's egg, betel leaf, *ganja*, are generally offered to the *Tista*.

*Tista Budi* or *Mechini* has been identified as *Durga* in the *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*. It contains that while *Visvasimha* was retreating from an unsuccessful raid against the *Bhuiyan* of *Phulguri*, he was saved by the *Mechini* and had given the secrecy of that *Bhuiyan* and eventually *Visvasimha* got the success.<sup>96</sup> This myth was definitely attached to the Koch chief *Visu* in later period. But local traditions prevailing in the Western Duars have described *Mechini* as just another incarnation of *Durga*. When *Shiva* was said to have come down to the Meches, *Durga* and *Ganges* were also began to live with them as *Mech* women and hence her worship is called *Mechini puja* or *khela*.<sup>97</sup>

These myths and beliefs are not the sudden innovation. It derives from the tribal tradition of nature worship or animism. River being the sources of water, irrigation and flood, and its popularity among the tribals led them to think that river is the abode of spirit. Deification and attachment of Hindu myths and popular deities were attached gradually and eventually took the form of folk festival.

### *Salesvara Puja*

According to the tradition prevalent in the Western Duars, *Salesvara* is nothing but the god of forest. The tradition is that '*Salesvar* or forest god' saves the men from the attack of wild animals in the forest when they extract natural resources and gather fruits, roots, honey, etc. The worship is performed by a *Deoshi* who offers a pair of cock and instead of killing, set them free to the forest. A big tree is chosen as god. The worship is done before the beginning of any operation for resource extraction from the forest. The *Deoshi* also offers flower to the hero of *Mech* tribe called *Khontopal*.<sup>98</sup>

The Koch-Rajbanshis also observe few other festivals like—*Baishakhi* and *Ashadi Seva*, *Madan Kama*, *Gorakhnath*, *Bisua*, *Siyal Puja*, *Bishahari*, *Naya Khai*, *Jiga Thakur* etc., which are equally related to their livelihood. The beliefs and practices relating to the production of paddy are mostly observed in the family level in the

normal seasons. Community participation is occasional particularly in the time of emergency. However, in the occasional hunting, fishing and gathering of forest products with a collective method the Koch-Rajbanshis are still maintaining the community participation. Community fishing of the Rajbanshis and the *Nanchang reiny* (fishing dance) of the Rabhas are still bearing the testimony of the importance of the community participation in the economic life of the people of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley which is one of the features of the tribal economy.

### 7.3.2. Synthesis of Culture.

Cultural synthesis in the Koch state was the ultimate impacts of the state sponsorship to the diffusion of exogenous culture, adoption from below, continuity of the tribal believe system and spread of the Islamic faith in the region. The synthesis of religious culture was most prominent in the worship of chief male and female deities i. e., *Shiva* and *Shakti (Durga/Chandi/Gauri)* of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley.

#### ***Bhandani***

*Bhandani* or the *Vanadevi*, a localized incarnation of *Durga*, seated on a tiger, is worshiped in the western Duars and Cooch Behar<sup>99</sup>. Unlike *Durga* of the Hindu pantheon, *Bhandani* is worshipped alone, just immediate after the immersion of *Durga*.

There are several myths attached to this deity. According to one, *Bhandani* is *Durga* who fought against the demons and after destroying the demonic power left for *Kailash*, riding over a tiger and ordered the king to worship her. According to another tradition, a king of certain jungle tract being forget to worship the *Devi Durga* arranged a special worship after the proper time was over and that is why *Devi* is worships after the immersion of *Durga*. However, in Cooch Behar there is the third myth that *Bhandani* is not *Durga* but *Bhandarni* or storekeeper of *Durga* who wish to get worship from the people. Whatever the myths attached to the *Bhandani* it is true that *Bhandani* is not a deity of the Hindu pantheon. The tribal deity became mixed with the *sanskritized* form of *Durga*. It is a kind of synthesis.

#### ***Devi Puja***

*Devi* or *Durga* was and still is being worshiped in the ruling family in Cooch Behar and the Raikat family with a special form having the tribal traditions. It is a special synthesized form of both the *Durga* of the Hindu pantheon and chief female deity of the tribals. The tribal king although adopted the Vedic form of the *Durga* but

did not abandon its tribal form. In the chiefdom or Haria Mandal and Visvasimha, Durga is said to have been worshiped as *Mechini* by the Koch and Mech tribes. Visvasimha, even sacrificed *faringas* (flying insect) and a fellow tribal cowherd to the goddess *Mechini* <sup>100</sup>. However, other deities of the Hindu pantheon (like-- Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Kartik and Ganesh) were less known to them. So *Mechini* was worshipped alone. There is another myth that King Nara Narayan had seen a special form of goddess Durga in the dream who ordered him to introduce and popularize her worship in the kingdom. <sup>101</sup> Image of the deity is a special one. *Devi* stands on the lion that bites the elbow of the demon *Mahishasur*. There is another lion too <sup>102</sup>.

The worship is generally performed by a 'Kamrupi Brahmin'. However, certain tribal traditions are still attached to the *Devi*, such as the *Chalia Baria*, which is a special *puja*. In the second day of the *puja* a non-Brahmin priest performs it. Together with buffaloes, he-goats and tortoise, boar is also sacrificed in the *navami tithi* (third day). Sacrifice of tortoise and boar are not permitted to the worship of the 'Vedic form of the Durga' as they are the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. A tradition is current in Cooch Behar and Baikunthapur (Raikat family) that once there was the tradition of human sacrifice. But now, an image of human figure made of powdered rice and coloured with the human blood, is sacrificed in Devibari temple of Cooch Behar. The sacrificial objects like-- tortoise and boar and the image itself show that there was strong influence of tribal concept of the deity. Contrarily, customs and rituals of the Hindu pantheon for the ceremony had synthesized the worship of a popular deity of Eastern and Northeast India.

Shiva or Mahakal is the chief male deity of both the tribals and the non-tribals of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. So Shiva is being worshiped both by the Brahmin and tribal priests with certain tribal traditions. The state itself built several temples of Shiva (as mentioned earlier) and employed the tribal priests (*deory*) to assist the Brahmin priest of the temples. The tribal rituals of the worship of Shiva are generally performed by the *deories*. The style of Shiva worship in the temples of Bara Mahadeva at Baro Kodali, Chhoto Mahadev at Nakkatigahh, Mahakal of Mahakal Guri village and many other Shiva temples of the region are still bearing the testimonies of cultural synthesis where animals are sacrificed and fishes of local varieties are offered beside the performance of the Vedic rituals. More over certain tribal male deities like --*Masan*,

*Jachha, Bura Thakur, Dhum Baba*, etc., are being worshiped as Shiva where tribal traditions have significant presence.

#### **Others.**

Beside Shiva and Durga, specimens of religious synthesis also available in certain other folk festivals and worship of folk deities. The *Satyapida* and the *Paglapida* are the synthesized form of the Hindu and the Islamic faiths. Most popular aspect of the Koch-Rajbanshi beliefs, however, is *Garam puja* where deities of the Hindu pantheon, Islamic faith and tribal concept of spirits have their equal presence.<sup>103</sup>

The modification of the form of the tribal deities and their synthesis with the deities of the Hindu pantheon (non-tribal) is not merely the *sanskritization* of the tribal culture. The tribals did neither abandon their animism completely nor assimilated with the caste-culture even after *hinduization*. 'What had been occurred is the modification of tribal culture and synthesis of indigenous and exogenous culture patronized by the state'.

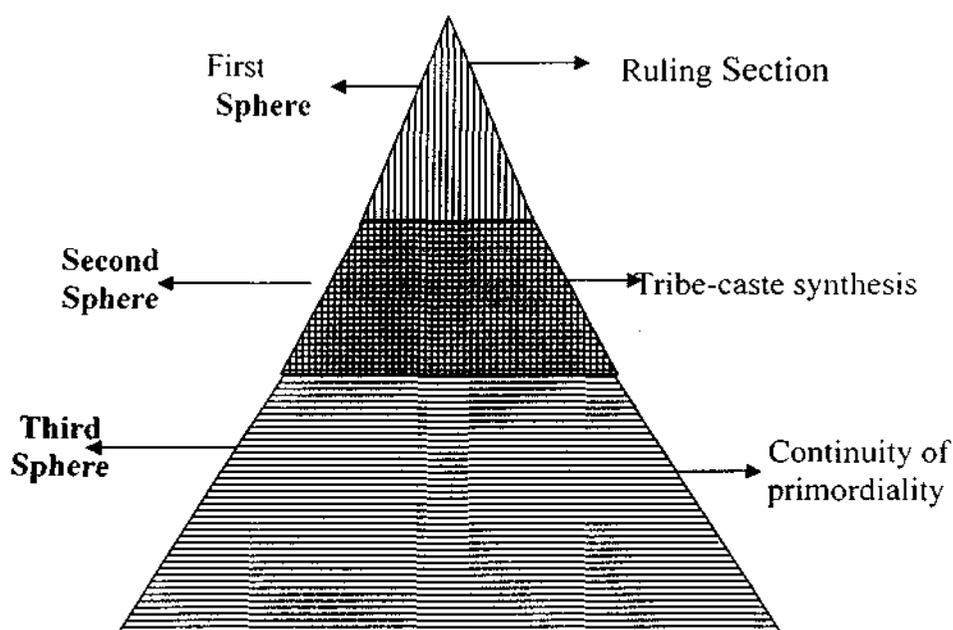
#### **7.4. Internal Legitimacy and the Spheres of Cultural Changes.**

The process of cultural change discussed in the forgoing section of the chapter reveals three spheres of influence of the '*sanskritization* among the tribal people of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. First sphere was the ruling section comprising the ruling family, *Raikat, Karzis* and the *Patras*, who adopted the culture of the caste-society and the neo-Vishnavism and changed their social customs on the light of the new cultural ideologies. They patronized the Brahmins, Vaishnava saints, built the temples and *satras* and encouraged the diffusion of caste-culture among the tribals. It gave them twofold legitimacy. First is the legitimacy from the non-tribals because '*sanskritized* tribals' were recognized as *kshatriya* i.e. ruling caste. Second is the legitimacy from the tribals because the ruling section had delinked it from the tribal control.

The second sphere stood between the ruling section and the tribals of the remote periphery. It had its mobility towards *sanskritization*. The peasantized tribals and *hinduized / vaishnavite* non-ruling tribals with modified animism and synthesized cultural form constitute the second sphere. They partially abandoned the tribal social customs, food habits, language, mode of production and way of life which were replaced by the adoption from the exogenous culture.

The third sphere consisting numerous tribal people is less influenced by the culture of the caste-society. They were less peasantized and their mode of production remained traditional and of mixed character of subsistence tribal economy. They have conserved primordial faiths, beliefs and practices. Meches of the Duars and Rabhas of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts ('core area' of the Koch Kingdom) and extended territories have maintained the primordiality. Even they remained nomadic in their settlement and agricultural operations till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. <sup>104</sup> The state did not forcibly impose the cultural values of the caste-society over them.

**Figure: 7.1:** Level of *Sanskritization*.



'The *sanskritization* from above' is thus, generated the centripetal forces of cultural change of the tribals which is equally related to their mode of production. Culture change had elevated the ruling section to a **caste**. It emanates the forces of further change of non-ruling tribals particularly through the patronization of non-tribal cultural agents and building of temples endowed with land, land-grants to the religious institutions and diffusion of non-tribal literatures through the vernaculars. It legitimized the emerging tribal power in the internal domain. As the entire tribal folk was not

transformed to a non-tribal entity, primordial culture with modified form had been patronized by the state to make its rule acceptable to the tribals of the remote periphery.

### 7.5. External Legitimacy (Horizontal Legitimacy).

Internal legitimacy so far been noticed in the process of integration of ruling power, maintenance of law and order through specific institutions and agencies to enforce the coercive power, adoption of advanced culture with synchronic maintenance of older believes, however, do not legitimate it in the external field. The rule of particular tribe does not achieve sovereignty until or unless the wieldier of the authority is recognized by the neighbouring states (both tribal and non-tribal). Sovereignty of pre-colonial tribal state of Northeast India, in most cases rested on regular expeditions and warfare. However, military expeditions alone do not materialize the horizontal legitimacy. Recognition of tribal kingdom by the pre-modern non-tribal states has been noticed in the matrimonial alliances and relations.<sup>105</sup> In the present case, the Koch kings adopted and experienced both military expeditions and warfare and marriage relations with non-tribal states and social groups for the recognition of the 'tribal state' as legitimate ruling entity and for the elevation of their social status.

The warfare had served two purposes. First is the extraction of booties that enforced the state formation process which was a basic feature of the political formation of the Koches since the beginning. Regular military expedition had maintained the sovereignty of the Koch kings in the conquered territories. Instead of provincial system, conquered territories were directly administered from the core area. Thus, regular expedition was essential to keep the conquered territories in control, lack of which led to the gradual decrement of the Koch territories in the extended area. The role of warfare and the military expedition have been already discussed in the chapters III and IV.

Second means of external legitimacy is quite interesting for the Koch kingdom. Like contemporary and previous states of India, the Koches adopted the policy of the matrimonial relations. The *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* and other genealogies of the Koch kings have given a long list of 18 wives of Visvasimha from Nepal, Kashmir, Gauda, Kashi, Mithila, Sonitpur and Kamarupa.<sup>106</sup> These marriages of Visvasimha had attached the tribal kings with other political identities and dominant powers. The *Rajopakhyan* has given another description that Chandan (the first king of the Koches),

Vivasimha and Sisvasimha (*Raikat*) had married three daughters of Turbak, governor of Goalpara, appointed by the Sultan of Bengal.<sup>107</sup> Whether it is fictitious are not, it had little connection with this external legitimacy. Nara Narayan and Chilarai had marriage relations with the Kayastha Bhuiyans. Pratap Ray Bhuiyan's daughter and niece were married to Nara Narayan and Chilarai respectively<sup>108</sup>. Both Nara Narayan and Chilarai became great patron of the Vaishnavism for these marriages. These marriage relations with the non-tribal families had reinforced the process of *sanskritization*.

While Lakshmi Narayan had been engage in conflict with Parikshit Narayan, he allowed the Mughal intervention in the Koch Kingdom. Under his initiatives one political marriage had been performed with the Mughal party. Man Singh, the Mughal governor of Bengal was given marriage in 1596 A.D. with Pravabati Devi, sister of Lakshmi Narayan.<sup>109</sup> It was not merely recognition for the Koch kings but Lakshmi Narayan wanted to utilize the Mughal support against the Raghudeva and Parikshit Narayan. Lakshmi Narayan also tried to establish good terms with the Ahoms with the same purpose in 1620 A.D.. Even he promised the Ahom king to make a matrimonial relation with him. But after the death of Lakshmi Narayan, Bir Narayan denied to keep the promise of the late King. Instead of daughter of the late king, Birupakshya Karzi, one state official, had offered his daughter Lakshmi Priya to the Ahom king and granddaughter, Hemaprabha, to the Ahom prince.<sup>110</sup> These offers of daughters and sisters of the Koch kings to the dominant neighbouring power were essentially 'Koch attempt of achieving external security'.

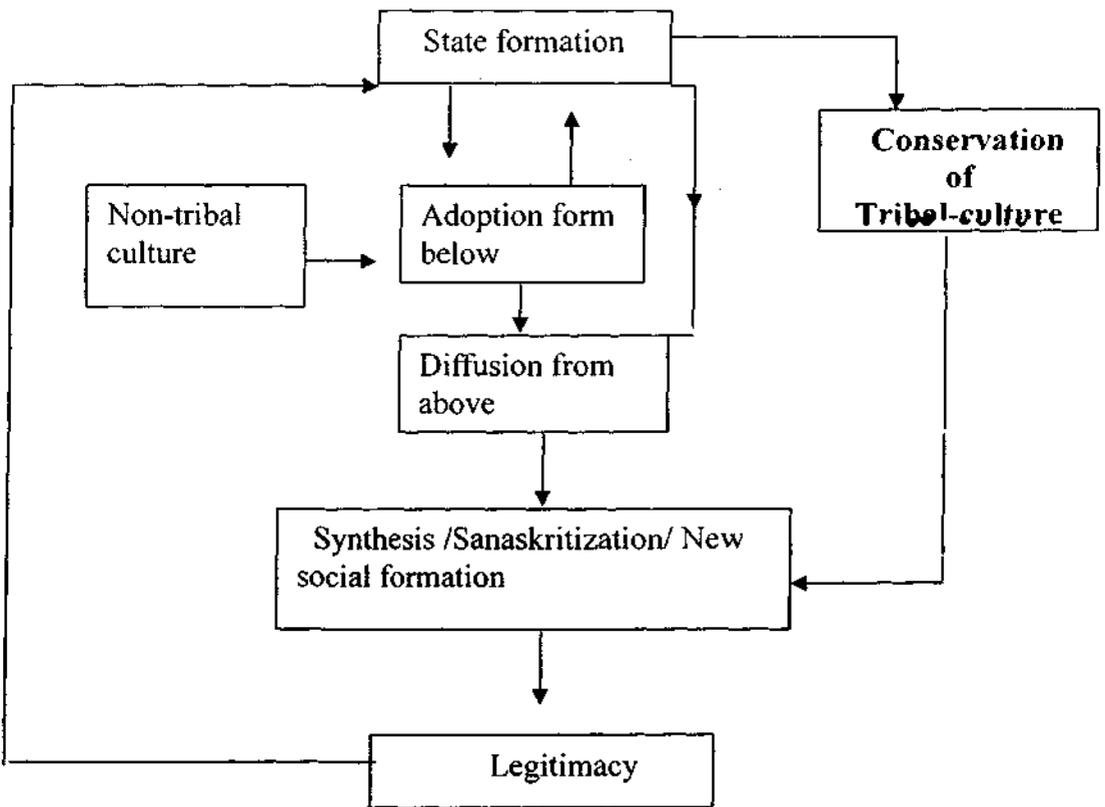
**Table 7.13:** Marriage relations of the Koch rulers in regards to the external legitimacy.

Ruler/ officer	Name of the wife /daughter/ sister	Party
Visvasimha	Ratnakanti.	Nepal.
„	Chandrakanti, Purnakanti, Hemavati and Rati.	Kamarupa
„	Hemaprava and Padmabati.	Gauda
„	Tilottama	Kashmir
„	Chandra, Chandranana, Jaya, Vijaya and Jayanti.	Kashi
„	Lalita, Labanyabati and Padmamala.	Sonitpur
„	Satarupa and Kanchanmala.	Mithila.
Nara Narayan	Bhanumati	Pratap Ray
Chilarai	Chandravati	Nice of Pratap Ray
Lakshmi	Pravabati (sister of the king)	Man Singh

Narayan		
Birupakshya Karzi.	LakshmiPriya (daughter) Hemaprava (grand daughter)	Ahom king
Prana Narayan	Rupamati (sister of the king)	Pratap Malla (king of Nepal).

But Prana Narayan once again revived the political status of the Kingdom. For him matrimonial relation was not defensive rather legitimacy of the Kingdom was the purpose. So he offered his sister Rupamati Devi, to Pratap Malla, the Malla king of Nepal.<sup>111</sup> *The Ugratara Temple Inscription* (1665) refers that the King Pratap Malla had married Rupamati Devi, the second daughter of the Koch king Bir Narayan. This marriage relation established a close relation between the two distinct ruling families.

**Figure 7.2.** Legitimacy and state formation



Achieving the external legitimacy through the marriage relation was started with Visvasimha. His relations with different states of Northern India and Northeastern

India had accelerated *distribaliration* of kings emerged from tribalism. The marriage relations with the *Kayasthas* were more social than political.

### 7.6 Observations

The Koch kingdom did adopt similar approach to legitimize its rule within the state, as did a few contemporary tribal states of Eastern and Northeastern India. Distribution of concentrated surplus through the building of religious institutions and works of public utility had its positive outcome both for the state and the subjects. Adoption and patronization of non-tribal ideologies and conservation of primordial culture by the state had legitimize the Koch rule both among the tribals and the non-tribals .At the same time it reinforced the detribalization process which eventually fitted the *Hinduized/sanskritized* tribe within the non-tribal social hierarchy. Simultaneously, adoption of contemporary standard vernacular in the offices, courts and foreign relations and translations of the religious scriptures to the vernaculars had begun the process of linguistic *sanskritization* i.e. abandonment of the self (tribal) and the adoption of the alien (non-tribal) language in the sociopolitical life. So internal legitimization led to the growth of social stratification that simultaneously related to the state formation .On the other hand marriage relations with the non-tribal communities had recognized the formation of a political stratum within the tribe, which in the caste-hierarchy is stands as *kshatriya* i.e. legitimate ruler .So legitimization aspect of the state formation eventually resulted into the new social formation which brought someshort of cultural homogeneity.

### Notes and References.

1. Morton H. Fried: *The Evolution of Political Society*, (New York, Random House, 1967), p. 26.
2. H.J.M. Cleassen: *The Internal Dynamics of the Early State*, *Current Anthropology*, 25(1984), p. 368.
3. Morton H.Fried: *op. cit.*, p. 242.

4. Surajit Sinha (ed): *Tribal Polities and State Systems in Pre-colonial Eastern and Northeastern India*. (Calcutta, K.P.Bagchi &Co.,1987), p.xx
5. Hermann Kulke: *Kings and Cults: State Formation and Legitimation in India and South Asia*, reprint ed., (New Delhi,Manohar, 2001), p.92.
6. Surajit Sinha (ed): *op. cit.*, p. xvii. M.N. Srinivas has conceptualized the adoption of caste-culture by the tribes as *sanskritization* in regards to social mobility (M.N. Srinivas: *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India*. (Oxford, 1952). To him *sanskritization* is the process by which a 'low Hindu caste' or tribal or other group, changes its customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently, twice born caste. M.N.Srinivas: *Social Change in Modern India*, reprint ed., (New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1985), p.6. But in the state formation process it was a *kshatriyazation* of tribe. Hermann Kulke: *op.cit.*, p. 92.
7. *Guru Charita*, v. 2243, p. 488.
8. *Ibid.*, v. 3454, p. 687.
9. *Katha Guru Charita*, vs. 3449-3453, pp.686-687.
10. *Ibid.*, v. 3606, p. 719.
11. *Ibid.*, vs. 3729-3733, p. 743.
12. K.S. Singh: *Tribal Society in India*. (New Delhi. Manohar. 1985), p. 43.
13. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed: *Cooch Beharer Itihas*. (Cooch Behar, The Cooch Behar State Press, 1936), p. 95.
14. *Yogini Tantra*,ch. 13, vs. 2-22.
15. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs.27-71, pp.5-12; *Rajopakhyan*, pp. 3-5; *Kamrupar Buranji*, pp.10-11.
16. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs.123-131, pp.23-25.
17. The *Raj Vamsavali* of Ripunjay Das claims that a Brahmin named Ballavacharyya had converted Visvasimha to the Hinduism. But the *Gandharva Narayanar Vamsavali* (ms) mentions that Kalichandra Bhattacharya, a Brahmin had performed the rituals to bring Visvasimha in the fold of Shaivism.
18. *Rajopakhyan*, p. 41.
19. Surajit Sinha (ed): *op.cit.*, p. xv.

20. The road construction was an important attempt of the Khena kings of the pre-Koch period. The Roads from Kamatapur to Bhutan and from Kamatapur to Rangpur and Bogra were their contributions.
21. The Koch king had their special interest on the construction of tanks .In the present Cooch Behar town there are many tanks which have been excavated by the Cooch Behar State.
22. *Guru Charita, vs. 2230-2234, pp.442-43.*
23. The *Charita Puthis* or the biographies of the Vaishnava saints of the region including Sankardeva, Madhava Deva and Damodar Deva have vividly described the religious teachings of Sankaradeva and popularity of the neo-Vaishnavism .The published biographies such as Ramcharan Thakur: *Guru Charita*. 10<sup>th</sup> ed.. (Guwahati, 2001); Daityari Thakur: *Mahapurusha Sri Sankardeva aru Sri Madhava Devar Jiban Charita* (Nalbari, 1978); Bhusan Dvija: *Mahapurusa Sankaradeva*, edited by Durgabar Barkakati (Jorhat, 1925); Ramananda Dvija: *Guru Charita*, edited by M.Neog, (Nalbari, 1957); Upendra Chandra Lekharu (ed): *Katha Guru Charita*, 4th ed., (Guwahati, Datta Barua Publishing Pvt. Ltd., 2002), etc., have depicted the popularity of the Vaishnavism among the people of the region.
24. *Katha Guru Charita*, p.53.
25. For details about the *satras* of Assam and North Bengal. see, S.N. Sharma: *The New Vaishnavite Movement and the Satra Institutions of Assam*. (Gauhati University, 1966) and Dvijendra Nath Bhakat: *Satrar Samikshyattak Itibritta* (Dhubri, Bhabani Book House, 1995).
26. *Rajopakhyan*, p.16.
27. *Kamakshya Temple Inscription*, see **Appendix B**.
28. From the record available in the Coch Beharer Itihas by Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed it appears that the Kamakshya temple had around 23685 *bighas* of rent-free land. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed: *op.cit.* p. 127.
29. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement*, p. 94. Also see **Plate 7.3**.
30. *Hayagriva Madhav Temple Inscription*, cited in Maheswar Neog (compiled and ed.): *Prachya Sasanavali*, (Guwahati, Assam Prakashan Parishad, 1974), p.143;

*Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, v. 681-683, pp.137-138. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed had estimated an amount of total 54 thousand 300 *bighas* of land, granted to the Hayagriva Madhav temple by Raghudeva Narayan. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed :*op. cit.*, p.125.

31. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op. cit.*, p.545.

32. *Kamatesvari Temple Inscription*, see *Appendix C*; also *Plate 7.2.B*.

33. Prana Narayan granted 44 *jotes* of land to the Jalpesvar temple. These *jotes* came under the revenue assessment in 1891 by the order of the Revenue Departemnt of the Colonial Governement. Order No. 494 L.R. date –17<sup>th</sup> April, 1891.D.Sunder: *Survey and Settlement of the Western Duars in the District of Jalpaiguri, 1889-95*.p.123.

34. The date of construction of the Madan Mahon temple of Cooch Behar is controversial. While the *Rajopakhyan* ascribes the credit of foundation of the temple to King Rup Narayan, other sources have given the same credit to King Prana Narayan (1632-65).

35. See *Plate 7.4.B*.

36. The *hastabood* (statistics) prepared by Mr. Purling, the Collector of Rangpur in 1773. It estimated total land revenue as Rs. 264759 of which Rs. 51878 was the revenue of the land granted to the temples, *zagir* and charity land. *Mercer and Chouvet Report on Cooch Behar*, pp.172-73.

37. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op.cit.*, p.544.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 545.

39. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.38.

40. *Rajopakhyan*, p.24. Present researcher has collected the oral traditions about the temples, from fieldwork carried out at Gosanimary during the period between 2001 and 2004. Also Nripendra Nath Pal (ed): *Gosani Mangal*, 2nd ed., (Calcutta, Anima Prakashani, 1992), pp.138-141.

41. N.N. Vasu: *Social History of Kamrupa (3vols)*, reprint ed.,(Delhi, Northern Book Center, 1983), *vol. II*, p.61.

42. See *Plate 5.5 C*.

43. See *Plate 5.5.D*.

44. The *Deories* were appointed from the non-Brahmins particularly from the local tribal people and lower caste Hindus.
45. N.N.Majumdar: A Study of Tribe–Caste Continuum and the process of Sanaskritization among the Bodo Speaking Tribes of the Garo Hills, in K.S.Singh (ed): *The Tribal Situation in India* ,(New Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass ,1996),pp.263-270.
46. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 265-268 and vs. 291-294. p.60.
47. *Raja Vamsavali*, Ms. f. 9.
48. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed: *op. cit.*, 130.
49. *Raj Vamsavali*, Ms. (N.B.S.L. ms. no. 4), f. 9; P.C. Choudhury: *A Catalogue of the Sanaskrita Manuscripts of the DHAS*, (Gauhati, DHAS, 1961), p.58.
50. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed: *op.cit.*, p. 131.
51. *Ibid.* . p.154.
52. *Ibid.* . p.164.
53. For specimen see *Ibid.*, pp104-105.
54. *Kamrupar Buranji*, pp.69-84.
55. S.N.Sen (ed): *Prachin Bangla Patra Sankalan* (Calcutta, Calcutta University, 1942). *letter no. 1.*
56. Pitambar Siddhantavagis: *Markandeya Purana*, Ms. (N.B.S.L. ms. no. 08 and 13). f.1a and 1b.
57. Pitambar Shiddhantavagis: *Bhagavata Purana (Dasham Skandha)*, ms. (NBSL, ms.no 58).
58. Ajay Kumar Chakravarty: *Literatures in the Kamata-Koch Bihar Raj Darbar* (Dhubri, 1964), p.85.
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*, p.86.
61. *Naradiya Purana*, ms., (NBSL. Ms. 28).
62. Ajay Kumar Chakravarty :*op.cit.*, p.67.
63. *Ibid.*, p.68.
64. Ananta Kandali: *Mahabharata (Rajasuya)*, ms. (NBSL. ms.no101.).
65. Kavishekhar: *Kirata Parva*, ms. (NBSL. ms.no 90).
66. Srinath Brahmin: *Mahabharata (Adi Parva)*, (NBSL. ms.no. 77.)

67. *Draupadi Swayamvara*, ms. (NBSL. ms.no 78).
68. *Ibid*.
69. Sashi Bhushan Das Gupta: *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengal Manuscripts Preserved in the State Library of Cooch Behar*, (Cooch Behar, 1948), p. 99.
70. Dvija Ram Sarasvati: *Mahabharata (Visma Parva)* ,Ms. (NBSL ,Ms., no.94).
71. Dimbeswar Neog: *Asamiya Sahityar Buranjit Bhumuki* (Jorhat, 1863 Saka (1941 A.D.), p.47.
72. Birinchi Kumar Barua: *History of Assamese Literatures*, (New Delhi. Sahitya Academy. 1964), p. 24.
73. Maheswar Neog: *Sankaradeva*, reprint ed.. (New Delhi. National Book Trust. 2000), p.49.
74. Sankardeva had stressed on *sravana* and *kirtana* form of *bhakti* although other forms such as- *smarana* (remembering the god), *pada sevana* (serving the feet of the god), *archana* (the rite of ceremonial worship of the image of the deity), *vandana* (salutation and submission at the feet of the god). etc: were not discouraged.
75. Sankardeva and Madhava Deva: *Kirtana Ghasha O Hazari Ghosha*, published by Chidananda Das (Calcutta. 1298 B.S.),p. 36.
76. Birinchi Kumar Barua :*op.cit.* , p. 36.
77. *Ibid*, p.50.
78. *Ibid.*,p.147.
79. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed :*op. cit.*, p.152.
80. The manuscript copy of the *Adikanda, Sri Krishna Janma Rahasya* and *Bhakti Ratnavali* are available at the North Bengal State Library (NBSL), Cooch Behar.
81. Birinchi Kumar Barua: *op.cit.*,59.
82. *10<sup>th</sup> canto of the Mahabharata*, cited in Dimbeswar Neog: *op.cit.*, p. 60.
83. Ajay Kumar Chakravarty: *op.cit.*, p. 49.
84. *Ibid*.
85. The *Rajopakhyan* has mentioned the existence of this history book till the 1252 B.S.*Rajopakhyan*, p.xvii.
86. Ajay Kumar Chakravarty: *op.cit.* , p.100.
87. Surajit Sinha(ed):*op.cit.*, p.xxiii.

88. Morton H.Fried :*op.cit.*, p.242.
89. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali, vs.* 325-328.
90. *Ibid. Vs.*336-337.
91. For example, Suniti Kumar Chatterji: *Kirata Jana Kriti*, reprint ed., (Calcutta. Asiatic Society, 1898), p. 118.
92. Fieldwork carried out in the following villages--Madhya Kamakshya Guri, Dakshin Kamakshya Guri, Mahakal Guri and Khovar Danga of Alipur Duar Sub division. Jalpaiguri District, and Koch villages of West Garo Hills. Meghalaya.
93. D.Sunder: *Survey and Settlement of the Westren Duars*, p.56; Charu Chandra Sanyal: *Rajbanshis of North Bengal*, reprint ed., (Kolkata, The Asiatic Society, 2002), p193.
94. D.Sunder: *Survey and Settlement of the Western Duars*, p.57.
95. Charu Chadra Sanyal: *Rajbanshis of North Bengal*, reprint ed., (Kolkat. The Asiatic Society, 2003), p146. The priests of the Koch-Rajbanshis are known in different names such as –*Adhikari, Deoshi, Bhouria, Kirtania, Ojha, etc.* The *Adhikaris* perform the worships of the chief deities .The worships of *Bhandani* and *Mahakal* who are the synthesized form of the deities of tribal and Hindu pantheon, generally perform by the *Deoshis*.
96. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali, vs.* 97-103.
97. Charu Chandra Sanyal: *op.cit.*, p.137.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
99. See *Plate 7.5.D.*
100. *Rajopakhyan*, pp.11-12.
101. *Ibid.*, p.22.
102. See *Plate 7.2.D.*
103. *Garam (Gram) Thakur* is the savior of the villages. The villagers worship this deity together with Salewari, Mahakal, Sanyashi Thakur, Tista, Paglapid, Kali, Bishahari and Lakshmi.
104. D.Sunder: *Survey and Settlement of the Western Duars*, p.71.
105. Herman Kulke :*op.cit.*, p.94.
106. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali, vs.* 230-239.
107. *Rajopakhyan*, p.15.

108. *Guru Charita*, vs. 2443.

109. *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. I, pp. 362-363.

110. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed :*op. cit.*, p. 154.

111. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.