

***Socio-economic-cultural transition and development of languages, literature and arts:***

The political achievements of the King Naranarayan were not long lasting. The empire was reduced its size and the power declined at the last days of his life. However, his achievements in the fields of socio-economic -cultural transition and development of languages, literature and arts were long lasting all over the northeast India. He himself was the forerunner of societal development and assimilation, a strong believer of stable economy, great patron of learning, both Sanskrit and indigenous literature. He was the prime mover of all intra- human developments and assimilations. The *Kamakhya* temple Inscription speaks of the great king in the following words:

“Glory to the king Malladeva, who by virtue of his mercy, is kind to the people, who in archery is like Arjuna, and in charity like Dadhichi and Karna; he is like an ocean of all goodness, and he is versed in many Sastras; his character is excellent ; in beauty he is as bright as Kandarpa, he is a worshipper of kamakhya....”<sup>1</sup>.

Socio-economic - cultural transition and development of language, literature and art of the Koch kingdom under Naranarayan can be discussed under following heads;

***Society:***

***Population pattern:***

Social format of the territory was very complex due to the admixtures of different biological and cultural communities and the society was organized on basis of clans and tribes. For the convenience of our study , we would however mention them as Hindus and non-Hindu tribal. The Koch kingdom originated from tribal<sup>2</sup> social format under the chief ship of Hariya Mandal, the grand father of king Naranarayan in the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The general features of the tribal society as had noted by Robert Redfield ‘distinctiveness, smallness, homogeneity, and self-sufficiency as primary features of the tribal society’ and certain other features could be included to identify the tribal society such as common territory, common dialect or language, existences of common culture and distinct socio-political institutions<sup>3</sup>. The Koches too had their non-Hindu tribal identity with unique tribal form of society, culture, religious believe and languages up to

the time of Hariya Mandal. The Sanskrita scriptures like the *Kalika purana* and the *Yogini Tantra* have identified the territory extended from the Dikrai in the east to the Karatoya in the west, the land of the Brahmaputra-Tista valley (the territorial area of the Koch kingdom) as the tribal belt, dominated by non-Aryans tribes like Kiratas, Koches, Meches and others<sup>4</sup>. A similar description has been also given in the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, a 13<sup>th</sup> century Persian work of Monhaj-ud-din Siraj. It clearly mentioned that the territory between the country of Bengal (Lakhanawati) and Tibet dominated by three distinct tribal communities viz., Koch, Mech and Tharu<sup>5</sup>.

So it is clear from the descriptions of Sanskrita texts and of historical writings that the territory mostly inhabited by non-Hindu people like Koch, Mech, Tharu, Kachari and others from the historical times. The tribal people lived clan life having allegiance to their tribe and the tribal chief and the social life was regulated by tribal customs that came down traditionally from times immemorial. All the tribes have close socio-cultural similarities and in early stage they did not accept the socio-cultural assimilation with the Brahmanical culture without protest and challenge. Their food habit was completely different from the Aryans. The *Padma Purana* in its single verse has highlighted the culture of the Koches that they were accustomed to eat everything<sup>6</sup>. It is the fact that before their rise to political power, they were fully accustomed with their non-Hindu socio-cultural practices and the society was based on matriarchal principle. But with the rise to political power, the Koches accepted the patriarchal principle with the influence of Brahmanical association or contact. The DRV informs us that although Biswa Singha himself accepted the Brahmanical socio-cultural identities and married a number Hindu Princes from different kingdoms but at his deathbed advised his sons to marry only the beautiful daughters of the Koch -Mech - Kachharis<sup>7</sup>.

Hindu socio-cultural practices were also prevalent in the territory since very ancient period. The Brahmins, whose number was considerably small, held esteemed position in the society, made their settlements in the region were allured by the lucrative land grants, issued by the tribal kings. The territory was a stronghold of the Brahmins and a centre of tantric culture. They were serving as priest to both the tribal ruling class and the Hindu-converts and they used to enjoy high posts in the state administration of the Khen kings of Kamta in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Koch Kings namely Biswa Singha and Naranarayan brought Brahmins from other parts of India at the early part of 16<sup>th</sup> century and established them in their kingdom with grants of land and servitors. Biswa Singha brought

from Mithila a Brahmana of the name of Sarvabhauma belonging to the Gotra of Vasistha for the worship of his tutelary deities. It is mentioned in the *Brihat Rajavansavali* of Raja Harendra Narayan, that Siddhantavagisa and Vidyavagisa first came to Kamarupa on pilgrimage and the king Naranarayan received them cordially and made to each of them a grant of nine villages and thereafter both of them settled in the country<sup>8</sup>. They also took the important role in the process of socio-cultural assimilation and Aryanization in the Non-Hindu tribal royal courts and played prime role in cultivation and development of Sanskrita and others Languages, literature and arts of the locality. They also took the initiative of Hinduisation process of the locality.

Besides the Brahmins, the Daivagnas (Ganakas) and Kayasthas were the other most prominent Hindu community of the area. They had migrated to the Area in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries from Kaunaj and Gaud for their professional occupations of astrological calculations and book-keeping and accountancy (*Kayasthika*) respectively with the patronage of the local kings<sup>9</sup>. They gradually emerged as landed aristocrats called Bhuyans like the Brahmins, for their knowledge of advanced agricultural techniques and technologies. Thus, the Bhuyan system came into prominence from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Koches had to fight to establish the Koch kingdom by crushing the system. This *Kayastha* Bhuyans were at Kamarupa, Darrang, Barpeta and Goalpara and had a significant role in the contemporary politics of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. But after the establishment of the Koch kingdom, they got special treatment from the Koch kings to run the administration.

Among the Hindu communities, a large number of lower social status and were the majorities. Most of them derived their caste-names from the professions they held and they were professional caste. Noted among them were the *Tantis*(weavers), *Katanis*(spinners of silk and cotton thread), *Hiras/Kumars* (potters), The *Kamars* (blacksmiths), the *Sonaris* (goldsmiths), the *Kahars* (bellmetal workers or palanquin bearer), the *Dhobis* (washermen), the *Telis* (oilmen), the *Malis* or *Malakars* (gardeners or garland maker), *Nadial* or *Kaivartas* (boatmen or fishermen), *Goalas* (milkmen), *Baniyas* (traders) and *Muchis* (cobblers). Biswa Singha had appointed his sons in the charge of the various departments related to the above-mentioned professions<sup>10</sup>. The *Charit Puthis* and genealogies of the Koch also mentioned the existence of certain other occupational communities in the kingdom such as *Manjhi* (boatmen), *Baroi* (betel leaf farmer), *Kalita* (indigenous agricultural caste), *Mukhi* (image-maker), *Khaniker* (mask and image-maker), *Sutar* (carpenter), *Not* (dancer) and *Mali* (gardener)<sup>11</sup>.

Another section of the society consisted of the Muslims. However, it is difficult to ascertain exactly when the Muslims come to settle in western Kamarupa. Contemporary indigenous literary sources refer two terms for Muslims; the 'Turuks' and the 'Yavanas'. The both the terms certainly refer all the Muslim community in general but 'Turuks' most probably specifically refer Turks. The earliest reference of Muslims contact into the region was established during the time of Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji's expedition of Tibet in 1205 A.D. and a local Mech was converted to Islam and renamed as Ali Mech<sup>12</sup>. After the incident, wave after wave of the Muslims invasions poured into the territory but all the invasions were like temporary raids, without permanent impression. The Muslim settlement with social base started after the conquest of Kamatapur by Hussein Shah of Bengal in about 1498 A.D. Although Hussein Shah's invasion of Kamata ultimately proved to be a failure, it appears that a colony of Muhammadans remained in the country round about Hajo, where one Giyasuddin Aulia erected a Mosque and subsequently died and buried near the mosque<sup>13</sup>. This place is still considered as sacred by local Muslims, who regard it as "Poa Macca" (one-fourth of Macca). The Muslims had their own socio-cultural pattern. They took initiative in the cultivation of Arabic and Persian languages and in the preaching of Islam in the area.

From the above discussion it is clear that the territory, on the eve the 16<sup>th</sup> century populated by Multi-ethnic, Multi-lingual, Multi-cultural and multi-religious groups of people of both tribal and non-tribal origin. Among them, the tribal people preferred to live in the peripheral region and had their own dialects, manners and social customs. But creamy layer of the tribal people who rose to political power as clan leaders were greatly motivated by their Hindu officials including Brahmin priests and they Hinduised /Sanskritised themselves, shifted their centre of power (i.e. capital) to the core area (i.e. plains) and discarded or modified their tribal dialects, manners and social customs<sup>14</sup>. The Non-tribal Hindu people had their own Brahmanical socio-cultural heritage and preferred to live in the plain.

### ***Social stratification: professional and hierarchical:***

The social stratification in Koch kingdom was almost same as was in the other states of North East India during the reign of Narayanarayan and it was more or less organized based on clans and tribes. However, with the arrival of non-tribal Hindus including the Brahmins, the Kayasthas and others from Bengal and other parts of India, the situation

changed. The tribal, non-tribal Hindus and the admixture of the both made such a situation, where it became very hard to identify the pattern of social stratification. Under this situation, the scholars proceed from two angles: the profession based stratification and the hierarchical stratification.

The profession based social stratification was the prime characteristics of the Koch society and profession-based four categories of people appeared to have constituted the Koch Society.

The tribal chiefs, ruling class, their subordinate officers, Bhuyans, Samanta rajas and the priests, both Brahmanical and Tribal - constituted the first higher category. They are to be termed as 'Privileged aristocrats' and may be compared with the Mughal nobility. At the top, the king would try to follow the life style of the Bengal Sultans or of the Mughal Subedars of Bengal. They derived their income indirectly from land by offering various types of services to the state. They monopolized all the high posts of the administration, got some crown land, and hereditarily enjoyed it. Goutam Bhadra, with reference from the Vansavali mentioned that, ".....কোচ সামন্তদের সঙ্গে নৃপতির 'তালাকি প্রতিজ্ঞাপত্রের' উল্লেখ আছে। কোচ সামন্তরা নরনারায়নের কাছে বংশানুক্রমিক আনুগত্যের প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েছিল<sup>15</sup> .

The agriculturists of various types constituted the second higher category of professional group. They were largest in number and directly derived their income from agriculture and can be termed as 'peasantry'. They freely enjoyed land right and employed mainly in cultivation. However, at the time of war they have to provide to the state the military service as the *Paiks*.

The small traders, artisans and craftsman formed the 3<sup>rd</sup> higher category. They were mainly professional people having specialisation / training in the concerned jobs. However, Prof. M. Neog classed them as middle class and he identified the middle class consisting of many functionaries such as petty shopkeepers, government servants, sepoys, peons, Dhopdharas, Garmalis, storekeepers, Mahaliya, Sadagar, Dancers, Musicians, etc<sup>16</sup>. Some people of the second category perform dual jobs: cultivation as primary job and specialisation work as secondary job.

The slaves, house servants and bondsman formed the fourth or the lowest category. The slavery widely existed in the Koch kingdom and slaves were prisoners of war, condemned criminals, and persons born of slaves or purchased. The tradition of selling slaves in the open market was also prevalent there and sometimes bartered them with

horses<sup>17</sup>. Bondsmen, who were unable to repay their debt, were forced to sell their children or even themselves as slaves<sup>18</sup>. The *Katha Guru Charit* informs that a large number of house servants or slaves worked at the houses of rich people<sup>19</sup>.

On the other hand, N. N. Vasu mentioned that the hierarchical stratification based on four-fold caste system was prevalent in the Koch kingdom during the reign of Naranarayan and Chilarai<sup>20</sup>. According to him, Naranarayan and Chilarai both brought up at Benaras and greatly influenced by the ideal of high - caste Hindus and therefore a deep sympathy for Hindu manners, customs and ideals was rooted in their hearts. Because of which, they attempted to introduce those ideals and customs among their people after their accession to the power. They brought Siddhantavagisa and Vidyavagisa, two Brahmana scholars and patronized them with nine villages and ultimately they became the advisor and social dictators of the kingdom. Through the efforts of the king Naranarayan and Chilarai, under the guidance of Siddhantavagisa and his '*Kaumudis*' (his 18 books in same name) four-fold *Varnasrama* i.e. *Brahmanas*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaisyas* and *Sudras* with modification accordingly necessity, was introduced in the Koch King kingdom<sup>21</sup>.

In this system, the Brahmins including tribal Brahmins were at the top. Along with the Brahmins, some indigenous caste (class?) like Kayasthas, Daivajnas and Kalitas were considered as upper caste Hindus and equivalent to the Brahmins. The Bhuyans of both tribal and non-tribal, tribal chiefs who adopted Brahmanical culture, their subordinate officers and Samanta rajas were classed as Kshatriyas. However, nothing mentioned about the *Vaisyas* and their professions. In Koch kingdom, we do not find the *Vaisyas* except literary references only. But the *Katha Guru Charit* mentioned some specialized trading castes *Sadagars* (big traders), *Beparis* (small traders) and others<sup>22</sup>. According tradition, the *Vaisyas* were business communities and some times were engaged in agriculture. Therefore, it might be the fact that the trading communities were known as professional castes but not as the *Vaisyas*, for; the forth-fold Hindu caste system had no strong base in the kingdom. The earliest caste system had lost its characteristics within 8<sup>th</sup> / 9<sup>th</sup> century. New orders were organised in various areas. This mainly prompted by local needs as well as whims of the ruling class. However all the peasantry, both tribal and non-tribal of the lower strata were termed as *Sudras* and they were the lion portion of the population. But in the North-East India caste system was not rigid like other parts of India rather class system was maintained care fully.

The actual situation of social stratification is not clear from above discussion due to the confusing sources of information. However, this is the fact that the profession based stratification and the hierarchical stratification was not rigid, and it was nothing but the angle of discussion. In reality, the society had two stratas: the upper strata i.e. the privileged and rich class and lower strata i.e. non-privileged all the poor people of the country. The privileged class included the tribal chiefs, ruling class, their subordinate officers, Bhuyans, Samanta rajas and the priests, both Brahmanical and Tribal and rich business communities. According to the Hindu traditions and tribal rules, marriage within same caste and same tribe preferred, and we have few cases of that. Biswa Simgha at his deathbed, advised his sons to marry the beautiful daughters of the Koch, Mech and Kachari<sup>23</sup>, and Madhavadeva's father looking for a groom of his own caste i.e. Kayastha caste for his marriageable daughter<sup>24</sup>. However, practically the upper strata of the society did not obey it. Biswa Singha himself had established marriage relation with Kshatriya /royal ruling families of many other parts India and as well as the tribal ruling families of the North-East India as we have already mentioned in the chapter: I,<sup>25</sup>. The king Naranarayan had married Bhanumati, the daughter of Protapa Ray Bhuyan and his brother Chilarai had married Chamdraprabha, the nephew of Protapa Ray Bhuyan<sup>26</sup>. Chilarai also had married the daughter of the Padshah of Bengal<sup>27</sup>, and Lakshminarayan had given his sister in marriage with Man Singha , the Raja of Ambar and the then Mughal Subedar of Bengal<sup>28</sup> . Polygamy was very common in the upper strata of the society. Therefore, it is cleared that, in spite of caste barrier of the Hindu caste system and tribal rules, the inter-caste/tribal marriage and inter-caste/tribal dining was a common phenomena in the upper strata of the Koch society. Nevertheless, the inter-caste/tribal marriage and inter-caste/tribal dining between the upper strata and the lower strata of the society was very rear in the Koch kingdom.

On the other hand, the lower strata i.e. non- privileged class included the peasants both tribal and non tribal, slaves, house servants, bondmen and 'middle class' of M. Neog like petty shopkeepers, petty government servants, sepoy, peons, Dhopdharas, Garmalis, storekeepers, Mahaliya, Dancers, Musicians, etc . They were directly involved in production or services and they were also the taxpayer in cash or kind or services. But they directly received nothing from the state. The upper strata of the society looked them down.

Therefore, the social stratification either the profession based stratification or the hierarchical stratification based on four-fold caste system, all were based on the power, position of the affluent class. Although there were the religious rules, regulations and customs to channel it, its became unable to face the power, position of the affluent class.

### **Standard of living and life style:**

The standard of living and life style in the Koch kingdom during the reign of Naranarayan was based on the social stratification. The privileged class was an affluent class, and more or less led a luxurious life in the matter of house building, household affairs, food habits and dress code and tried to differentiate from non-privileged or lower strata of the society. The style of living of the people of the upper strata of the society was one of the pomp and splendour, and a clear distinction had been always maintained between the life style of them and the lower strata of the society<sup>29</sup> and they marked their ranks by possessing servants, slaves, elephants, horses and even a number of wives. Among the privileged class, the kings were at the top who tried to follow the life style of the Mughals and other contemporary rulers of the region. Kings lived in the royal palaces, which were furnished with all kind of amenities and securities. Stephen Cacella, a Jesuit traveler from Portugal, notes that to have entry to the Koch king, he and his companions had to pass through three courts enclosed by roomy Verandah and separated by strong gates, leading into a beautiful garden, in the middle of which stood a villa where the king awaited those<sup>30</sup>. The palace had a number of gates and rooms, which were well decorated. Other officials including all ranks i.e. senior to junior officers and Bhuyans of the privileged class too tried to ape this.

Among the lower strata i.e., non-privileged class, the peasants were majority in number, enjoyed its land rights and king's officials never interfere about the movement and personal affairs of the class. Beside agriculture, they were free to undertake other professional jobs like weaving, carpentry, pottery, shop keeping, dancing, Music etc. Their mandatory duties were to pay taxes and to provide military services to the state. The standard of living and life style of the peasantry varied according to their land holdings, which were the index of rich or poor. The *Katha Guru Charit* informs us that at lower level, some peasants had only one Bigha of land without any granary and plough, and on the other hand, at upper level some peasants had up to twenty-six Puras i.e. 104 Bighas of land with three to four granaries and a number of ploughs<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, it is the fact that

some peasants were rich and well off to lead quite an affluent life style, some were very poor, and to make their both ends meet with difficulty. The peasants with other professional jobs were also quite rich. Revenue collectors some times exploited all the peasants<sup>32</sup>.

The standard of living of the house servants, slaves and bondmen were fully depended on the mentality and behaviour of their owners. Some owners treated them as family members and their standard of living was quite good. On the other hand, by some owners, they were treated badly and cruelly and standard of living of that section of the slave was worst. The *Katha Guru Charit* informs us that a slave complained that he neither was allowed to sleep at night, nor had sufficient food and warm cloth in winter, but he had to work from morning to night and some times he was beaten brutally<sup>33</sup>.

### **Dress and Ornaments:**

There is no direct information about the dress pattern of the people of the kingdom during the reign of Naranarayan and after ward and we have to depend on the occasional references in various sources of information. The dress of the upper section and others varied region wise and class wise. The dress of the upper strata of society were made of silk and fine cotton<sup>34</sup> for, large amount of both silk and cotton fabrics were manufactured in the country<sup>35</sup>. The dress of men consisted three pieces of cloth - *Dhuty* (*netabhuni*), 8 to 16 cubits long, and 2 to 2.5 cubits wide and made of silk like *pat* and *muga* and fine cotton to cover down to the knees, *pachara* (wrapper) and *dopati* or *tona* (double folded scarf)<sup>36</sup>. Later on, dress items of the Mughal dresses like *Chauga* (waistcoat), *Chapkan* (long shirt) *Jama* etc. made of coarse cotton made their appearance in the royal court<sup>37</sup>. On occasions kings used to wear gold embroidered dress and following them, the nobility also used to wear silver embroidered clothes<sup>38</sup>. The *Chheleng* (like embroidered shawl of upper section /Chaddar of common people), a piece of *endi*, *muga* and wood or *fur* made cloth, for wrapping round the shoulders of men in winter were also used by both the upper section and lower section of the society<sup>39</sup>.

Sihabuddin Talish, a Persian writer observed about the dress of the common people of the region:

"It is not their custom to tie turbans round the head, to wear coats, trousers or shoes or to sleep on bedsteads. They only wrap a piece of fine linen round the head, and a

waistband around middle, and place a chaddar on the shoulders. Some rich men in winter put on a half-coat like a jacket<sup>40</sup>.

Dress of the common men folk of the population of the kingdom as revealed in the sculptures of the temples and painting of the period consisted of a single piece of cloth called *dhuty* or *churiya*, made of coarse cotton and much smaller in size than that used by the upper strata. It was wrapped round the waist and hardly reaching the knee. *Gamocho* or towel was used by the men folk of both upper and lower strata of the society as very common dress for bathing, wiping after bathe, wrapped round the head to protect sun heat or hanged it on the shoulder to wipe sweat.

The use of *Lengti*, a piece of thick coloured cloth about a feet and half in breadth and three feet in length was in vogue in the poorer and tribal men folk of the society, to hide the private parts of their body. It passed between the legs and attached at two ends to a cord passing round the waist. According to H. N. Chaudari, it had its origin in the wants of the people because they actually feel uncomfortable in a bigger or fuller raiment<sup>41</sup>. Subsequently *dhuty* largely substituted for it.

The dresses of the womenfolk of the upper strata of the society also varied region wise and class wise. The *Guru Charit* informed us that white, blue and yellow colours dresses were preferred by women<sup>42</sup>. The *Mekhla* and *Riha* were seem to be the original female dresses of Kamarupa, and that were the dresses of the Koch women in Rangpur<sup>43</sup> and its adjoining territories of the present North Bengal and lower Assam. The *Mekhla* tied round the waist or above the breast to reach up to the ankles and the *Riha* wrapped round the waist of the women, but being short, did not admit of passing round the shoulders<sup>44</sup>. In winter the women of the upper strata of the society used a piece of cloth called *Jhardar* or *mongjuri* (ladies shawl), usually made of *endi* with gold and silver embroideries. The *Jhardar* is of a flowered pattern and the *mongjuri* is plain<sup>45</sup>.

'Sari' was not the original and traditional dress of the region. It made its appearance in the region with the influence of Hinduization and acceptance of the Bengali socio-cultural pattern. The use of saris by the women of the nobility was in vogue even in the pre-Vaisnavite time and silken or costly saris were worn by the well-to-do class only<sup>46</sup>, and therefore, it was beyond the capacity of common people to wear it. It is also fact, Women of the western Koch kingdom preferred to wear saris than that of the *Mekhla* and others of their eastern counterpart. The use of *saris ghuris* (petticoats) and *Gomcheng* (Chinese silk) and hides were widely prevalent among the Koch women of the upper strata of the

Koch people, which is proved by the fact that king Naranarayan sent *saris*, *Gomcheng* (Chinese silk), *hides* and *ghuris* (petticoats) as presents to the Ahom court at the early stage of the Koch-Ahom relation<sup>47</sup>. But the Ahom king Sukhampha made a sarcastic comment about the presents, that 'these were quite unfit for exhibiting in the Ahom court, and only the Koches were accustomed to them'<sup>48</sup>. From this comment, D. Nath concluded that in eastern part of the kingdom, sari was looked down upon<sup>49</sup>. However, it might not be correct, for firstly, as we mentioned earlier that saris were in vogue even in the pre-Vaisnavite times. Secondly, *Mekhla* and *Riha* were the traditional dresses of the Ahom and they preferred to wear it. Thirdly, B. K. Barua clearly proved by a popular verse that saris were prevalent among women folk of the nobles<sup>50</sup>. Fourthly, "sarcastic comment" might be on the quality of the presents for, the Ahom were also sent presents including '*Nara-Kapor*' a special kind of cotton cloth. Therefore, it might be the fact that the saris were widely prevalent in the western part among the well-to-do class and in eastern part of the kingdom were used by the nobles' women folk only.

The common Tribal and non-tribal women folk wore one piece of coarse cotton made cloth about 5 feet length called *patani* or *tona*<sup>51</sup> and it is also known as *Bukbandha*<sup>52</sup>. The *patani* is tied round the body a little above the breasts like *mekhla* and broad enough to reach below the knee. It is actually used at home but while going out, they used to wear another piece of cloth with *patani* called *agran*, which is folded over the breasts.

Both men and women used various types of ornaments and it is proved by the fact that contemporary sculptures and literary sources. We have many sculptures and painting, showing various types of ornaments like rings, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, napurs, *gamkharu*, *kinkini*, *galpata* etc<sup>53</sup>. We have literary reference of *Sonari* or goldsmith who makes such ornaments. Ornaments of the upper section were made of gold and silver inlaid with precious stones and those of lower section were of nickel and corals<sup>54</sup>. It is also proved from the Vaisnavite paintings of the period that on the occasion performing arts like dance, recitation and song, flowers and garlands were used<sup>55</sup>. Utensils of gold and silver were used by the upper section only and on the other hand, the common people had not the means to purchase metal utensils like gold and silver. They used metal utensils of brass and copper only. They also used plates and jars made from dried gourd, earthen vessels with covers, and plates, pitchers and jars made from hollow bamboos<sup>56</sup>.

Therefore, from the above discussion it is clear that in the matter of dresses, ornaments and utensils, there were wide difference between the upper section and the lower section of the society.

### ***Position of Woman:***

Contemporary, near contemporary literary sources and elaborate discussion of modern scholars revealed the position of women in the Kingdom during our period of study. The position of women in the society as well as in family during the early Koch rulers varied respecting their social, political and economic status. The position women of lower strata, including tribal and non-tribal women, and that of the women of upper stratas, including tribal and non-tribal women also varied. It is fact that tribal women of the both stratas enjoyed comparatively greater freedom and prestige in the society as well as in family than their counterpart non-tribal women. Again, it is also fact that due to the dominance of tribal population in the whole North-East India and influences of tribal elements in the society, all section of women enjoyed comparatively greater social status as well as freedom than their counterpart in the other parts of India during the period.

Families in the Koch kingdom were patriarchal, where the position of women was subordinate to men. However, they enjoyed great freedom in the society due to the tribal outlook and influence, which were still prevailing. Birth of male child expected and it is being observed as an event of great joy. Even Gods and goddesses were worshipped praying male child For example: Kusumbara the father of Sankaradeva worshipped Lord Siva in order that he might be blessed with a male child<sup>57</sup> and same type of information available about the birth of Biswa Singha<sup>58</sup>. Thus, high expectation for male child indirectly revealed the inferior position of women in the society following traditional Hindu pattern. Due to patriarchal system succession, daughter had no right to their father property, but a widow in a unilateral family, was allowed to succeed her husband's property.

Polygamy was very common among the upper strata (both tribal and non-tribal) including not only royal families and nobilities but also religious divines and Pundits. We have already mentioned with proper references, in different places that Hariya Mandal, the father of Biswa Singha, had two wives, Biswa Singha, the father of king Naranarayan had about 18 wives from different countries, and Raghudeva, the son of Chilarai had a large numbers of wives. Chathurbhuj Thakur, grandson of Sankaradeva and a Neo-Vaisnava preceptor had three wives, Kanakalata, Mukundapriya and Devahuti<sup>59</sup>. Besides,

rich and affluent peasants also tried to imitate the upper strata and used to keep two or three wives<sup>60</sup>. Child marriage and marriage at grown up age both were prevalent in the society irrespectively tribal and non-tribal communities of upper and lower stratum. Thus, the marriage of *Hira*, mother of Biswa Singha with Hariya Mandal, took place when she was just nine years old<sup>61</sup>. King Naranarayan also seems to marry at an early age, as he got married with Bhanumati before going to Benaras for learning<sup>62</sup>. Sankaradeva, at the age of 32 married Suryavati, daughter of Harivaragiri Kayastha but he gave his daughter Manu or *Haripriya* in marriage to *Hari*, a Kayastha youth at the early age about 9-10 years<sup>63</sup>. Through out the period, we have no any reference of widow remarriage, although S. L. Baruah opines "Widow-Remarriage was prevalent but not among the Brahmins and the Kayasthas<sup>64</sup>.

According to contemporary literature, dowry system more or less was current among the both upper and lower stratum of tribal and non-tribal community. Kings, aristocrats and the affluent Bhuyans used to present villages, cattle along with other valuables including gold, silver clothes etc. to their daughter's marriage<sup>65</sup>. Chilarai obtained the five Parganas: *Bahirbandh*, *Bhitarbandh*, *Goyabari*, *Serpur* and *Daskaunia* from the Padshah of Gaud as dowry<sup>66</sup>. In the same way, among some tribes there was an interesting custom of paying the expenditure of the wedding ceremony in part or full by the groom to bride's party<sup>67</sup> and the amount was called '*Go-dhan*' and paid either in cash or kind<sup>68</sup>. It is also fact from the literary sources that the marriageable girls were allowed freedom to choose their grooms and in cases of settle marriages their consents were also taken into consideration<sup>69</sup>.

We have no direct information whether *Purdah system* was prevalent or not among the women. However, it seems to us from the contemporary activities of women that *Purdah system* was not prevalent among the both tribal and non-tribal women of upper and lower strata. According to Sihabuddin Talish, the wives of the Rajah and the peasants alike never veiled their faces before anybody and they moved about in the market places with bare heads<sup>70</sup>.

We have already mentioned earlier that Queen Bhanumati allowed accompanying King Naranarayan during the Ahom Expedition in 1562. According to the DRV and other sources, Raghudeva had sent his one hundred and twenty queens to fight his uncle king Naranarayan after the division of the Kingdom<sup>71</sup>. These two incidents clearly indicate that *Purdah system* was not prevalent among the women of royal family. In the same way,

women of lower strata mainly tribal women were allowed to participate in various types of out door activities. They allowed helping their husband in cultivation in every stage except ploughing. Besides, household activities, rearing up their children they engaged in spinning and weaving of clothes for household usages. It became a compulsory tradition of the Mech marriageable girls to be acquainted with the weaving with their traditional loom called *Sanchali* before their marriages<sup>72</sup>. Some poor tribal Women engaged themselves in small trade like batelnut, alkalis, fishes etc. either to increase income or for their livelihood<sup>73</sup>. The DRV informs us that there were the nurses (*Dhai-Matas*) in the Koch royal palace to look after the children<sup>74</sup>. Some women were proficient in dancing and singing and attached with temples as '*Devdasis*'<sup>75</sup> and with other social ceremonies as *Natis*<sup>76</sup>.

Therefore, it is clear from the above discussion that the *Purdah* system was not prevalent among the both, tribal and non-tribal womenfolk of the country and they enjoyed more freedom than their counterpart of the other parts of India did.

Women of the upper strata of the society of the kingdom during the period of our study had enough freedom and leisure, for which they able to engaged themselves in various types of learning, fine arts and socio-cultural activities. There was no formal education system for women, however, they got teachings in morality and religious-spiritualism from the elder members of the family through the *Kirtana*, *Namaghosh* and Scriptures based stories in their houses as well as in the village *Namaghars*. Besides, the exhibition of the *Bhawnas* or one act plays on religious themes also helped them to learn. It was a tradition in the nobility circle that women had to learn three R's i.e. reading of the *Ratnavali*, the *Kirtana* and *Namaghosha* form male members of the family<sup>77</sup>.

Some talented women of the upper strata marked their great achievements in the fields of languages, literatures, fine art, religious and socio-cultural activities, which uplifted the social status of the women in society. Thus, it was at the instance of queen *Bhanumati*, the consort of king *Naranarayan*, *Purusottam Viddhyavagis* compiled his Sanskrita grammar '*Prayoga-ratna-mala*', which was read by all section of people including women and *Sudras* and became main grammar for learning<sup>78</sup>. Wife of *Sarvabhuma* *Bhattacharyya* was a very learned woman and said to have earned a warm encomium from King *Naranarayan* by defeating at his court the famous Bengali scholar of the period, *Raghunandan Bhattachayya*, in a discourse connected with the different ways of life advocated in the *Vedas* and the *Smritis*<sup>79</sup>. *Kamalapriya* alias *Bhubaneswaridevi*,

wife of Chilarai was highly proficient in devotional songs and in playing musical instrument like *Saringa*. According to the *Katha Guru Charita*, Chilarai happened one day to overhear his wife singing a devotional song of Sankaradeva on the instrument, which impressed him so much, that he immediately became a devotee of Neo-Vaisnavite faith of Sankaradeva<sup>80</sup>. We have already mentioned that *Kanaklata alias Lakshmi Ai*, the first of the three wives of *Chaturbhuja Thakur* and grand daughter-in-law of Sankaradeva was a noted Neo-Vaisnavite preacher. She was an efficient woman of much ability and responsibility, for which got appointment in the ecclesiastical order, as the head of a *Satra* and initiated a large number of disciples to the faith during her stay at *Bheladunga Satra*<sup>81</sup>. Another woman, *Dayal Teli*, wife of *Krishna Teli* and a disciple of Madhavadeva, was appointed the by her master (Madhavadeva) as the *Medhi* or religious instructor, to give instructions to the queens of Laxminarayan on religious matters<sup>82</sup>.

In the Koch royal court, women exercised much political influences in various aspects including in the questions of succession. On the marriage of Hariya Mandal with *Hira*, at an early age, *Urvashi*, the mother of *Hira* did able to obtain promises from her husband *Dambaru*, to keep her daughter with them till she attained maturity<sup>83</sup>. *Bhanumati*, the chief consort of king *Naranarayan* was the most intelligent and influential woman in the royal court during our period of Study. According the *Rajoupakhyan* of *Joynath Munshi*<sup>84</sup>, as per custom of the dynasty, *Nara Singha*, the first son of *Biswa Singha* would ascend to the throne of Koch Kingdom after his father death. *Bhanumati* despaired of the fact that her husband's prospect of ruling the empire was nil. Hence, on the day of *Nara Singha*'s coronation, she with presence of mind, humbly reminded him the fact that after her wedding, had blessed her saying '*Rajmahishi Bhava*' (May you be the queen). However, his blessings would never come true if he instead of *Naranarayan* ascended the throne of the kingdom. On hearing this, *Nara Singha* promptly relinquished the throne in favour of *Naranarayan* and stuck by her words. Although, other source do not confirmed it<sup>85</sup>. What may be the fact, this incident highlights the intelligence, presence of mind and influence of *Bhanumati* in the royal court. She accompanied her husband to the *Ahom* expedition in 1562. We have mentioned earlier that at the instance of *Bhanumati*, *Purusottam Viddhyavagis* compiled his Sanskrita grammar '*Prayoga-ratnamala*'. According to one version, it was at the suggestion of *Bhanumati*, *Naranarayan*, had released the *Ahom* hostages on the pretext of their winning a game of dice with them<sup>86</sup>.

The stepmother of Parikshit Narayan, at the death of her husband Raghudeva organized a conspiracy to make her son Indra Narayan the king of Koch-Hajo overtaking the legal claim of Parikshit Narayan<sup>87</sup>. Besides, queens and other members of the royal family, some professional women also involved in court politics. Thus, it was Nurse (Dai Ma) of Naranarayan and Chilarai called by the people, sent the message of political development after the death of Biswa Singha, by a letter through a Sannyasi named Nagabhoga to them at Benaras<sup>88</sup>.

We have few references about the practice of Sati, which, most probably was connected with the women of upper strata. According to tradition *Sudamni*, the queen Biswa Singha had mounted the funeral pyre with her husband's body following this system<sup>89</sup>. It is also prevailing tradition that at the news of the death of Biswa Singha, his old father Hariya Mandal died of grief and his mother *Hira* mounted the funeral pyre with her husband's body<sup>90</sup>. Sankaradeva's mother *Satyasandha* followed this practice at the death of his father Kusumbara<sup>91</sup>. Moreover, there are references of sati system in the writings of Sankaradeva<sup>92</sup>.

Contemporary Neo-Vaisnavism literatures, highly praised the Chastity of women of the upper and lower strata of the Society. *Radhika* Sati alias *Yogamaya*, a Kaivarta woman, whose chastity was vividly praised by Sankaradeva and was regarded as an ideal woman, even among the common folks she is being remembered as an icon of womanhood till very recent times<sup>93</sup>. However, adultery was also prevailing in the society. It is recorded in the '*Gosani Mangal*', that *Manamala*, a wife of last *khen* king *Nilambar*, had an illicit affair with *Manohara*, the son of *Shashipatra*, the minister of the kingdom<sup>94</sup>. Contemporary Neo-Vaisnava and other literatures contained many colophons representing women as a source of all evils and solely responsible for all social vices<sup>95</sup>.

From the above discussion it may be assumed that some women of the both the stratas enjoyed some sort of freedoms, privileges and influenced various aspects of society, marked their achievements in many fields. However, major sections of women were beyond these and considered them as subordinate to men. Due to the patriarchal social system, they have to submit themselves to their father at childhood and to husband after marriage. Thus, Madhavadeva, chief disciple of Sankaradeva suggested Sankaradeva's wife to address her husband as '*Gosain*' meaning 'Lord'<sup>96</sup>.

## ***The transformation of socio-cultural pattern and Socio-cultural assimilation of the Koches:***

The process of Hinduisation or Sanskritization had first begun with the kings and their officers and then the economically and socially stronger section of the tribal society followed them. In fact, the process of Hinduisation or conversion to Hinduism was regarded as a question of prestige and social status, they became Hindu by their own choice and so was the case with the tribal people<sup>97</sup>. With the rise to power, the Koch royal family and its close relatives started adopting Hindu socio-cultural pattern with influence the Brahmans. Hariya Mandal, the grand father of Naranarayan, no doubt was a tribal chief of the 12 Koch /Mech and but his son Bisu, the father of the king Naranarayan, started Hinduization process with state formation and the Brahmanas tried to legitimize his Kshatryo origin<sup>98</sup>. As a result, Bisu became Biswa Singha. He established marriage relations with Kshatriya royal family of Gaud, Nepal Kashi etc, sent his sons Naranarayan (Malladeva) and Chilarai (Sukladhvaja) to Baranas for the study of Sanskrita literature and others. Therefore, it is proved that after the conversion to Hinduism. Biswa Singha accepted the Hindu socio-cultural pattern and actively patronized Hinduism and encouraged the worship of both Siva and Durga in the form of *Baneswar* and *Kamateswari* respectively. Biswa Singha rebuilt the temple of Goddess Kamakhya at Nilachal hills<sup>99</sup> and the temple of Goddess Bhabani (Kamateswari) at Gossanimari in the present district of Koch Behar<sup>100</sup>. According to local chronicles, Biswa Singha brought to his kingdom a number of Brahmans from Mithila and Gaur to encourage Hinduised socio-cultural rites and one Kali Chandra Bhattacharyya of Gaud who encouraged the worship of Lord Siva and one Vasudeva Acharyya who was appointed the chief priest of the Kamakhya temple<sup>101</sup>. He also patronized the worship of Vishnu and gave gifts to Vaishnava priests and astrologers<sup>102</sup>. In this way, Brahmanical socio-cultural system was established in area.

King Naranarayan and Chilarai had their education in Sanskrita literature at Baranas and well aware of the Brahmanical socio-cultural tradition. At the time of his accession to the throne, he performed coronation ceremony according to the Hindu socio-cultural tradition<sup>103</sup>. However, he did not enforce his personal socio-cultural pattern on the other tribal communities of his kingdom and did not disregard tribal customs and rites. During the time of his Ahom expedition through the *Gosain Kamal Ali*, Naranarayan constructed a temple of the Goddess Durga at Bhairavkunda. He instructed the Meches and the Koches

living to the north of the *Gosain Kamal Ali* to follow their tribal customs to worship the goddess and in the territory south of this *Ali* as far as the Brahmaputra, the Brahmanic rites were to be continued<sup>104</sup>. But with the acceptance of Hinduised socio-cultural pattern by royal family, an under current went into the society for Hinduisation. By encouraging syncretism of Brahmanical and Non- Brahmanical cultures, Naranarayan brought about the transformation in socio-cultural pattern of the whole of northeast India.

Another important impetus to the socio-cultural aspect was the rise of Neo-Vaisnavism under the leadership of Sankaradeva (1449-1569). The religious aspect of Sankaradeva would be discussed elsewhere, but socio-cultural changes brought out by it, was a landmark in the whole northeast India. It marked the beginning of the emergence of an egalitarian society cutting across caste taboos and restrictions. In the wake of the Neo-Vaisnavite movement, there emerged a set of new social ethics and behaviour and code of conduct among the people<sup>105</sup>. The process of Hinduisation that followed in the wake of the Neo-Vaisnavite movement was not a forceful one; rather it was based on the willing co-operation of the people who desired conversion to Hinduism. The two tier societal patterns (the tribal and the Brahmanical) had been challenged by Neo-Vaisnavism. The non-Hindu tribal people greatly influenced by Neo-Vaisnavism for its liberal outlook that inspired them to accept the faith. But the Brahmans (both Saktas and Saibas) got alarmed at the influence of Neo-Vaisnavism of Sankaradeva and they tried to provoke king Naranarayan who was a active devotee of the Goddess Sakti and against Neo-Vaisnavism. The king's brother Chilarai however, was favourably inclined towards the Vaishnavas and a well-wisher of Sankaradeva. However, all their efforts proved abortive and King himself wanted to be initiated into Vaisnavism. However, Sankaradeva did not agree to do this as he had '*made it a rule not to accept as his disciple a king, a Brahmana or a woman*'<sup>106</sup>. But the king was resolved to be his follower and ultimately Sankaradeva agreed to initiate the king into *Sarana Mantra* of Neo- vaisnavism. Ultimately, both Naranarayan and Chilarai came to have great regard for vaisnavism through the influence of Sankaradeva and established the idol of *Vishnu*<sup>107</sup>. As a result, Neo-Vaisnavism became the religion of not only the common people but also the religion of royal family. However, one thing is interesting, the king as well as common people did not discard the worshiping of other god and goddess of Hindu tradition, although Sankaradeva informed them that those who did not believe in the unity of the godhead and worshipped a number of deities were not entitled to get *Sarana mantra*<sup>108</sup>. Koch

kings of the Koch dynasty on the one hand demanded themselves as 'Sivavansi' (decent from Siva); on the other hand, they used the title 'Narayana' (other name of Bhagabata Vishnu). Therefore, it can be said that the transformation of socio-cultural pattern and Socio-cultural assimilation within the Koch kingdom were based on liberal outlook of the common people as well as royal family.

The establishment of large number of temples dedicated to Lord Siva (tribal and non tribal) and in the same way, establishment of large number of *Satras* (Vaisnava Monastries) and *Namghars* (Vaisnava prayer Halls) in the Koch kingdom under royal patronage. It indicates that both the religions were equally treated.

From the above discussion, it cleared that the transformation of socio-cultural pattern and Socio-cultural assimilation of all the people of the region, following the 'Filtration theory from above' and completed was in three stages.

In the 1st stage, the tribal ruling section, including royal family and tribal state officials (*Raikat, Karzis and Mantris etc.*) adopted socio-cultural-religious pattern of mainstream Brahmanical culture and Neo-Vaisnavism and changed their old pattern of life by the influences of the Brahmins and Neo-Vaisnava Saints and they were recognized as *Kshatriya* of the Hindu traditional caste system.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> stage, just below the 1<sup>st</sup> stage consisted all the peasantised tribal people, who were greatly influenced by the socio-cultural changes of the 1<sup>st</sup> stage and they intended to Sanskritize themselves following that. In this stage, they gave up or modified their tribal socio-cultural pattern, fully or partially and Hinduized / Vaisnavized themselves. The ruling class and their officials (of 1<sup>st</sup> stage) also encouraged them to do so. As a result, tribal peasants modified or abandoned their tribal socio-cultural-religious patterns, food habits, dress codes and languages, and became an integrated part of Hinduized / Neo-Vaisnavized folds.

In the 3rd stage, the tribal people, who were living on the periphery, following traditional tribal economy and conserving traditional animism, faiths, beliefs and other practices, they preferred to remain isolated in their traditional settlement beyond the influences of new arrived socio-economic and cultural pattern. The state authority also did not try to interfere in their internal aspects<sup>109</sup>.

### ***Economic development and economic solidarity:***

The period of king Naranarayan witnessed and accelerated the growth in agriculture, crafts, industries, trades, commerce, and the introduction of monetary economy. The people of the Koch kingdom were self-sufficient, and they themselves produced all things of their requirements by following traditional technique of their forefather<sup>110</sup> and it was designed to satisfy material wants of the people, to organize production, to control distribution and to determine the rights and claims of ownership within the community. It is also the fact that the prevailing traditional tribal economic system of the kingdom was almost the same, that of in whole of the northeast. With state formation, under Biswa Simgha and Naranarayan there started the process of diffusion of the traditional tribal techniques and technologies with comparatively advanced techniques and technologies of the main land, which quickened the development of the economic structure and production. Agriculture, collection of forest products, crafts and industries and business both internal and with neighbouring countries were the main parts of the economic system.

### ***Agriculture:***

Agriculture formed the mainstay of both the tribal and non-tribal economy. The tribals of the hilly region had practiced the *Jhum* cultivation. P. C. Chaudhury had mentioned, "cultivation was carried on in the beginning by a crude method of 'jhuming' i.e. by cutting down jungles and trees, setting fire to them, making holes in the land with the help of digging sticks and then sowing seeds without the use of the hoe or plough"<sup>111</sup>. The non-tribal people of the plains of the kingdom were acquainted with the cultivation pattern of the mainland and with the artificially irrigated agricultural practices<sup>112</sup>. The topographical nature of the region and the fertility and productivity of soil were suitable for the cultivation of all types of crops. According to the writer of the 'Fathiya -i-Ibriya', a contemporary Persian writing, "Koch Behar is well known for its excellent water, mildness of the climate, its fresh vegetation and flowers. Oranges are plentiful, as also other fruits and vegetables"<sup>113</sup>. Another Persian writing, '*Riyaz -us - Salatin*' mentioned that ".....the sweetness of its water, and mildness of salubrity of its air" and about the crops "Large oranges thrive here and other fruits also grow in abundance"<sup>114</sup>.

Rice was extensively cultivated, as it was the primary food of the people of the region and the topographical nature of the region, which was suitable for the cultivation of rice. According to its times of cultivation rice were of two broad categories. *Aush* (ahu) rice

used to be sown in dry season regularly particularly in the highlands, and *Aman / sali* (wet-rice) rice was cultivated in rainy season particularly in low land. The *Aman* rice cultivation was done while the monsoon had begun and the lands were full with water. It required irrigation and transplantation of seeds (*Bichan*), which must be lowland and clay in nature and could hold water and moisture for long time. Wet-rice cultivation with sophisticated technologies introduced by the non-tribals had been diffused to the tribals of the region, which stimulated the changes of tribal mode of production. The iron plough and spade (*kodal*) had replaced wooden plough and the traditional implements of jhum cultivation in advance stage of state formation. Many Pukhurs (ponds) , were excavated for many purposes including the purpose of irrigation during the region of Naranarayan<sup>115</sup> and use of streams water for irrigation by making dams were also prevalent the period<sup>116</sup> .

Other food grains like wheat, *china*, *kaon*, *makai* or *bhutta* (maize) and pulses like *moog* (a kind of pigeon-pea ), *musur* (lentil ), *kheshari* (*lathyrus sativus*), *thakuri* (*phaseolus radiatus*), *arahar* (*gajanus indicus*) and pea were grown in the region and were popular food grains<sup>117</sup>. Oil seeds like mustard (*sarisha/rai*) and *til* (*seamum indicum*) were also grown in the Koch kingdom, which is proved by the professional caste called *Teli* (make oil from oil seeds). Biswa Singha appointed his son Ananta Narayan, as an officer to supervise over the Telis<sup>118</sup>, Naranarayan continued the system<sup>119</sup>. To offer the betel leaf (*pan*) and betel nut (*gua / supari*) to the guests was a common custom of the people of the region and the DRV gave us a professional caste called *Tamuli*<sup>120</sup>. Therefore, it is clear that the betel leaf (*pan*) and betel nut (*gua / supari*) were grown in Koch kingdom. The DRV also informed us that Biswa Singha appointed his son Rupchand in charge of 'পঞ্চশস্য' (five crops)<sup>121</sup>. Cotton was another important crops and it was cultivated by a large number of people of the hilly areas of Chikinagram and khuntaghat of the kingdom. According to the DRV, Hariya Mondal the grand father of Naranarayan used to cultivate cotton in the hilly area of chikinagram<sup>122</sup>.

Horticulture was another occupation of livelihood. Large amount of fruits both cultivated and wild were produced in the kingdom having local geological characteristic. *Yogini Tantra* gives a vivid list of fruits, vegetables and flowers like jack-fruits, coconuts, orange, mango, olive, banana, lemon, grape, papaya, brinjal, plum, guava, sweet orange etc., by which Devi Kamakhya could be worshipped<sup>123</sup>. Shihabuddin Talish (17<sup>th</sup> century)

also gives a vivid description about the fruits, vegetables and flowers of the region in the following way:

“Many kinds of odorous fruits and herbs of Bengal and Hindustan grow in Assam. We saw here certain varieties of flowers and fruits, both wild and cultivated, which are not to be met with elsewhere in the whole of India. ....pepper, spikenard and many species of lemon are abundant mangoes are full of worms, but plentiful, sweet and free from fibre, though yielding scanty juice. Its pineapples are large, delicious to taste, and rich in juice”<sup>124</sup>.

The Neo- Vaisnava literature of the period occasionally made references of the different types of beautiful and fragrant flowers like *jai* (*Jasminum auriculatum*), *tagar* (*Tabernaemontana coronaria*), *malati* (*asclepias volubilis*), *champa* (*Michelia champaca*), etc., which were cultivated in the gardens of the noble and others<sup>125</sup>. But it is fact that the agriculture was subsistence in nature and extensive cultivation was not in vogue, atleast at the early period.

#### **Forest products:**

Beside agriculture, a section of people used to collect natural products from forest for their livelihood. Mostly forest products had been utilized for making the implements of the productions like - agricultural tools, hunting and fishing implements and weaving looms. Bamboo was an important forest product that was grown all over the country of many varieties. Hunting, fishing and musical instruments, agricultural implements and building home and homesteads were mainly made of bamboo of large varieties. Bamboo was also used in making furniture, utensils<sup>126</sup> and making of arms and weapons like bow and arrow<sup>127</sup>. Ralf Fitch recorded ‘all the countries is set with bamboo or canes made Sharpe at both the ends and driven into the earth, and they can let in the water and drown the ground above knee deepe, that men nor horses can passe’<sup>128</sup>. *Motha*, one kind of grass had the use in making mats. Timber like *sal* (*shrea robusta*), *sisu*, *khair*, *agaru*, *sonaru*, *palas*, *maina*, *ghila*, *shimul* and other valuable trees grown in the forest of the region and had its immense use in the domestic and community life of the people. The Mech women were experts in collection and rearing of *endi* silkworm and for this purpose plants like *era* (*Riccinus communis*), *chom* (*Antheroea Assama*), *nuni* (Mulberry tree), *sowalu* (*Tetrantheramacropaylla*), *kesheru* (*Heteroponax fragrams*), *champa* (*Michelia pulnycnsis*), *hidai* (*Barringtonia accutangula*) etc. were cultivated to feed the worms<sup>129</sup>.

*Gala* (Lac) was collected from forest and this area was famous for the production of lac of red colour and which was used to dye their calicos and others stuffs<sup>130</sup>.

### ***Development of Crafts and Industries:***

During the reign of King Naranarayan, development of crafts and industries reached in a considerable advance stage, due to the adoption of non-tribal advanced technologies and peaceful state co-operation. The DRV and other contemporary sources mentioned some professional communities and products, which clearly proved the existence of crafts and industries in the region during the period of our study. Biswa Singha had appointed his son Meghnarayan as a supervisor of the weaving industries and to collect taxes from the weavers and washer men<sup>131</sup>, and king Naranarayan also had continued this office. With the state formation, peaceful political condition and admixture of tribal and non-tribal techniques, during the reign of Naranarayan and his successors, crafts and industries had made considerable progress. The most noted industries were weaving and dyeing. This region has a reputation from the early times for its indigenous silk like *pat*, *muga* and *endi*. Ralph Fitch, who visited the Koch kingdom(1586AD) during the reign of king Naranarayan, and Persian writer like Shihabuddin Tallish(17<sup>th</sup> century) made references of silk (*muga*) and cotton industries and its trades.

The tribal communities like the Mech, Koch and Rabhas had developed the *endi-culture* and the art of dying of the threads made from the *endi*, *muga* and cotton fiber. *Endi culture* was a traditional common and household production of the Meches and it became a compulsory tradition of the Mech brides to be acquainted with the weaving of their traditional loom called *sanchali* before their marriage<sup>132</sup>. The tribal communities of the region with their traditional technology produced the *endi*, *mekhli* and silk (*Muga*) cloth and they were important commodities of internal and external trades beside the household use<sup>133</sup>. *Katanis* were the traditional silk (*muga*) spinners and weavers in the Koch kingdom.

Traditional non-tribal professional weavers called '*Tantis*', who knew the art of making cloths with traditional loom called '*Tants*' of Bengal and Assam. Two other castes like *Jolah* and *Yogi* had their expertise in weaving. Vaisnava saint Sankaradeva was appointed by king Naranarayan as the *Gomasta* (administrative officer) of the '*Tantis*' of the Tantikuchi Mahal of Barpeta to look after the affairs of the *Tantis*<sup>134</sup> which had indirectly contributed to the development of the weaving industry. On request of king

Naranarayan, Saint Sankaradeva had got a 60X30 yards large special cloth woven at Tantikuchi village and called it '*Vrindananiya Kapor*' depicting on it the scenes from the early life of lord Krishna<sup>135</sup>. Narayanpur was a notable centre of weaving industry. Madhavadeva offered a beautiful cloth called '*Narayanpuriya Kapor*' (a produced of Narayanpur, the easternmost outpost of the Koches) to Sankaradeva at the time of his initiation to the Vaisnava Faith by the latter<sup>136</sup>. Sualkuchi and Kamarkuchi were other two notable centers of weaving industries. Dyeing was an important crafts related to the weaving industries. The technique of dyeing clothes with lac was prevalent among the tribes of the Koch kingdom since ancient times. The materials used were not only lac and indigo, but also roots, leaves and barks of trees of various kinds and the procedure was to dye not the cloth but the thread<sup>137</sup>.

Pottery was another important craft, which were in prevalent in the region, during the period of our study to meet the requirement of the common utensils. Potters were of two kinds - the Hira tribe was the maker of earthenware without wheel and non-tribal professional caste called 'Kumar' was the maker of earthenware with wheel. A section of the *kalita* also adopted the art of pottery<sup>138</sup>. The use of wheel was easier for the professional Kumar to make big utensils like *Handis* (vessel), *Saras* (lids), *Kalasis* (pitchers), *thalas* (plates), *Ghatis* (jugs) and other earthen pots<sup>139</sup>.

Besides these, earthen image making, particularly of the Goddess Durga was prevalent in the Koch kingdom even before the rise of Biswa Simgha and some professional people called '*Khanikaras*' did the work. The *Katha Guru Charit* mentions that Biswa Singha worshiped an image of the Goddess Durga, when he was a cowherd<sup>140</sup>. The earthen images of the Goddess Durga so impressed the Ahom envoys that on their return to the Ahom capital and on their reporting the king immediately sent his own court artisans to Koch kingdom to be trained<sup>141</sup> in the art of images making<sup>141</sup>. Stone engraving<sup>142</sup> and stone / brick building /temple construction were two important crafts during the period. According to the inscription of the Kamakhya temple and others information, present Kamakhya temple structure had been built by Chilarai, during the reign of Naranarayana in the year 1565. Therefore, it is proved that the craftsmanship of stone engraving, stone inscription engraving and artistic temple construction were well developed and patronized during the period.

According to the DRV, Biswa Singha appointed his sons Brishketu and Hari Singha in charges of brass metal and bell metal respectively<sup>143</sup>. 'Sarthebari, the most noted centre

of bell-metal and brass works, of a little later period, might have been functioning there during the reign of king Naranarayan<sup>144</sup>. Due to the availability of wild elephants and other animals, ivory and leather works were in prevalent in the kingdom during his reign and Barpeta was an important centre of ivory work<sup>145</sup>. Making of fishing instruments like *Jakois* and *jals*, (fishing nets) were important household crafts and were mainly used by Kaivartas and Nadiyals<sup>146</sup>.

Crushing of oil seeds and making of oil from *Sarishas / Rais / Ragis*, (mustard seeds) were in prevalent in the region developed as a special household craft. However, professional oilmen caste called *Telis* and *Kalus* had large concentration in the kingdom. Biswa Singha appointed his son Ananta Narayan, as an officer to supervise over the *Telis*<sup>147</sup> and Naranarayan also continued the system and they had served the state even as *Paik*<sup>148</sup>. The *Telis* and *Kalus* had developed the cattle powered mill locally called *ghani* for the production of mustard oil from mustard seeds. Another small cattle powered mill called *ghani* was used by cultivators for pressing sugarcane for the preparation of *gud* or molasses<sup>149</sup>.

Black smithery and gold smithery were other two important crafts and industries of the Koch kingdom. The Koch kingdom had keen interest about the ironworks and jewellery works of gold, silver and precious stones. According to the DRV, Biswa Singha appointed his sons Brishketu and Sura Singha to look after the black smithery and gold smithery of the state respectively<sup>150</sup>. Gold and silver ornaments worn by rich womenfolk of the kingdom like – *Har* (necklace), *Phooti* (earring), *Bankharu* (ornaments of leg), *Noth* (nose ring) etc, were manufactured by gold smith locally called *Sonaries*<sup>151</sup>. Blacksmiths locally called *Kamars* were traditional caste Hindu who was the chief producer of iron implements like *dao* (knife), *kodal* (hoe), *fal* (ploughshare) and other agricultural and cooking implements. Moreover, they also had expertise in manufacturing of the lock, padlock, knives, spears, arrow share, swords and clamps for building boat etc. The Koch kings had great interest about the ironworks and that is proved by the fact that Biswa Singha appointed his son Brishaketu as the officer in charge of the iron works<sup>152</sup>.

The wooden implements making was another important crafts of the kingdom and mainly Kalitas and other tribes of the region did it. They not only made the household and agricultural implements like stools, chairs, benches, caskets and ploughs but also made the war boats, merchant boats and small boats and charits literatures repeatedly illustrated the importance of the boats for transportation in the river system of the

region<sup>153</sup>. King Naranarayan introduced navy in his force that significantly contributed to the growth of the boat making industries. *Fathiya-i-Ibriya* has left some references about the boats of various types and its quality of the region. *Fathiya-i-Ibriya* records " they built most of their boats of chambal wood ; and such vessels, however heavily they may be loaded, on being swamped do not sink in the water"<sup>154</sup>. About the techniques of boat making of the region, U.N. Gohain observes, "Canoes were manufactured out of trees, which were hollowed out ....If a large boat was required, the shell was plastered over with mud and steamed over a fire , and the sides were then distented by the insertion of thwarts in this way boats 60 feet long by 6 or 7 feet in breadth were constructed, capable of lasting , if the wood be good forest timber, for 10 years or even longer"<sup>155</sup> .

The bamboo works were the most important crafts of the region and both tribal and non-tribal people more or less were involved in it. However, the tribal were expert in this crafts. Different types of implements and tools for agriculture, fishing and hunting implements, household articles and weaving sets were manufactured from the bamboos of large varieties. Bamboo had immense use in making of furnitures like Chair, *Mura*, benches, *Jhapi* and *Mathal* (bamboo and leaf made head gear), trays, agricultural implements like Plough, *ladder* and *bida*. Weapons like bow and arrow and spear stick were also made from bamboo. Bamboo was also used in making of a special type of poisonous stick called *Bishpayiji* for using in the war<sup>156</sup>. Training in bamboo, wood, cane and other crafts was given at *Satras* (Neo-Vaisnavite centres).

There were other household small-scale crafts like mat or *pati* making from one kind of grass called *mutha* grass, lime making by *Chunaris* or *mukhis* developed for domestic use and for trade<sup>157</sup>. Making rice from paddy by using the traditional domestic husking machine locally called *Dheki* and *Chham* were prevalent during the reign. However, *Dheki* is not indogenous husking machine of Assam or Koch Behar and probably introduced from lower Bengal.

It is also fact from the contemporary sources that state accumulated its revenue from the crafts and industries and professional craftsmen had to pay taxes. The DRV has given a list of professional craftsmen from which state could collect taxes and for that purpose state appointed officials to look after it<sup>158</sup>. According to the *Gurucharita* of *Daityari Thakur*, the professional weavers had to pay an annual tax of rupees two to the state<sup>159</sup>. It is probable that other professionals also had to pay such taxes to the state but nothing is

not known about the amount of actual taxes. Some times craftsmen were allowed to render service to the state in instead of cash taxes.

It is evidence from the above discussion that on the one hand, tribal and non-tribal craft, industries and professional caste or groups were prevalent; on the other hand, technological acculturation of the above all also took place which accelerated the development of the crafts and industries of the period. As non-tribal technologies were advance, so the tribal people adopted that for their betterment. Therefore, technological acculturation was a process by which the tribal people adopted the occupations, techniques and many things, which again accelerated their economic growth into monetary economy.

### ***Development of Trade and Commerce:***

Development of agriculture, crafts, industries and marketable surplus productions during the reign of king Naranarayn also gave impetus to the development of trade and Commerce, not only within his kingdom but also in the whole of the northeast India. Moreover, encouragement in the way of establishment of roads, trade centers, commercial relation with neighbouring countries and finally introduction of coins by king Naranarayn also helped the development of trade and Commerce. Contemporary and near contemporary sources, occasionally threw glimpses on the both, internal and external trades, and its various aspects of the kingdom during the period. It is evident from the sources that the Koch kingdom had flourishing trade relations with neighbouring states like Bhutan, Tibet, Bengal, Mughal India and other northeast Indian states including Ahom, Jayantiya etc. In the same way, internal, both small and large-scale trade was an important aspect of the Koch economy. However, it is not clear from the sources that whether the state was directly involved in trade and commerce, but the state directly controled the trade and commerce through different types of administrative officers. Thus according to the DRV, Biswa Singha, father of King Naranarayan appointed his son Suryabar to look after the affairs of the traders<sup>160</sup>.

### ***Koch-Bhutan trade relations:***

Bhutan was the most important trade partner of the Koches during the period and that was carried on through *duars* or mountain passes, which have been continued from ancient times. From the time of King Naranarayan, Bhutan was subordinate to the Koches

and it continued until the reign of the Lakshminarayan. A large number of Koch coins (NarayaniTanka) had been current in Bhutan and many coins have been unearthed from various places of Bhutan that proved the Koch Bhutan trade relations. According to Rhodes, during the reign of the Koch King Naranarayan, "there was a major trade route between Bengal and Tibet passing through Koch Behar and Bhutan. This was recorded by the English merchant and traveller Ralph Fitch in 1586, who noted that musk, wool, agate, silk and pepper were purchased." <sup>161</sup>. He also said that in the last half of the 16th century, the *Narayani Tanka* became the most used Currency in Koch Behar, Assam and Bhutan. The Koch- Bhutan commercial relation was two-dimensional; on the one hand, it was reciprocal for their internal requirement, on the other hand, both the countries acted as 'middle zone' of Asiatic trade between Bengal and Tibet-China<sup>162</sup>. The '*Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*', a Persian writing referred to a cattle market called Karampatan or Kararpatan in the region in the north of Koch kingdom in the following way:

"...everyday, at daybreak, in the cattle market of that city, about one thousand five hundred houses are sold and all the Tangan horses which reach the Lakhanawati country they bring from that place"<sup>163</sup>. It also described that the merchants from Lakhanawati purchased Bhutani Ponies or Tangan horses from the market within the Koch kingdom and sell them in Lakhanawati<sup>164</sup>.

The merchant-traveller Ralph Fitch came to Koch Behar in about 1586, taking enormous risk only to survey the commercial prospects of Tibet through this region<sup>165</sup>. Ralph Fitch records that the traders of Koch kingdom brought pepper from China through Bhutan<sup>166</sup>. Most of the Chinese goods, the Bhutanese merchants brought for selling in the towns within Koch kingdom and small share of the articles brought for their home consumption<sup>167</sup>. Similarly, the Koch merchants, brought their goods from the Bhutanese merchants, not only for home consumption, but also for exporting to other neighbouring countries. Therefore, both the countries acted as 'middle zone'.

The Bhutani traders including the government officials brought their goods of trade, both domestic products as well as their imported goods from Tibet and China to the trading centers of Koch Kingdom like Koch Behar, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Odalbari, Hajo and others<sup>168</sup>. Nazirganj, Bhurchungmari (Tufanganj) and Geegunshur four miles from Chauna on the Assam-Bhutan border were the three important markets for the traders of both the

countries<sup>169</sup>. Moreover, seasonal fairs held in different places like Hajo, Charigaon and Odalguri in eastern part and Darwani, Pangew, Barabhita, Badargaon, Haldibari Jalpesh etc., in the western part of the Koch kingdom, where the Bhutanese goods were sold in large scale<sup>170</sup>.

The Bhutani traders generally used to export Chinese-silk, woolen blanket, yak-tails, Tangan horses, gold dust, rock-salt, orange, silver etc., and in exchange of them, they imported iron, lac, rice, silk cloth, cotton cloth, dried-fish, buffalo-horns, cattle, conch shells etc<sup>171</sup>. The king of Bhutan had monopolized the export of Tangan horse to Koch kingdom<sup>172</sup>. At the early stage, Gold dust and some times Tangan horse were used as a medium of exchange of trade between Bhutan and Koch kingdom<sup>173</sup>. However, after the Introduction of *Narayani Tanka* by King Naranarayan, it became the medium of exchange at advance stage of his reign. It is evident from the *Guru Charita*, that the King Naranarayan ordered his men to sell Narayandasa and Gokulchand, two trusted disciples of Sankaradeva, to the Bhutanese traders named Hema and Pema, at Rs. 120 as slaves, for propagating the Neo-Vaisnavism in the early stage<sup>174</sup>. It is also evident from the same source that slave trade was prevalent between the two kingdoms.

#### ***Trade relations with other Neighbouring states:***

Trade relations of the Koch kingdom during reign of King Naranarayan with other states like Bengal, Kacher, Sylhet, Jayantiya, Assam, and Manipur had been flourishing. Ralph Fitch refers to the extensive trade on cotton, and cotton fibres etc. in Bengal<sup>175</sup>, and the Koch kingdom had been a partner of that, for, the cloths of Bengal had a great demand in the Koch kingdom<sup>176</sup> and salt<sup>177</sup> regularly imported from Bengal. Jesuit traveler Stephen Cecella, who visited Koch kingdom in 1627, recorded that goods from Patna, Rajmahal and Gaud were supplied frequently to fulfill the internal demands of the kingdom<sup>178</sup>. The traders of Koch kingdom re-exported or the traders of Bengal brought Bhutanese *Tangan*<sup>179</sup> (horses), and *Bhot Kambal*<sup>180</sup> (blanket of Bhutan) from the Koch kingdom to Bengal. Moreover, the Mughals were interested in agar wood, sandalwood, silk, and textiles and carried on trade in these commodities with the Koch kingdom<sup>181</sup>. King Naranarayan permitted the kings of Jayantiya and Sylhet to mint coins for the development of trade with those states and that of Bengal<sup>182</sup>. King Naranarayan established many *Chowkies* (outposts) at suitable places, not only to guard the borders, but also to look after the exports and imports and to prevent illegal trade<sup>183</sup>. The Koch

kingdom imported gold, silver, *patkapor*, *daokatari*, elephant tusk etc. from other northeastern states especially from the Ahom state<sup>184</sup>. The traders of the Koch kingdom, considered the Ahom kingdom, as "something like a paradise for merchants, where all valuable trade commodities could be procured in good qualities and at a considerably low price"<sup>185</sup>. Although, some of the above mentioned sources were composed after the reign of King Naranarayan, but it is probable that the trade was also in vogue during his reign.

Besides external trade, internal trade was also flourishing in the Koch kingdom during the period. In the matter of local and internal trades, *Bazars* (town centric markets), *Bandars* (mainly river ports) and *Haats* (weekly or by-weekly temporary markets) played important role. Stephen Cecella refers to many *Bazars* in the Koch kingdom, where both local products and imported goods were available<sup>186</sup>. *Bandars* were generally situated on the bank of big river, which acted as meeting place of land and river routes<sup>187</sup>. *Haats* were public places situated in the rural areas, people of the adjoining villages assembled on fixed days for selling and buying goods of daily uses. Besides these, *Melas* (fairs) held at different places at different times on different religious occasions were also played vital role in internal trade and commerce.

In the matter of trade, there were big and small traders. Big traders called '*Sadagars*' engaged in large scale internal and external trades, with huge capital<sup>188</sup> and dealt with the trades of gold, jewellery, silk, salt, mustard seeds, elephant tusks and other big scale commodities<sup>189</sup>. *Madhavadeva* and *Bhavananda*, (later renamed Narayan Thakur by Sankaradeva), both disciples of Sankaradeva were to two big traders of the period<sup>190</sup>. *Madhavadeva*<sup>191</sup> carried on his trade mainly in areca nuts and betel leaves from Narayanpur and Gadgaon in the east to Banduka in the west<sup>192</sup>. *Bhavananda* alias Narayan Thakur had trade relations with the countries like the Bhutan, Assam, Garo hills and Bengal and traded in shipping, mustered seeds and others<sup>193</sup>. Big traders used to form partnership with the big traders of the adjoining states and thus it is evident from the *Katha Guru Charita* that *Bhavananda* had partnership with seven of his companions in Bengal, Bhutan, Garo Hills and the Assam<sup>194</sup>.

Smaller traders called '*Beparis*' were dealt with small scale trade of areca nut, betel vine, fuel wood, salt, khar (alkali), fish, food grains, fruits, vegetables, cattle, bamboo and wooden furniture, agricultural and fishing instruments etc. on a local basis<sup>195</sup>. It is interesting to note that there was no caste, sect and religious barrier of the traders and

they could be of any caste, sect, or religion. Above-mentioned *Madhavadeva*<sup>196</sup> and *Bhavananda*<sup>197</sup> were *Kayastha* and *Kalita* by castes respectively.

Details about the price of commodities, customs and trade duties of the period are not known. We have very few references on it. The *Katha Guru Charita*, informs us that two full size napkins locally called *gamocha* cost 8 pons (640) cowries<sup>198</sup>, and a packet of betel-vine cost 4 to 8 pons of (320 to 640 cowries)<sup>199</sup>. The same source refers to different types of customs and trade duties like *hat-kar* (market tax), *ghat-kar* (river port tax), *jal-kar* (taxes on fishing in the rivers) *path-kar* (road tax) *dan-kar* or sales tax. Chakiyals or Chowkidars (keepers of Chowkis, political or customs outpost), phathowals or pathkhowas (keepers of paths or outpost on roads and rivers) and other collectors of taxes collected all these taxes<sup>200</sup>.

### **Means of transports and trade routes:**

Both land route and river route were the main routes of transportations of merchandizes. In overland trade, mountain passes (*duars*); old and new constructed routes were in use. The trade with Bhutan and Tibet carried on only through the mountain passes (*duars*), and Bhutanese *Tangans* were in use for transportation. There is evident from contemporary sources that the caravan of *Tangans* carrying merchandizes through the mountain passes. The old roads constructed by the *khen* rulers were in use during reign of King Naranarayan. The last *Khen* ruler *Nilambar* (1480-98) had constructed two main roads; one from *Kamatapur* to *Ghoraghat* through *Rangpur*, another one from his capital *Kamatapur* to north direction was extended up to *Girimul* through *Kumari Kote* and *Mural bus*<sup>201</sup>. King Naranarayan had constructed the *Gosai Kamal Ali* that was the main road for overland transportations of the period. W. Robinson, refers to the roads connecting *Gauhati* and *Goalpara* (both within the Koch Kingdom) with *Kacher*, *Sylhet*, and *Jayantiya* kingdoms<sup>202</sup>. D. Nath mentioned two roads to Bengal; one ran through *Goalpara*, *Bagwa*, *Rangpur*, *Dinajpur*, *Maldah* and *Murshidabad* and other roads ran from *Goalpara* to *Dacca* through *Singimari* and *Jaamalpur*<sup>203</sup>. In Overland transportation, horses and Bullock carts were main means of transportation.

The Rivers or waterways were the main and most important means of transportation of the period. In this regard, the *Brahmaputra* with its large numbers of tributaries and other big rivers played most important role like the rivers-nets. Contemporary and near contemporary sources of the period occasionally refers to the fact. Ralph Fitch came to

Koch Behar through waterways<sup>204</sup>. Introduction of the navy, development of boat making industry and existence of large number *Bandar* (river port), as we have mentioned earlier, during the reign of Naranarayan indicate the importance of it. Stephen Cacella refers to large boats from Gaud frequented the capital at Koch Behar and moved up and down for the whole year<sup>205</sup>. Actually, large number of rivers of the region forced and facilitated the waterway transportation. Small and large-scale trades were carried on by boats and in rainy session, it was the only means of communications of all kind of transportation.

### ***Medium of Exchange and the Narayani Tankas:***

At the early stage of the establishment of the Koch kingdom, the economy was not monetized and tribal economy was based on the barter system. Therefore, local trade and commerce executed through barter of cattle, paddy<sup>206</sup>, the slaves and handloom products<sup>207</sup>. At the same time, almonds<sup>208</sup>, and cowries<sup>209</sup> were in use as medium of exchange and considered as money, and even after the introduction of the *Narayani Tanka*, the circulation of cowries continued simultaneously. Haliram Dhekiya Phukan, Barbaruah, Sihabuddin Talish and Gait suggested the prevalence of coins along with cowries in the region in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>210</sup>. The *Katha Guru Charita* refers to *Mohars, taka, rupiya, adtaka* (Half-rupee), *maha* or *siki* (quarter rupee), and *Kara* or *admaha* (half-maha/ 1/8 of a rupee)<sup>211</sup>. We have very few references of metal coins in the pre-Koch period of the region<sup>112</sup> and number of it is so small that could not be used as medium of exchange and most probably were nominal. However, introduction of *Narayani Tanka*, by Koch kings marked the beginning of the monetization of the economy of the region and accelerated the development of the trade and commerce. Although, trade and commerce were monetized with the introduction of coins by kings of many dynasty of northeast India, but the common people used barter system to exchange ordinary commodities of daily uses and cowries were used for small-scale transaction. In exchange value, generally 1280 cowries were equivalent to one silver coin<sup>213</sup>.

The earliest coins of the Koch dynasty so far have been came to lime light is bearing the date *Saka* 1477 (1555), which was issued by King Naranarayan. Biswa Singha, the father of king Naranarayan did either not issue coins or his coins are yet to be discovered, although some literary sources and following that some modern scholars hold the view that he had issued coins<sup>214</sup>. Under this situation, it may rightly be considered that King

Naranarayan is the first king of the dynasty, who issued coins and subsequent kings of the dynasty (both the houses of the Koch royal family) continued this process.

A large numbers of *Narayani Mudra* (tanka), including rupee, half-rupee, and quarter-rupee denominations of king Naranarayan were recently discovered from Chandirjhar (Alipurduar, W.B, 1986), Harisinga(Mangoldai, Assam,1986), Halflong and Modgharia (Gauhati, Assam,1986), Phulbari (West Garo Hills, 1992) and Barundanga (Dhubri, Assam, 1996)<sup>215</sup> and other places, proved the circulation of Narayani Mudra, over a large area of northeast India. Among these, one of the largest finds of mediaeval coins of India discovered in recent times is the Chandir jhar hoard of coins<sup>216</sup>. The trove unearthed at Chandir jhar village in the Alipurduar district of West Bengal contains 767 silver coins belonging to the Suri Sultans of Delhi, Bengal Sultans, Bahmani Sultans, Mughal Emperor Akbar, kings of Tripura and Koch Behar covering a period of nearly 240 years. Out of 767 coins, 222 belong to King Naranarayan and beared a particular date the *Saka* 1477 (1555)<sup>217</sup>.

One thing should be kept in mind that the coins of king Naranarayan so far discovered issued on a particular date i.e. *Saka* 1477(1555).The earliest coins of Lakshminarayan and Raghudev so far discovered issued in *saka* 1509 (1587) and *Saka* 1510(1588) respectively. So it is evident from our present sources of information that through out the reign of King Naranarayan, he issued coins only in *Saka* 1477(1555)<sup>218</sup> and the Koch coins remained the main means of transaction of trade and commerce of the region. The reign of King Naranarayan, also witnessed the introduction of coins by kings of many other states of the northeast India like the *Ahom*, the *Kachari*, Jayantiya, and Khyram (of Khasi hills), which gave great impetus in the process of monetization of trade and commerce of the regions. Among these, the Jayantiya kings of Jayantiya Hills and the kings of Khyram of Khasi hills issued coins with the permission of king Naranarayan, bearing the name of Naranarayan as their overlord<sup>219</sup> and even Gohain Kamal, Dhewan of Khaspur, after detaching him from the control of the core area, minted coins bearing the name of king Naranarayan<sup>220</sup>. Bhutan also gets her coins from the mint of Koch kingdom by sending silver<sup>221</sup>.Therefore, it is evident that Narayani Mudra had been minted from several places of north-east India and became an acceptable standard medium of exchange both in inter regional and intra regional trade and commerce of the whole north-east India.

The Narayani Mudra (tanka) of King Naranarayan and his successors, of denominations of Rupee, ½ rupee and ¼ rupee have been discovered and bear different types descriptions. The descriptions on obverse and reverse of kings Naranarayan, Lakshminarayan, Raghudeva and Jayantiya kings are given below:(See Plates; IX, X, XI and XII at the end).

Kings.	Dates.	Denominations.	Reverse.	Obverse.
King Naranarayan	Saka 1477	1 Rupee, ½ rupee and ¼ rupee.	Sri Sriman Nara Narayansya Saka1477.	Sri Sri Shiva Charana Kamala MadhuKarashya.
Lakshmi Narayan	Saka1509 & Raja Saka 98.	1Rupee, ½ rupee and ¼ rupee.	Sri Sriman Lakshmi Narayansya Saka 1509/ Raja Saka 98.	Sri Sri Shiva CharanaKamala Madhu Karashya.
Raghudeva Narayan.	Saka1510	1Rupee and ½ rupee	Sri Sri Raghudeva Narayan Bhupalashya Saka 1510.	Sri Sri Hara Gouri Charana Kamala Madhu Karashya.
Jayantiya Kings <sup>222</sup>	Saka 1592& Others.	1Rupee	Sri Sri Jayantipura-Purandarasya Saka 1592	Sri Sri Siva Charana-Kamala Madhukarasya

Thus, Introduction of the Narayani Mudra, primarily by King Naranarayan not only led to the growth of trade and commerce in favour of Koch Kingdom but it also became the prime medium of exchange of the whole region. The circulation of coins (Narayani Mudra) increased in the region due to collection of huge coins as tributes from the conquered states of northeast India<sup>223</sup>. Moreover, gold and silver plundered from northeast India by King Nranarayan had been utilized to mint *Narayani Mudra* (tanka), most probably during the reigns of Lakshminarayan and Raghudeva. The DRV informs us that Raghudeva had

a reserve of 30000000 Narayani Mudra<sup>224</sup>, and Lakshminarayan had more reserve of Narayani Mudra than Raghudeva. According to A. Guha "The rapid increase in money supply from several sources indicated that demand for media of exchange and trade, both intra-regional and inter-regional, were increasing over the years 1500-1700."<sup>225</sup>

### ***Development of education, languages and literature:***

Development of education, language and literature during the reign of King Naranarayan is a landmark in the history of North-East India. D. Neog describes, "The reign of Naranarayan, styled as Assamese *Vikramaditya* (1540-1584), is celebrated not only for peace plenty, but also for proverbial patronage of learning and culture"<sup>226</sup>. The arrival of a large number of Brahmins and others from Mithila and Bengal since the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, rise of Neo-Vaisnavite religion under the leadership of Sankaradeva and royal patronage facilitated the development of education, language and literature of the region. The establishment of kingdoms by tribal chiefs, the abandonment of the tribal culture and adoption of Indo-Aryan languages, at least by upper strata of society including royal families, for easy communication with other tribal and non-tribal people had accelerated the development of indigenous languages and led to their linguistic changes<sup>227</sup>. The period from about 1400-1550 is considered as the period of 'blossoms of renaissance' in the Assamese language and literature which included the reign of King Naranarayan and cultivation and development of literature and language including that of *Sankaradeva* in the region during his reign also considered as Assamese language and literature<sup>228</sup>. Therefore, language and literature during reign of Naranarayan was an integrate part of Assamese language and literature. The literary activities of the region were two-dimensional: *Sanskrita* language centric and non-*Sanskrita* language centric literary activities.

### ***Languages:***

The non-*Sanskrita* language, which was accepted as royal language of communication and administration by Biswa Singha and King Naranarayan got great impetus during the period<sup>229</sup>. About the name of this non-*Sanskrita* language of the lower Brahmaputra valley, including Northern Bengal and its roots, there are two main views among the scholars. The scholars of Bengal claim this non-*Sanskrita* language to be the early specimen of Bengali language<sup>230</sup>, the Assamese scholars<sup>231</sup> claim this to be the

early specimen of Assamese language. Without going into the controversies, it can be safely be assumed that the language has some common characteristics of the Bengali and Assamese languages, for which the debate might have risen<sup>232</sup>. In the seventh century, when the Chinese traveler Huien Sung visited Kamarupa, he found the local language slightly different from that of Magadha or middle India<sup>233</sup>. In course development, the language came under two influences, one of South-West of Bengal and the other of Mithila and ultimately Bengali influence became predominant and considered as Bengali language. G. A. Grierson has included the language under Indo-Aryan language group<sup>234</sup>. However, due to the close connection and inclusion of many words of Tibeto-Burman language group so the influence of Tibeto-Burman language is very much there but the language is Indo-Aryan<sup>235</sup>. Again, due to the political closeness of the region with northeast India and cultural assimilation of that, the language became an integrated part of Assamese literature, for which they termed it as '*Kamarupi*' or '*Kamatapuri*' language but the language is akin to Bengali of the middle ages<sup>236</sup>.

The Koch kings, in the first quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century adopted the standard language i.e. Bengali (or *Kamrupi* / *Kamatapuri*) of eastern India, by discarding their Tribal languages like Mech / Baro / Koch and gradually it became the language of the state for administrative and communicative purposes. Moreover, intellectual communities like the Brahmins and *Kayasthyas* were encouraged by state to diffuse the teaching, morale and knowledge of the classical Sanskrita literature through this language. The earliest specimen of this language so far known is the letter of Naranarayan dated 1477 Saka (1555) sent to the Ahom king with the peace proposal<sup>237</sup> and in succeeding periods the language was modified for all-round usages. Moreover, the rise of Neo- Vaisnavism under the leadership Sankaradeva gave a great impetus to the advancement of learning and literature through this language in the region during the period. Though Sankaradeva was a distinguished Sanskrita scholar, he wrote mainly in this language, with the aim of bringing Sanskrita lore within the uneducated masses. Thus, the adoption of this non-Sanskrita and non-tribal language by Koch King Naranarayan in its administrations, courts, foreign affairs and even in cultivation of literature, led the tribal people to be acquainted with this language( *Bengali* / *Kamarupi* / *Kamatapuri* ) and ultimately this was accepted by the tribal people along with the upper strata of the society as colloquial language. In addition, Vaisnavite preachers also helped the development of the language.

Besides, the adoption and cultivation of the Bengali (*Kamarupi / Kamatapuri*), Koch kings were great patron of Sanskrit language, literature and learning. The Sanskrit was the main language of literary activities and had been cultivated under both Brahmins and royal patronages in the region since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. With the state formation under Biswa Singha and King Naranarayan, the Koches adopted Hinduism, which was intimately linked with the Sanskrita language and literature. Both Biswa Singha, the founder of the dynasty and his illustrious son King Naranarayan were great patron of Sanskrita language and literature and its learning. This is proved by the fact that Biswa Singha sent his sons Naranarayan (Malladeva) and Chilarai (Sukladhaja) to Benaras, and they had their education in grammar, the Puranas, Sruti, Smriti, Mimamsa and Atharvanic military practices under the guidance of their teacher Brahmananda<sup>238</sup> and they became well versed in many aspects of Sanskrit language and literature. They themselves became a great source of inspiration to the scholars and poets of the kingdom and created such a situation that was suitable for the cultivation of Sanskrita language and literature.

According to the *Maharaja Vansavali* of Rupunjay Das, Naranarayan himself was the author of a dictionary of Sanskrita language named '*Malladevi Abhidhan*'<sup>239</sup> although no manuscript yet have been discovered. Purusshottam Vidyavagish in the direction of King Naranarayan and his queen had compiled a Sanskrita grammar called '*Prayoga-ratnamala*'<sup>240</sup>, which became the main grammar for general education including the kids of the royal family. However, it is also a fact that the cultivation Sanskrita language and literature was limited within upper strata of the society including members of royal families, the Brahmins and Kayasthyas etc. However, primary knowledge in Sanskrita language and literature was pre-requisite for the servants of the court of the Koches in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>241</sup>, and for this reason, the upper strata of the society monopolized lucrative posts in royal court.

From the above discussion, it has cleared that early Koch kings patronized linguistic development of both the languages i.e. the *Sanskrita* and the Bengali (or *Kamarupi / Kamatapuri*), which ultimately led to the development of the literatures, learning and education and other aspects which we are going to discuss in the succeeding pages.

### **Literatures:**

Koch kings Biswa Singha and his illustrious son king Naranarayan not only hinduised themselves and Sanskritised the culture and languages of the country, but also adopted the Sanskrita and the Bengali (or *Kamarupi / Kamatapuri*) languages for the spreading of the education and literatures of the period. As king Naranarayan and his brother Chilarai, both were well versed in the Sanskrita as well as the Bengali (or *Kamarupi / Kamatapuri*) languages, took active interest to spread the teachings and values of Sanskrita literature through the contemporary vernacular of the region i.e. Bengali (or *Kamarupi / Kamatapuri*). For this reason, he along with his brother invited to their court the Brahmins and learned scholars from Banaras and other places; patronized them with lucrative posts in royal court to cultivate learning and literature. According to the DRV, Naranarayan formally instructed his court scholars to engage themselves in studies<sup>242</sup>. Another important way for the cultivation of learning and literature was to hold scholarly debates where scholars from different parts of the country were invited to participate. The *Guru Charitas* refer many of such debates held in the court of Naranarayan<sup>243</sup>. The scholars who won such debates or who could show his scholarship were conferred high-sounding titles like *Vidyavagis*, *Siddhantavagis*, *Kandali*, *Kavindra*, *Kaviratna*, etc., and winners were also awarded with presents and certificates. For example, King Naranarayan conferred the title *Kavindra* on one of his court scholars *Baninath*<sup>244</sup>, *Saraswati*, *Bharat Bhushan* and *Bharat Chandra*, on *Aniruddha Dvija*<sup>245</sup> and *Ananta Kandali* got his title *Kandali* for his mastery over *tarka Sastra*<sup>246</sup>. It is also during his reign; the Neo-Vaisnavite saint *Sankaradeva* and his disciples cultivated Neo-Vaisnavite literature, which heralded the Renaissance in Assamese literature.

During the reign of king Naranarayan, the literary activities included the composition of Sanskrita and Bengali (or *Kamarupi / Kamatapuri*) texts and translation of Sanskrita scriptures into the vernacular. In this regard, it should be mentioned here that the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Purans* and *Smriti Sastras* etc. as the sources of Indian mythology and Hinduism, got special attention of the king to popularize the teachings and values of these texts among the subjects. However, the translation was not word-for-word translation or verbatim translation. In the most cases, it was done on the story or theme of the Sanskrita texts using local backgrounds.

*Pitambar Siddhantavagis*, a great scholar in the court of Naranarayan translated *Markandeya Puran* at the instance of *Yubaraj Samarsingha* to diffuse the secrets of the

sacred scripture<sup>247</sup> and the Dasham Skandha (Book X) of the Bhagavata Puran<sup>248</sup>. However, most notable work of Pitambar Siddhantavagis was on *Smriti* literature. In the court of Naranarayan, he compiled following 18 *Smritinvandhans* called *Kaumudi*<sup>249</sup>: *Danda Kaumudi*, *Preta Kaumudi*, *Vrishotsarga Kaumudi*, *Pramana Kaumudi*, *Sraddha Kaumudi*, *Durgotsava Kaumudi*, *Ekadasi Kaumudi*, *Suddhi Kaumudi*, *Pratistha Kaumudi*, *Sankalpa Kaumudi*, *Prayachitta Kaumudi*, *Tirtha Kaumudi*, *Kala Kaumudi*, *Diksha Kaumudi*, *Sambandha Kaumudi*, *Tithi Kaumudi*, *Daya Kaumudi*, and *Acharya Kaumudi*. He also translated *Nala-Damayanti* episode of the Mahabharata into the vernacular at the suggestion of Samara Singha<sup>250</sup>. Kavi Rama Saraswati was another very popular poet and voluminous writer in the court of Naranarayan, who at the instance of the king translated major portion i.e. 30000 verses out of 33000 verses of the Mahabharata into popular vernacular<sup>251</sup>. He in different names and titles such as Aniruddha, Kavichandra, Bharata Bhusan and Srinath Brahman with collaboration of some other scholars like his son Gopinath, Vidya Panchanan, Kamsari Kayastha, Ghabhru Khan, Damodaro Das, and others translated several Parvas of the Mahabharata like *Vana Parva*, *Visma Parva*, *Virata Parva*, *Karna Parva*, *Udyog Parva*, *Ashvamedha Parva*, *Nadi Parva* etc. into vernaculars<sup>252</sup>. He also translated *Gita-Gobinda* of Jaydeva of Bengal in the name *Jayadeva Kavya* and wrote the *Vyadha-Charita* and *Bhima Charita* in vernacular<sup>253</sup>.

Ananta Kandali, (Real name Hari Charan) another star writer in the court of king Naranarayan and disciple of Sankaradeva, had composed *Sabitri Upakhyan*, *Mahiravan badha*, *Harihar-yuddha*, *Vrittasur-badha*, *Jiva-stuti*, *Sri Rama Kirtana* in *Kirtana* style and famous *Kumarharan kavya* and translated the *Rajasuya* section of the Mahabharata into vernacular<sup>254</sup>. Besides, Sankaradeva, as his favourite disciple, allowed Ananta Kandali to complete the translation of the unfinished half of the tenth *Kanda* of the Bhagavata Purana<sup>255</sup>.

Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya was another writer of the period. He translated the *Padma purana* under the title '*Swarga khandha Rahasya*' and after becoming the disciple of Sankaradeva, he wrote the biography of his Guru and also translated fragments of *Bhagavata Purana* and *Bhavisya Purana*<sup>256</sup>.

Kalap Chandra Dvija in the court of king Naranarayan had translated the fourth and sixth *Skanda of Bhagvata Purana* and a part of the Ramayana under the *Ramayana Chandika*<sup>257</sup>.

### **Neo-Vaisnavite Literatures:**

It is fact that the Hindu traditional scholars have generally translated the epics and the Puranas into the vernacular (Bengali or *Kamarupi / Kamatapuri*) for diffusing the secrets of the classical literature. However, Neo-Vaisnavism introduced by Sankaradeva (1449-1569) had encouraged the Vaisnava scholars to produce literatures on the Vaishnavism. It is also a fact that the Neo-Vaisnavite movement gave a tremendous impetus to the development of the vernacular literatures in various directions. Sankaradeva and his disciples not only translated the scriptures into the vernaculars but also composed various types of literary works.

In the year 1546 , Sankaradeva settled in Barpeta, a place within the kingdom of king Naranarayan, laid the foundations of the Pathbausi Satra and spent the remaining years (1543-1569) of his life here under the patronage of the enlightened Koch king Naranarayan and the major portion of his writings, lyrics, dramas and others were composed here<sup>258</sup>. The biographies called *Guru Charitas* or *Charitas* through valuable light on the literary activities.

M. Neog divided the literary activities of Sankaradeva into three periods corresponding to his stay in the Bara Bhuyan (up to 1516), Ahom (1516-1546) and Koch (1546-69) territories respectively<sup>259</sup>. The second and third periods covered the reigns of Biswa Singha and Naranarayan, and third period is considered as the most important period in the life of Snakaradeva. Sankaradeva began his writings with *Hahischandra-Upakhyan (Markandeya-Purana)* at his school life, which is considered as the "the first book in which the four posts of *Bhakti* were fixed"<sup>260</sup>. Sankaradeva wrote *Kirtana-Ghosh* (collection of 29 Kirtanas), a kind of devotional *Bhakti* songs in vernacular for propagating the *Bhakti* faith<sup>261</sup>. The most of the stories had been taken from the tales of the *Bhagavata* puranas with few exceptions<sup>262</sup>. Sankaradeva drew inspiration chiefly from the *Bhagavata*, which was his main base of literary activities. At the instance of King Naranarayan, he took up the works of translation of the all the *Bhagavata* books and himself translated the

major portion , namely Books I, II, III, VII, VIII, IX, X, and XII<sup>263</sup>. Besides Sankaradeva, under his guidance, his other disciple writers, who undertook the works of translation of other sections of the *Bhagavata* were Ananta Kandali (Books IV, VI and a section of Book X), Kesava Charana (Books VII and a section of Book IX), Gopal Charana Dvija (sections of the Book III), Kavi Kalap Chandra (sections of the Book IV), Sri Visnu Bharati (sections of the Book IV), Ratnakara Misra (sections of the Book V), Sri Chandradeva (sections of the Book IV), Aniruddha Kayastha (sections of the Book IV and V) and Hari (sections of the Book V)<sup>264</sup>. According to the *Katha Guru Charita*, Sankaradeva wrote Nimi-Navasiddha-Samvada, a doctrinal treaty based the *Bhagavata* book XI, at his early stay in the Koch state<sup>265</sup>. During his stay in Koch state, he wrote Anadi Patan on astrology, Gunamala (the garland of qualities), a summary of the *Bhagavata* at the instance of King Naranarayan and Bhakti ratnakara a doctrinal work in the ideas of Bhakti<sup>266</sup>. He also translated the Ramayana (Uttar-Kanda).

Most popular form of devotional literatures composed during the period in Sanskrita, vernacular and as well as in Brajabuli by Sankaradeva were the Baragitas (great songs), (panegyrics) and the *Totaka* hymn. The Baragitas (great songs) mostly were composed in Brajabuli language, the language of Charyas or Charyapadas. The Bhatimas constitute typical form of Vaisnava poetry; primarily songs to glorify a panegyrist (may be god Krishna or even king). According to the *Katha Guru Charita*, Sankaradeva recited a Bhatima on the first day of his visit to the court of king Naranarayan i.e. *Jaya jaya malla nripati rasajana*, 'Glory be unto king Malla, an appreciator of sentiments, in praise of the king's valour, his love of learning and poetry, his religious mindedness and his physical beauty'<sup>267</sup>. The *Totaka* metre, glorifying gods was probably composed in Sanskrita with an eye on the scholars assembling at the Koch court<sup>268</sup>.

Under the inspiration of the Koch kings, Sankaradeva and his disciples had composed a large numbers of dramas popularly known as the '*Ankiyanats*', (one act plays) as a medium of propagation of Neo-Vaisnavism. He composed *Ankiyanats* like the *Kaliya -Damana*, the *Keli-Gopal*, the *Rukmini-Harana* (in about 1560AD), *Parijata-Harana*, *Sri-Rama-Vijaya* etc<sup>269</sup>. Madhavadeva, one of the favourite disciples of the Sankaradeva, had composed many *Ankiyanats* like the *Arjuna-Bhanjana*, the *Chordhara*, the *Pimpara-Guchuwa*, the *Dadhi-Mathan*, the *Bhojana-Vihara*, the *Bhushan-Bhanjana*

etc<sup>270</sup>. The most of the *Ankiyanats* were in the *Brajabuli* language and performance of it always accompanied by music, dance and had a great appeal to the masses of the region. Madhavadeva also wrote '*Nama-Ghosh*', which is as popular as the *Kirtana-ghosh* of Sankaradeva.

### **Secular writings:**

The Koch King Naranarayan not only encouraged the cultivation of religious literature, but also patronized the development of secular subjects like biography, arithmetic, astrology and medical science etc. Bakul Kayastha, a court writer of king Naranarayan, wrote the *Kitavat manjuri*, a book on arithmetic, land surveying and bookkeeping from information of the '*Lilavati*' and Sridhar was another scholar in the court of Naranarayan, who wrote a book on astronomy called '*Sadhyakhanda*' on *Jhotish*<sup>271</sup>. Churamani wrote his work *Jyotis Churamani* on arithmetic, astrology and mensuration in about 1560AD<sup>272</sup>. Bhusan Dvija, a court poet of Naranarayan, composed the biography of Sankaradeva named '*Guru Charita*'. In the same way, Rama Ray, father-in-law of Chilarai had composed the biography of his *Guru* Damodaradevo, called '*Gurulila*'. *Guptamani* of Madhavadeva deals with the relationship between the mind and environment<sup>273</sup>. It is believed that Sagarkhari composed his famous *Ghoranidan*, a treatise on diseases of horses, under the patronage of the Koches<sup>274</sup>.

### **Some aspects on Educations, learning etc:**

During the period of our study, there was no centralized educational system in the kingdom. However, locally basic educations were imparted in the *Tolas* and *Chatrasalas*, which were a *Gurukula* type of residential schools, managed generally by the Brahmin Pandits, Acharyyas or Ojhas, and were maintained by public donations. Sankaradeva secured his early education in such a *Tola* under the Brahmin Pandit Mahendra Kandali, and Madhavadeva studied under Rajendra Adhyapaka at Banduka<sup>275</sup>. The *Katha Guru Charita* informs us that there had been small huts attached to the *Tolas*, where students from distance places had to live for their education<sup>276</sup>. Besides learning, the students had to participate in various types of works like cleaning and keeping of the school houses in order, domestic works of teachers and begging for foods as traditional custom<sup>277</sup>. Princes of the royal family secured their basic education under the Brahmin scholars attached to

the court. In the *Tola* system of education, the curriculum mainly consisted of Sanskrita grammar, Lexicons, the Epics, the *Puranas*, religious works- *Dharmasastras*, *Niti-sastras* and *Yajamani* and the medium of instruction was in Sanskrita<sup>278</sup>. The professional training was also prevalent among the Kayasthas to improve efficiency of bookkeeping etc.<sup>279</sup>. With the rise of the Neo-vaisnava Movement, the responsibility of imparting education came under its domain. The Satra institution voluntarily took upon itself the noble responsibility of enlightening the people through their own *to/s*. All the important Satras used to maintain a regular band of scholars whose duty was to impart education, especially in respect of ancient lore and scriptures.

We have no references of the advance education centres within the kingdom, so ambitious students went outside of the state for their advanced learning. Naranarayan and Chilarai had their education at Benaras in grammar, the *Puranas*, *Sruti*, *Smritis*, *Mimamsa* and Atharvanic military practices under Brahmananda Sannyasi, a great Sanskrita scholar<sup>280</sup>. Kanthabhusan of the Maguri village near Hajo went to Benaras for advanced education in the Vedanta under a scholar named Brahmananda/ Rama-Bhatta, Asurari, son of Murari Chakraborty had his education at *Navadvipa*<sup>281</sup>.

Contemporary literary sources are completely silent about the education in vernacular. But writings of official letters in vernacular, using the vernacular as official language of the state, translation of large number of the Sanskrita texts in the vernacular and above all writings of Neo-Vaisnavite literatures in the vernacular indirectly throw some lights on the non-formal and non institutional vernacular education. The literary activities in the vernacular was like a under current among the masses and they received informal education through the stories of the translated form of the classical writings, Neo-Vaisnavite propagations, folk-literature, folk music etc. The theatrical performances on religious themes by Neo-Vaisnava preachers served as one of the most important media for religious based informal educations among the masses. Besides, prayer-songs including music and dance and the *Namghars*, (village prayer halls) also performed important roles in verbal education.

It should be mention here that formal institutional educations were limited among the Brahmins and upper strata of society including royal princes and professional caste like Kayasthas. The common masses were beyond the formal *Tola* centric education system. The Brahmins tried to control the whole education system and according social convention teaching profession was the monopoly right of the Brahmins. For example, When

Sankaradeva, a non-Brahmin student was appointed the *Ojha-Chatra* (class captain), being a brilliant and intelligent student, there was a resentment among the Brahmins students and Mahendra kandali, his teacher, had to face the brought about by one of the guardians for his violation of the convention<sup>282</sup>. However, the state-sponsored stalwarts had mainly translated the classical literature in the vernacular and composed of Vaisnavite works in the vernacular gave impetus to the learning and education among the masses.

### ***Dances and Music:***

During the reigns of Biswa Singsha and Naranarayan, remarkable development taken place in the field of music and dance. Contemporary literary archaeological evidence refers to the music, dance and musical instruments. Dance and music of the period can be discussed under two heads: Non -Vaisnavite and Neo-Vaisnavite dance and music.

### ***Non-Vaisnavite dance and music:***

Non-Vaisnavite dance and music were the local traditional form of dance and music. The *Kalika Puran* refers to one hundred and eight mudras (dancing postures) with which the goddess could be worshiped<sup>283</sup>. The DRV refers to a large number musical instruments used at the time of the coronation ceremonies of Biswa Singha and Naranarayan, which indirectly indicates the prevalence dance and musical performances<sup>284</sup>. The DRV also informs us that King Naranarayan organized a dance party during his Ahom expedition in 1562 on the bank of the river Sankosh to obtain the support of the all Mech-Kachari people of the tribal origin<sup>285</sup>. The reign of Biswa Singha witnessed the introduction of the *Oja-Pali* dance and music. According to D. Nath, "In this type of musical performance, songs from the Ramayana and the *Manasa Kavyas*, the former composed by Durgavar and the later by both Durgavar and Mankar, were used to be sung by a group of singers under the guidance of a leader called *Oja* on the occasions of some festive gatherings like the Durga Puja, and the manasa-puja"<sup>286</sup>. This type of choral music were full of classical ragas or melodies like *Gunjari*, *Patamanjari*, *Devomohana*, *Mandali*, etc and the main *Talas* (rhythm) like *Ekatala*, *Khaman*, *Rachaka*, *Rupaka* etc. were basically Non-Vaisnavite in character and very popular among the masses. Therefore, Sankaradeva accepted this type of performance or its technique to

the singing of *Kirtana-Ghosas* and others of his Neo-Vaisnavite fold<sup>287</sup>. Ananta Kandali and Kalap Chandra Dvija, both under the patronage of king Naranarayan composed *Sri Rama Kirtana* and *Ramayana Chandika* respectively on the Ramayana in Kirtana style, which were sung in various occasions<sup>288</sup>. Kendukalai, the chief priest of goddess Kamakhya in the days of Naranarayan, used to sing in her shrine when the goddess herself appeared in form and danced to song<sup>289</sup>. Chilarai, the brother of Naranarayan was himself a musician. He utilized the musical treatise, *Sangita-damodara* of Subhankara Kavi perhaps of old Mithila, in his musical work '*Saraswati*, commentary of the *Gita-Govinda*, where he quotes the *Laksanas* of the ragas like *Malava, Gurjari, Karnata, Bhairavi* etc<sup>290</sup>. The Non-Vaisnavite performing arts based on mainly classical pattern, and executed in traditional non-Vaisnavite religious performances. The tribal people performed their traditional tribal dance and music associated with agriculture at the time of the sowing of seeds, before starting harvesting and in the community feast held after the completion of the harvest. They also performed music and dance on the occasions like birth, marriage, death and worship of the deities.

### **Neo-Vaisnavite dance and music:**

The Neo-Vaisnavite movement brought a new era in the field of music and dance in the region during our period of study. Neo-Vaisnavite dance and music based on Vaisnavite faith and its different branches. Sankaradeva, Madhavadeva and other Neo-Vaisnavite writers composed different types of the songs which were generally of a descriptive character, and recited or sung in religious gatherings in a simple, sonorous voice to impress the masses to the faith of *Bhakti*.

The Neo-Vaisnava music, in the hand of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva reached a remarkable structure in its tone and variety. A large number of *ragas* or melodies, *Talas* (rhythm) and musical instruments were introduced in music. They employed the ragas like *Ahira, Asowari, Kalyan, Kedara, Gauri, Tuda, Dhanasri, Nata, Purvi* etc. in their musical writings<sup>291</sup>. Musical rhythms like *Ekatali, Khar-man, Chutikala, Chuta, Yati-man, Domani Visama, Paritala, Rupaka* and *Chok* are found in their writings of dramatics performances<sup>292</sup>. With traditional musical instruments like *Vipanchi, Kavilasa, Rudra Kavilasa, Rudra Vina, Rudra Tokari, Saringa, khanjari* etc. they introduced *Rabab, Dotara, Mridanga / Khol, Ramatala, or Karatal* etc. in musical performances<sup>293</sup>. Different forms of music introduced by Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva included mainly *Baragits, Ankargits,*

*Kirtan-ghosh, Bhatima, Nam-ghosh* etc. All these songs especially *Baragits* and *Ankargits* were tuned to classical Ragas and *Talas* and were performed with musical instruments as we have mentioned earlier. The influences of these songs among the all classes of people were remarkable, and acted as the vehicle for the propagation of the *Bhakti* of Neo-Vaisnavite faith. Two incidents may be mentioned here to get an idea about the influence of musical performance of the *Bhakti* songs. Chilarai, happened one day to overhear his wife Kamalapriya, Ramaraya's daughter singing a *Bhakti* song on the *Sarinda*, he was so impressed by that he lost no time in resolving to secure initiation into *Bhakti* and likewise Damodaradeva was attracted to the faith by the prayers held daily in Sankaradeva's *Satra*<sup>294</sup>.

Sankaradeva introduced the art of dancing mainly in connection with the dramatic performances that were for the most part dance and music, prose constituting but an insignificant fraction. His large number of dances based on Vaisnavite religious themes like *Sutra-bhangi* or *Sutradharar Nach*, *Krishna-bhangi* or *Gosai-prevesar Nach*, *Gopi-prevesar Nach*, *Chali Nach*, *Nritya-bhangi Nath*, *rasa Nritya*, *Jhumur Nach*, *Yuddhar Nach* etc.<sup>295</sup>.

M. Neog termed the dance of Sankaradeva as 'Satra School of dancing' as the Satras and Nama-ghars were important centres of this dance and music<sup>296</sup>. On the other hand, in the opinion of D. Nath, "...Sankaradeva created a new type of music and dance which can rightly be termed as the Kamarupi or the Assamese school of Indian music and dance"<sup>297</sup>.

### ***Development of Art, architecture, sculpture and painting:***

Due to the strong economic solidarity, comparatively peaceful political situation and keen interest of the early Koch kings, a new era had been started in the field of art, architecture and sculpture during our period of study. Development of Neo-Vaisnavite movement, initiated a new branch of artistic work i.e. the painting. One interesting thing should kept mind that establishment and development in the field of art, architecture, sculpture and painting during the period is mainly based on religions and secular part of its are very rare. Besides religious establishments like temples, Nam-ghars and Satras of Vaisnavite faith, literary sources also throw glimpses in the fields Art, architecture, sculpture and painting:

The most important architectural work during the period, our study was the rebuilding of Kamakhya temple (see plates III, IV and V) by King Naranarayan and his brother Chilarai in 1565 on the Nilachal hill at Gouhati on the bank of the river Brahmaputra. The architecture and sculpture of the temple belonged to different periods due to the renovations, rebuilding and new constructions in the temple campus in the later periods for which it is difficult to comments about it. According to D. Nath, "The general structure of the temple conforms to Sri Chakra plan and has the *Nat-Mandir* or *Mandapa* (main temple), the *Gapuram* (the gate way) and the *Garbhagriha* (sanctum).The *sikhara* of the temple, which resembles a bee-hive, is a combination of *nagara* and *vesara* type. This was a creation of the Koch artists and can be termed as the '*Nilachala-type*' <sup>298</sup>. The vertex of the temple is oval shaped like beehive-having 7 spires, 3 golden pitchers on blossoming lotus, upon that a golden trident. The temple flaunts beautiful frescos of adorned gods and goddesses of the Hindu Puranas. The plinth of the temple shows mouldings of the older temple. The main temple consists of three major chambers. The first and western chamber is large and rectangular and is not used by the general pilgrims. The middle chamber is a square, with a small idol of the goddess, probably a later addition. The walls of this chamber contain sculptured images of King Naranarayan, Chilarai and inscription recording its rebuilding by Chilarai in 1565 AD., and that of the other gods and goddesses. This chamber leads to the *Garbhagriha* (sanctum), the last chamber. The *Garbhagriha* (sanctum) of the temple is in the form of a cave, which consists of no image but a Yoni of the goddess and a natural under ground spring. This image known as the "matra yoni"and is worshipped with reverence. Some panels of the temple are also amazingly decorated with sculptural images of Ganesha, Chamundeswari in a delightful pattern of dancing postures (see plate VI). The main gateway was also build at the same time<sup>299</sup>. The Kamakhya is one of the most astounding architectural structures, which reflects the perfect form of the medieval architectural style.

Another important temple of the period with architectural and sculptural values is the Hayagriva Madhava temple (see plate VII) located at Hajo, a town about 30 km to west of Gouhati. According to the inscription of the temple, it was rebuild by Raghudeva, the son of Chilarai in Saka 1505(1583AD.) with the most skilled and efficient artist Sridhara, on the hillock called Mani Kuta (hillock) and a flight of stone steps composed of slab(s) leads to the main grounds of the temple<sup>300</sup>. The temple was built with stone slabs, is octagonal in plan, about 30-feet in diameter and crowned with a pyramidal roof, which

continues right up to an apex point. It appears "from the disarrangement of many of the mouldings and cornices, and awkward position of several bas-reliefs, that the upper portion of the temple has been reconstructed from the old materials, without much precision of arrangement"<sup>301</sup>.

For proper understanding of the Architectural and sculptural works, the entire temple vertically may be divided into three parts: the high plinth, middle portion with Garvagriha (sanctum) and Sikhara. A row of Elephants or '*Gajaratha*' appears on the plinth moulding, and on a moulding of about 2-feet above the plinth, a row of caparisoned elephants in high relief encircle the building and appears to bear the full brunt of the edifice. The elephants, all the tuskers each standing 16" in height, are facing outwards, are being finely designed and sculptured showing only their tusks, trunks and front legs. The entire structure of the temple rests over enormous brick pillars and is considered as an addition to the original structure of the temple, possibly by the Koch king Raghudeva in about 1583AD.

The middle portion, the *Garvagriha* (sanctum) which is a crypt, 14 square feet in size, contains the image and its pedestal and into which you descend by a flight of stone steps. The door case to this shrine, "is formed of four blocks of granite, and measures 10ft. in height and 5ft. in breadth. A lotus is engraved over the lintel of the door in the entrance. The door opens into an anteroom, also of stone, 10ft. by 10 ft., having inches of 4ft. square, stone screens, one on each side with apertures for the admission of light and air, cut in form of lotus flowers"<sup>302</sup>.

The third part, the Sikhara of the Hayagriva temple has a pyramidal plane face, which continues right up to an apex point. In the horizontal aspect of the temple, it has large vestibule may be termed as '*Varandah*, in vernacular, measuring 40 feet by 20 feet built of brick and resting on massive brick pillars. The upper walls of the exterior of the temple contain life-size sculptured figures representing the ten Avataras with Buddha as the ninth. The rest of the figures are of a non-descript character, but they are mostly male, and nearly all figures carry a trident ('*Trishul*').

Besides the Kamakhya and the Hayagriva Madhava temples, early Koch kings built some other temples of architectural values. The temple named Bhairav Nath temple (than), established by Naranarayan and Chilarai, on the Bhairava hill in the present district of Goalpara of Assam. The temple resembles the architectural pattern of the Kamakhya

temple and although the temple is dedicated to Lord Siva (Bhairava nath), the images of His consort Bhairavi, Radha-Krishna (of Vaisnava faith) and other minor deities are found in the temple (Bhairava Nath temple). The Baneswar Siva Temple (see plate!), at Baneswar, a place situated at a distance of about 10 Km to the North of Koch Behar town is said to have been constructed by king Naranarayan<sup>303</sup>. This temple too resembles the architectural pattern of the Kamakhya temple. The vertex of the temple is oval shaped like Kamakhya temple. The temple has a 'Shivalinga' 10 feet below the plinth level. Moreover, the Siva temples of *Chhoto Mahadeva* at *Nakkati Gachh* and *Baro Mahadeva* at *Baro Kodali* (both at Tufanganj, in Koch Behar district) bear some architectural values of the period<sup>304</sup>.

Besides, some of the inscripational and literary sources refer to some religious and secular architectural works, which however are not in existence now. Thus, an inscription in a stone slab in western Nilachal hill records that the beautiful Pandunath temple was built by Gadadhara, the loyal minister of king Raghu deva, with stones and dedicated to the feet of Payonidhi Bishnu in Saka 1507<sup>305</sup>. The DRV records the construction of Kamteswaridevi temple by Biswa singha, the father of king Naranarayan<sup>306</sup>. However, both the temples are not in existence now<sup>307</sup>. In spite of the literary references of (both Local and Foreign) of royal palaces of the early kings of the dynasty, but no such palaces or its ruins discovered still now. The DRV also occasionally refers to the construction of capital cities; splendor courts, but remains of them do not exist. The early Koch kings used burnt bricks and stone slabs for the construction of temples. According to the DRV, king Naranarayan appointed 'Kumars' (potters), to make bricks for the construction of the Kamakhya temple and in this occasion, bricks were burnt in ghee<sup>308</sup>. Another type of architecture and sculpture developed during the period of our study under the influences of Neo-Vaisnavite movement of Sankaradeva and his disciples and that is Satra. According to D. Nath, "Under the guidance of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva, and royal patronage, the artists of the period developed a new style which can be termed as the 'Satriya-school' of architecture and sculpture"<sup>309</sup>. This is new in the sense that instead of bricks and stone slabs, products like timber, bamboo, soil, thatching material etc. were used for the construction of Satras, which served as the religious place, place of learning and the dwelling place of the Monks of the faith. An ideal Neo -Vaisnavite Satra proper consists of a square enclosure wall, made of bamboo and wood, varying according to its

strength and having four main parts; i) four openings or gateways called *Karapat*, looking like a small house. ii) The central assembly hall called *Namghar* or *Kirtanghar*, big in size for prayer and social gathering. iii) The central temple, composite of a shrine called *Manikut* or *Bhaj-ghar* in which is placed the *Simhasana* or *Thapana*, which contain the main object of worship. iv) The four rows of huts or long houses called *Hati*, where the *Bhaktas* lived<sup>310</sup>. Sankaradeva is said to have established his first *Satra* at Bardowa, his birthplace, ultimately became a holy (*Than*) of the Vaisnavite faith and then at different centers, during the course of his long and extensive travels across the length and breadth of region. Under the patronages of King Naranarayan and Chilarai a large number of *Satras* were established in different places of the kingdom like the followings<sup>311</sup>:

- a) Madhupur *Satra* (also know as Bardowa *Satra*) at Madhupur, founder: Sankaradeva
- b) RamraiKuthi or Satrasal, *Satra* at Dhubri, founder: Ram Ray.
- c) Kakatkuta and Vela *Satras*, (Koch Behar, now extinct), founders: Sankaradeva and Madhavdeva.
- d) Fulbari *Satra* (Tufanganj, Koch Behar), founder: Madhavdeva.
- e) Bhitrua *Satra* (Baikunthapur).
- f) Barpeta *Satra* (Barpeta).
- g) Raghunath Pravu *Satra* (Golokganj, Dhubri.etc).

However, most of the *Satras* of the period are extinct now and present structures of the almost all *Satras* were belonging to the later period. The original *Kirtanghar* at Barpeta *Satra*, built under the patronage of the Koch (Hajo) king Raghudeva, and at the instructions of the Madhavadeva and his chief apostle Mathuradas Budha Ata, was a masterpiece of the wooden works<sup>312</sup>. Not only the *Karapatas* (main gate-ways), *Kirtanaghars*, *Bhaj-ghars*, but also the walls, gates, windows and posts were nicely engraved with many folk-art elements and images and scenes taken from religious texts and even some times wooden statues were placed in on the main gates as gate-keepers, which bear the efficiency of wooden sculpture<sup>313</sup>. Therefore, the *Satras* bear not only

manuscripts, artifacts and antiques of immense historical values but also architectural and sculptural values as well.

One interesting point should be mentioned here that both the temples (stones-bricks) and the Satras (wooden) of the region bear different architectural and sculptural characteristics patterns in execution. The temple art, architecture and sculpture of the *Kamakhya*, *Hayagriva* and other temples was just an extension of all India pattern with little local variations. Although, D. Nath termed it as 'Nilachala-type' of architecture and sculpture for local variation, he find "nothing special or striking in the architecture of the early years of the Koch rule which can be termed as Kamarupa or Assam school"<sup>314</sup>. Thus, S.K. Chatterjee termed it as "Pan-Indian Hindu tradition" of art, architecture and sculpture<sup>315</sup>. Moreover, in the field of architecture and sculpture, Koch king followed more north behar and mid India than Bengal. The *sikhara*, of Kamakhya temple is a combined form of *nagara* and *Vesara* type of Pan-India. The plinth decoration of the Hayagriva Madhava temple is identical with decorative style of the Kailash cave temple of Ellora<sup>316</sup>. Engraving of the images of King Naranarayan and Chilarai on the walls of the Kamakhya temple and as well as lotus flowers type apertures of the Hayagriva Madhava temple for the admission of light and air and they are identical with mid India. It was due to the strongest connection of the early Koch kings with north Bihar and mid India<sup>317</sup>. On the other hand, the architecture and sculpture of the Vaisnavite Satras bears local characteristics, which can be termed as '*Satriya-School*' and only influence it bears from outside is subject matter of the art, architecture and sculpture, which is Purana based.

### **Painting:**

Painting, especially Neo-Vaisnavite was a new chapter and watermark of the period of our study, which received great patronage from the Koch royal court and executed by Neo-Vaisnavite Artists. The Neo-Vaisnavite Artists took great parts in their Satra centric paintings and may be named as "the *Satriya* style of paintings'. It reached high watermark during the reign of king Naranarayan and it is considered as 'new chapter', in the sense that no specimen of paintings done in the area anterior to the time of the Sankaradeva is available to us<sup>318</sup>. The *Satriya* style, the indigenous school of paintings is the product of Sri Sankaradeva. The *Citra Bhagavat* (*Bhagavat*, book X), dated 1461 Saka (1539 A.D.), from Bali satra of Naogaon is the earliest example of the *Satriya* style. The painting of this

manuscript is of great beauty and represents one of the earliest attempts to illustrate a version of the Bhagavat composed in vernacular<sup>319</sup>. On the paintings of '*Citra-Bhagavata*' M. Neog opines it "seem to be the work of some Sutra artists and a representative work too of the Assam" and "The technique and finish of this work exhibit strong Rajput-Mughal influences, although here and there local elements are naturally to be expected"<sup>320</sup>, in colours and concepts. Dr. Moti Chandra gives a beautiful analysis of the characteristics of the Bhagavata paintings in the following ways: "The physical features of the human figures, angularity in draughtmanship, monochrome background and conventional landscape are common to them. --- In short, the lyrical draughtmanship, simple composition, dramatic narration, and splendid colours give the Bhagavata illustrations a charm which distinguishes them from similar paintings from Udaypur and elsewhere"<sup>321</sup>. The *Katha Guru Charita* describes Sankaradeva as a skilled painter, and how he painted the scenes of the '*Seven Vaikunthas*' on the ginned cotton paper (*tula-pat*), to be used in the presentation of his play *Chihna-yatra* (does not exist today). According to the same source, he also painted with vermilion (*hengul*) and yellow arsenic (*haital*) an elephant on a small piece of paper and pasted on it a wooden bookcase with his *Gunamala*, which he had presented to his patron king Naranaryan<sup>322</sup>. It has also been recorded in the *Katha Guru Charita* that he, for the sake of his patron king (Naranaryan) had depicted the scenes of Lord Krishna's childhood woven into a tapestry sheet of embroidered designs on silk cloth 180 feet long called *Vrindavani Vastra*. The vastra was woven by 12 master weavers in Barpeta, commissioned by Chilarai and under the supervision of Sankaradeva probably between 1565 and 1568,<sup>323</sup>. Another illustrated manuscript of the reign of king Naranaryan is Rama Saraswati's Mahabharata (*Udyoga Parva*) wherein the artist painted the ornaments with real gold<sup>324</sup>. Manuscripts with illustrated borders were known as *latā-katā puthi* or manuscripts with scrolls and running motifs along the borders. Many manuscripts contain pictures of the deadly sins, of the glory of Visnu, and of His incarnations according to Hindu conception.

All combinations of colours were used but the treatment is always flat. The prominent ones were yellow and green. The materials used in painting are indigo, yellow ochre (*gerumāti*), vermilion (*hengul*), yellow arsenic (*haital*) and lamp-black. These materials could easily give the basic colors and even a few composite ones. Most of the

manuscripts painting were executed on *Sachi-pat*<sup>225</sup>. These are always shown against deep blue or red and sometimes with grey background.

In technique and in finish, the pictures of trees with flowers and birds have considerable charm, and animal life is vividly portrayed with observant sympathy and tenderness of feeling, that reminds us of the paintings in the manuscript *Hasti-vidyarnava*, which depicts the different types of elephants with their respective characteristics. The animals like maleness Indian lion, the bison (methon in Assamese) and birds are appeared in the painting in clear and sympathetic manner.

There are some convention and stylization that may be considered as the limitations of these paintings of the period and which can be seen in the illustrated *Bhagavata-purana*. The figures are mostly in profile, the eyes are fish-shaped and have arched eyebrows and physiology is not given due attention and physiognomy scarcely shines bright; individualization is not the aim attempted at by the painter's brush, although the MS *Lava-Kusar Yuddha* is an exception and unique, where characterization through facial expression and colour is to be noticed. Another exceptional and unique characterization is found in the Ms. *Bhagavata*, there is a rhythm in the scenes of musical performances of *Gandharvas*, *Apsaras* and *Vidhyadharas*, where attempts at symmetry are evident and movements of groups are effectively depicted.

In general, nothing is found impressive in background as well as scene setting. M. Neog writes "Landscape or any other background is scarcely or never attempted; and perspective seems to be a thing till now unknown to the painter, as the third dimension is nowhere in evidence. Successive scenes have been flatly depicted on the same plane like those in celluloid ribbons of cinematography but without anything to mark one from another. The peculiar way of representing pouring rain-water, rivers and lakes are of a conventional type. Mountains look like cross-sections of them. The trees are far from the real. The chariots (rathas) are not very happy in that they look like a low, flat stool with wheels at the bottom and a flag post at the front"<sup>326</sup>.

In spite of these limitations, "In some bigger satras the visitor eye with pleasure catches the sight of mural paintings and wood-carvings of beauty, with folk-art elements, depicting figures of gods and scenes from the Vaisnavite scriptures"<sup>327</sup>. The impulse to

create the art of painting can be explained by the evolution of the worship of religious scripture. The cult of worship of scripture in the altar of each Satra enjoyed unprecedented impetus. The practice was also followed in the domestic chapel of each household in Assam. Thus paintings under the Koch patronage at the early stage being inspired by the Mughal-Rajputas style and finally it inspired the artists of the region and became familiar as the 'Satriya style of paintings' and may be considered as a unique contribution to the domain of Indian painting . In the succeeding period, royal court centric painting also developed in the region and may be named as 'royal school of paintings'<sup>328</sup> .

**Notes and references:**

1. *Bengal past and present*, Vol. XXIV, p.14.
2. George Peter Murdock gives the definition of a tribe in the following way:  
 a ' social group, usually comprising a number of sibs, bands, villages or other sub groups, which is normally characterized by the possession of a definite territory , a distinct dialect , a homogeneous and distinctive culture and either a unified political organization or at least some sense of common solidarity as against outsiders. (Henry Prott Fairchild (ed) "*Dictionary of Sociology and Related Science*", Littlefield, Adams& Co., 1961, p.324)
3. Robert Redfield: '*The Little Community*', (Almquist and Wiksells, Bektrycheri A. B., 1955), p. 39. The International Labour organization (ILO) in its 169<sup>th</sup> Convention , article1, has also defined a tribe with the following words; 'Tribal peoples .....are those whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulation' . (Cited in Meshbah Kamal, Ishani Chakraborty and Zobaida Nasrin; *Nijbhume ParbasiUttarbanger Adibasir Prantikata Discourse*, (Dhaka, Research and development Collective, 2001, p.18)
4. *Yogini Tantra*, pt.1, Ch. 11, vv. 16-18; *The Kalika Purana*, ch. vv. 95 -111.
5. *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, p. 560.
6. Cited in N.N. Vasu; *Social History of Kamrupa*, Vol. 1, p. 71.
7. DRV, verse.277, p.56.

মোর বাক্য শুনা সারধান নকরিবাঁ কেএৰঁ অন্য কাণ

মোৰ বংশে কন্যা নানিব অন্য জাতিৰ ।

ভাল ভাল ৰূপ গুন চাই যথাত সুন্দৰ কন্যা পাই

আনিবাহাঁ কন্যা কোঁচ মেচ কছাৰীৰ ॥ ২৭৭

8. N. N. Vasu; op. cit. Vol. II, p.58.
9. The *Katha Guru Charit*, p. 78.
10. DRV, vv. 259-264.
11. Cited in R. K. Barman, *From tribalism to state*, Abhijeet Publication, Delhi, 2007, p. 37.
12. *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, p. 562.
13. K. L. Barua, '*Early History of Kamarupa*', p. 175.
14. Biswa Singha changed the centre of his power from *Chikina* to *Hingulabas* then again- to *Kamtapur (Koch Beher)*. *Rajopakhyan*, p.16; DRV. vv. 207-8.
15. Goutam Bhadra, '*Mughal Yuger Krishi Arthaniti o Krishak bidroha*, Calcutta , 1983 , p.140.
16. M .Neog (ed): *The Guru-charit Katha*, Gauhati University, Guahati, 1987, introduction.
17. Ram charan Thakur: *The Guru Charit*, vv. 3461-3488.
18. Khan Chaudhari A. Ahamed: '*Koch Beharer Itihas*', p. 57.
19. *The Katha Guru Charit*, op. cit., p. 65.
20. N. N. Vasu: *Social History of Kamrupa* Vol. II, pp. 54-59.
21. Raja Harendranarayan: '*Brihat Raja Vansavali*', padas 1751-1794 .(Vide Assam Govt. Collection, Darang , No. 2, 1<sup>st</sup> part )

Original v:

‘বিপ্ৰ ক্ষত্ৰগন বৈশ্য শূদ্ৰ জন আনো নানা জাতি -----।

কৰিয়া বিভেদ দিলা পৰিচ্ছেদ ভাগে ভাগে অতিশয় ১৭৯১ ।

সমস্ত জাতিক ভিন্ন কৰিলেক উত্তম মধ্যম কৰি ।

কতো সকলক হীন কৰিলেক শাস্ত্ৰবাক্য অনুসারি। ১৭৯২ ।

Cited in N. N. Vasu, op. cit. p .59.

22. *The Katha Guru Charit* , pp .123, 250, and 307.
23. DRV, v. 277.
24. *The Katha Guru Charita* , p.76 .
25. The DRV, vv. 230-235, and 240-250.

26. The *Katha Guru Charit* , p.137 ; Brihat Raja Vansavali, op. cit. , cited in cited in N. N. Vasu, op. cit. p.71 .
27. Gait, op. cit. p.56 and D. N. op. cit. p.71.
28. The *Akbara Namah*, op. cit. p.716 .
29. A. Guha, 'The *Medieval Economy of Assam* ', in '*The Cambridge Economic History of India* '(1200-1750), Vol. I , (ed) Tapan Roy Choudury and Irfan Habib , Cambridge university Press , 1982 , p.505 .
30. C. Wessels: *Early Jesuit Travelers in Central Asia* (A.D.1603-1721), reprint ed., Madras, Asian Educational Service, 1992, pp.124-27.
31. The *Katha Guru Charit*, p.65.
32. Ibid. p.70.
33. Ibid., p.127.
34. *Historical Letters of the Ahom Period*, a collection of 44 letters exchanged between the Ahom and the Koch kings, transcript No. 18, Vol. V, part VI, DHAS, Gauhati. Tantikuchi Mahal of Barpeta, Sualkuchi and Kamarkuchi were the main centres of werving industries, (Haliram Mohanto, '*Sankar Charita*', Sualkuchi, 1925, vv. 3506-07, p. 275).
35. *Ralph Fitch, 'England's pioneer to India, Burma, etc.'*, (ed), J .H. Ryley, London, 1899, p. 112; also in '*Early travels in India*' by sir W. Foster, Oxford University press,192, reprint edition, S. Chand and co., New Delhi, 1968, pp.1-47.
36. Hamilton, *Account of Assam*, p.61.
37. A. Guha, op. cit. p.504.
38. Koch Rajar Buranji, p.91 ff.
39. A. Guha, op. cit. p.504.
40. Quoted in D. Nath, op. cit. p.139.
41. H. N. Choudary, *Brihat Rajavansavali*, Vide Assam govt. collection, Darrang, No-2. CBSLRS, p.134.
42. K. C. Pathak edited the *Guru Charita*, pp.104-5 .
43. Hamilton, op. cit., p.61.
44. Ibid.
45. Some scholars used the word '*chheleng* 'or '*chadar*' denoting shawl, both ladies and gents. But the *chheleng* or *chadar* was originally gents shawl with a measurement of six cubits long and three cubits wide and on the other hand *Jhardar* or *Mongjuri*

was ladies shawl with a measurement of four to five cubits long and two to two and half cubits wide, and with luxurious gold or silver embroideries (Hamilton , Account of Assam, p. 61).

46. M. Neog, *Purani Asamiya Samaj Aru Samskriti Gauhati*, 1971, p.133.
47. *Historical Letters of the Ahom Period*, a collection of 44 letters exchanged between the Ahom and the Koch kings, transcript No. 18, Vol. V, part VI, DHAS, Gauhati.
48. Ibid.
49. D. Nath, op. cit. p.140.
50. B. K. Barua, '*Asamer loka Samskriti*', Gauhati, 1961, p.150. The verse is as following:  
"Sari pindhe sari pindhe bhalo manuhar jee  
Bhalo Kari sari pindhe chikan gawat di".  
Meaning; ... the daughters of the nobles only who wear saris, they wear it nicely around their beautiful bodies.
51. H. N. chaudhary, op. cit. p.135.
52. Khan Chaudhuri A. A., *Cooch Beharer Itihas* (Bengali), reprint, 1990, Calcutta, p. 57.
53. D. Nath, op. cit. p.140.
54. Khan Choudhary A. A. op. cit. p.57.
55. D. Nath, op. cit. See plates no. XI, XII and XIII.
56. Khan Chaudhuri A. A. op. cit. p.57.
57. Daityari, vv. 27-34; Bhushan 16 and; *The Katha Guru Charita*, 15-f.
58. *Akbaranamah*, op. cit., pp.1066-68 records ...." a pious women was praying in the in the temple of Jalpeswar, which dedicated to Mahadev and prayed for a son who should be become a ruler . By Gods help she become pregnant and bore a son" and named as Biswa Singha.
59. M. Neog, op. cit., p.150; *The Katha Guru Charita.*, p.696.
60. D. Nath, op. cit., p. 142.
61. Khan Chaudhuri, A.A., op. cit., p.83.
62. Nripendra Nath Pal, '*Kochbehar-Raj Abong Raj-Anttapur*' in Bhattacharyya, P. K. (ed), '*The Kingdom of Kamata- Kochbehar in Historical Perspective*', Ratna Prakashan and NBU, 2000, pp. 53-73.
63. M. Neog, op. cit., p103.
64. S. L. Baruah, op. cit., p. 422.

65. The *Guru Charita* of Ram Charana Thakur, v, 2920, cited in D. Nath, op. cit., p.142.
66. ABSM, p. 33. , Gait, op. cit. p. 56. He stated that Chilarai obtained the favour of the Padshah of Gauda by saving the life of the Padshah's mother from snakebite. The Padshah released Chilarai and even gave his daughter in marriage with above mentioned territories .The mothers of the Padshah declared the river Karatoya as the western boundary of the Koch kingdom. , The DRV, vv. 519-536, gave us same information except the marriage and dowry. Khan Chaudhuri A. Ahamed, op. cit. p. 114. Stated that the mother's of the Padshah accepted Chilarai as her son and he was not married with the daughter of the Padshah but with five noble-born-daughters of that country.
67. D. Nath, op. cit., p142.
68. The *Katha Guru Charita*, p.106.
69. The *Katha Guru Charita*, p. 106.
70. Sihabuddin Talish cited in S. L. Baruah, '*A comprehensive history of Assam*', Munsimam and Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1985, p.421.
71. DRV, vv. 659-665; Khan Chaudhuri A. Ahamed's, '*Koch Beharer Itihas*', p.121 mentioned the numbers of Raghudeva's wives as 120 without mentioning his source of information.
72. Sunil, Pal, '*Mech Jatir Endi Silpa*', Amrita-12.30 (1972), p.306, cited in R. K. Barman, op. cit. p.126.
73. The *Katha Guru Charita*, pp. 103 -111 and 276.
74. DRV,v., 289. It records that when Naranarayan and Chilarai were at Benaras for their studies, the nurses informed them about the political development after the death of their father Biswa Singha.
75. P. C. Chaudhury, op. cit., p.326.
76. S. L. Baruah, op. cit., p. 422.
77. DRV,v.128. It records that at the coronation ceremony of Biswa Singha, Nats and Natis participated in dancing and singing.
78. DRV, v. 605; Vasu, op. cit., p. 74 and M. Neog op. cit., p.97.
79. B. K. Barua, op. cit., p. 59.
80. The *Katha Guru Charita*, p.138; M. Neog, op. cit., pp.277 &288.

81. M. Neog, op. cit., pp. 23 & 149-50. She was the first woman in the history of Neo-Vaisnavism of Assam, who acted as religious head and initiated disciples and appointed other persons (males) as superior (Ibid.).
82. *The Katha Guru Charita*, p.662.
83. Khan Chaudhuri, A.A., op. cit., p.83.
84. Munshi, Joynath, '*Rajoupakhyan*' ed., Das, Biswanath, Mala Publications, Calcutta, p. 21; Pal, Nripendra Nath, *Kochbehar-Raj Abong Raj Antapur* in Bhattacharyya, P. K. (ed), '*The Kingdom of Kamata- Kochbehar in Historical Perspective*', Ratna Prakashan and NBU, 2000. , Nripendra Nath Pal writes:

“কোচবিহারের সিংহাসনে পিতা বিশ্বসিংহের অবর্তমানে নরসিংহের বসার কথা । সে কারণে যুবরাজের সিংহাসনে আরোহণের দিন ভানুমতি দেখলেন তাঁর স্বামীর রাজা হবার সম্ভাবনা নেই, তখন তিনি নরসিংহকে সবিনয়ে স্বরণ করিয়ে দেন যে — বিয়ের পর প্রণাম করার সময় আপনি আমাকে ‘রাজমহিষী ভব’ বলে আশীর্বাদ করেছিলেন, কিন্তু আজ তিনি রাজা হলে সেই আশীর্বাদ রক্ষা হয় না, এই কথা স্বরণ করিয়ে দেবার সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই নরসিংহ সত্য পালনে সিংহাসনের অধিকার ছাড়েন এবং নরনারায়নকে রাজা করে নিজের প্রতিশ্রুতি রক্ষা করেন”।

85. DRV, Buranjis and other sources recorded that Naranarayan came to the throne by defeating his elder brother Nara Singha.
86. J. P. Wade, '*An account of Assam*', p. 206, cited in D. Nath, op. cit., p. 143.
87. D. Nath, op. cit., p. 143.
88. DRV.v., 289, however, it did not mention the name of the nurse. However, Khan Chaudhuri A. A, op. cit., p. 99, recorded the names of the nurse and the massager without mentioning his source.
89. Khan Chaudhuri A. A, op. cit., p. 99.
90. Ibid.
91. *The Katha Guru Charita*, p.31; *Daityari*, 36; *Ramananda*, 117.
92. M. Neog, op. cit p.94. He refers to the works like *Harischandra-upakhyan*, 437; *Rukmini-harana-Kavya*, 635; *Kirtanaghosh*, 1924.
93. *The Katha Guru Charita*, p. 48-ff. It records a story about it. On their repeated failure to build an embankment on the Tembubani River, the Bhuyans of the region, concluded that the work could be done only if a women of chastity would bring water from the Brahmaputra on a sieve and offer it there. When

other women in the area refused to do so, only *Radhika* alias *Yogamaya*, a Kaivarta woman did it very confidently by amazing all others and thereby proved her chastity.

94. Radhakrishna Das Bairagi: *Gosani Mangal*, Published by Brajachandra Majumdar, (Calcutta 1306 B.S.), 2nd edition edited by Nripendra Nath Pal, (Calcutta, Anima Prakashani, 1399 B. S.), pp.112-114.
95. *The Katha Guru Charita*, p. 282.
96. Mahanta, A., '*Sankaradevar Dristit Nari O Sankaradevar Chintat Pragatisilata*', Dibrugarh, 1982, p. 19.
97. Kalita, R. C. Assam Association: A Study in Regionalism, 1903-35, unpublished ICHR Research Project, 2003, pp. 13-15.
98. DRV, vv. 52-73, *Kamarupa Buranji*, p. 10, DAB. , p.127, Rajoupakhyan, pp.6-8.
99. DRV, v. 114.
100. *Koch Behar Jelar Purakriti*, p. 14.
101. Cited in D. Nath, '*History of Koch the Kingdom-1515-1515*', p.38.
102. Gait, p.50; Assam Buranji of Gunaviram Barua, p.41;
103. DRV, vv. 312-313.
104. DRV, vv. 337-338 .
105. M. Neog, '*Sankaradeva and his times : Early history of the Vaishnava faith and movement in Assam*', Gauhati University , Gauhati , 1965 , p. 378; S. N. Sharma , *The Neo-vaishnavite movement and the Satra Institution of Assam* , Gauhati University , Gauhati , 1966, p. 100 ; B. K. Baruah *Asamar Loka Samkriti* , Gauhati, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 1967, p. 159 .
106. N. N. Vasu; op. cit. Vol. II, p. 108.
107. Ibid, p. 110.
108. Ibid, p. 112.
109. For example; Naranarayan during his Assam expedition in 1562 established a temple of Goddess Durga at Chandikabehar and introduced a cultural code for the people of the tribal origin. The Mech, the Kachari and the Koches of tribal fold to the north of the *Gohai Kamal Aali* will follow their tribal customs to worship.
110. DRV, Introduction by N. C. sharma, p.15.
111. P. C. Chaudhury: '*The History of civilization of the people of Assam to the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD*', *Spectrum* publications, Gauhati, 1987, reprint, p. 334. Although the

book is about Assam but the system of jhum cultivation among the tribal was same throughout the whole of northeast. .

112. Amalendu Guha: *Medieval and Early Colonial Assam: Society, Polity and Economy*, Calcutta, K.P. Bagchi & Co., p. 12.
113. Cited in D. Nath, op. cit. p. 147.
114. Ghulam Hussain Salim, '*Riyaz-us-Salati'n*', Eng.Tr. Abdus Salam, 1975, (reprint) p. 13.
115. DRV, vv. 257, informs us that Biswa Singha appointed his son Gahain kamal in charge of *Ali* (roads) and *pukurs* (ponds) construction, who constructed *Gahain Kamal Ali* and many ponds during the reign of Naranarayan.
116. The Kacharis knew the technique of making dams on streams for irrigation and they were under the control during the reign of Naranarayan. (A. Guha, '*Ahom Migration : its impacts on rice economy of Medieval Assam*' *Artha vijnana* , Vol. 9. 1967, Issue No. 2 , p. 144.
117. H. N. Chaudhury, op. cit. pp. 165-68.
118. DRV, v. 261.
119. *Rajvansavali*, f. 9.
120. DRV, vv. 182-3.
121. DRV, v. 264.
122. DRV . v. 53 and some others Burunjis also.
123. The *Yogini Tantra*, II, patal V, vv. 277-279, 315-319.
124. H. Blochmann: *Koch Bihar, Koch hajo and Assam in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries*, JASB, 1872 p. 66; Ghulam Hussain Salim op. cit. p. 13.
125. Cited in D. Nath, *History of Koch the Kingdom-1515-1515*, p. 139; Stephen Cacella, a Jesuit traveler from Portugal, also mentioned beautiful garden in front of king's palace. C. Wessels: *Early Jesuit Travelers in Central Asia* (A.D.1603-1721), reprint ed., Madras, Asian Educational Service, 1992, pp. 124-27.
126. Khan Chaudhuri A. A. op. cit. p. 57 .He mentioned varieties of bamboo made utensils.
127. J. P. Wade; '*An Account of Assam*' edited by Benudhar Sharma, Lakhimpur, 1927, p.186. The use of bamboo made bow and arrow among the tribal communities are very common even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
128. William Foster; '*Early Travels in India*, ed. Reprint, Delhi, p.25.

129. D. Nath, op. cit. p.150.
130. V. Ball, (ed.), *Tavernier's travels in India*, Vol. II, London, 1925, pp. 281f. cited in D. Nath, op. cit. p. 150 .
131. DRV, v. 263.
132. Hari Narayan Dutta Barua: *Chitra Bhagavat*, Nalbari, Assam, `1949, p. 1.
133. Jadav Chandra Chakrabarty cited in R.K. Barman, *From tribalism to state*, Delhi, 2007, p.126.
134. Haliram Mohanto: *Sankar Charita*, Sualkuchi, 1925, vv. 3506-07, p. 275.
135. Ibid. vv. 3509-10. pp. 275-76. ; *The Katha Guru Charit* p. 267, cited in D. Nath , op. cit. p.151.
136. Daityari Thakur: *Mahapurusha Sri Sankaradeva, Aru Sri Madhavadeva charita* by, (ed), H.N. Datta Baruah, Nalbari, 509 Sankarabda (1978). v. 271; *The Katha Guru Charit* p. 267, cited in D. Nath , op. cit. p. 151.
137. D. Nath, op. cit. p.152.
138. M. Martin, *Eastern India*, reprint ed, Delhi, 1976, vol. 5., *Rangpur and Assam*, p. 553; Haliram Dekial Phukan, *Assam Buranji*, edited by J. M. Bhattacharyya, Gauhati, 1369BS. p. 88.
139. H.N. choudhary, op. cit. p. 154; Khan Chaudhuri A. A. op. cit. p. 63.
140. *The Katha Guru Charit*, p. 60.
141. Pandit Sreejut Hemchandra Goswami (ed): *Purani Assam Buranji* , reprint , 1977, Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti , Gauhati, p. 53 ; D. Nath , op. cit. p. 153.
142. DRV,v. 680, mentions that Raghudeva appointed the Stone engravers (Silakutis) a temple to constructs
143. DRV, v. 260.
144. D. Nath, op. cit. p. 151.
145. Ibid.
- 146 . With other articles, *Jakoi* (a kind of instrument made of bamboo for catching fish) were also sent to the Ahom court by king Naranarayan at the time of Peace Proposals. *Historical Letters of the Ahom Period*, a collection of 44 letters exchanged between the Koch and the Ahom kings, Transcript No.18, Vol.V, part VI, DHAS, Gauhati.
147. DRV, vv. 259 & 260.
148. H.N. Choudhary, op. cit. p. 191.

149. Ibid, p.156.
150. DRV, v. 261.
151. H.N. Chaudhary, op. cit. p. 155.
152. DRV: v. 260.
153. R.K. Barman, op. cit., p. 128.
154. Cited in D. Nath, op. cit. p. 152.
155. U.N. Gohain, '*Assam under the Ahoms*', Jorhat, 1942, p. 202, cited in D. Nath, op. cit. p. 152.
156. *Rajoupakhyan*, p-112.
157. Haliram Dekial Phukan: op. cit., pp. 88-91.
158. DRV: vv. 259-264.
159. Daityari Thakur: '*Mahapurush Sri Sankaradeva and Madhavadevar Jivan Charita*', edited by H. N. Dutta Barua, Nalbari, 1978, vv. 1250-1251.
160. DRV. v. 263.
161. Nicholas Rhodes, *Koch Behar coins used in Bhutan*, in P. K. Bhattacharyya edited *The Kingdom of Kamata Koch Behar in Historical Perspective*, North Bengal University, 2000, pp. 148-55.
162. Indirect information supports this view.
163. Minhaj -uddin Siraj, *Tabaqat-I-Nasiri*, trans in English by Major H. G. Raverty, vol-1, reprint 1970, p. 567f.
164. Ibid.
165. Phanindranath Chakraborty, *A survey of Indo-Tibetan Trade and Commerce*, in *The Historical Review*, Vol. II, No. II, 1987, pp. 89-98.
166. J. H. Ryley, *Ralph Fitch, England's Pioneer in India, Burma, etc*, London, 1899, p. 112.
167. Phanindranath Chakraborty: op. cit. p. 97.
168. K. K. Bose: *Account of Bootan*, in H. K. Kuloy (ed.): *Political Missions to Bootan*, reprint ed., New Delhi, 1972, pp. 339-58; George Bogley, op. cit., p. 51.
169. Perberton, Captain Richard Boileau, *Report on the Eastern frontier of british India*, reprint, DHAS, Gauhati, 1966, p. 118f; Ananda Chandra ghosh: *Cooch Beharer Itihas*, edited by Ananda Gopal Ghosh and Narayan Saha, Darjeeling, *Uttarbanga Itihas Prakashan Parishad*, 1990, p. 8.
170. Perberton: op. cit. pp. 142-44; D. Nath, op. cit. p. 154; R.K. Barman: op. cit. p. 135.

171. Phanindranath Chakraborty: op. cit. p. 92; D. Nath, op. cit. p. 54.
172. K. K. Bose: op. cit., p. 350.
173. Phanindranath Chakraborty: op. cit. p. 90; D. Nath, op. cit. p. 154.
174. *Guru Charita*, v. 3488; N. N. Vasu, op. cit. p. 105.
175. J. H. Ryley, op. cit. p. 111.
176. H.N. Chaudhury, op. cit. p. 192.
177. Haliram Dekial Phukan: op. cit., p. 105.
178. C. Wessels, op. cit., pp. 127-28.
179. Minhaj - uddin Siraj, op. cit. p. 567f refers to the Bhutanese *Tangan* in Lakhanawati, which brought from Bhutan through the Koch kingdom.
180. Krishnadas Kabiraj: *Sri Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., Calcutta, Basumati Sahitya Mandir, 1386B.S., p. 8 refers that *Bhot Kam̄bal* was very popular in Bengal.
181. D. Nath, op. cit., p. 155.
182. D. Nath, op. cit., pp. 62 & 154.
183. SMJC, op. cit. pp. 25-33; D. Nath, op. cit., pp. 62 & 154.
184. Jadav Chandra Chakraborty: *Koch Biharer Itihas* reprinted in Nripendranath Pal (ed.): *Bishaya Cooch Behar*, Calcutta, 1994, pp. 31-32.
185. M. Neog: *Sankaradeva and his times*, reprint, Delhi, 1985, p. 79.
186. C. Wessels, op. cit., p. 28.
187. H.N. Chaudhury, op. cit. p. 123. He also mentioned some *Bandars* situated on big roads.
188. The *Katha Guru Charita*, op. cit. p. 307. It informs us that big traders had capability to invest as much as Rs. 4 lakhs.
189. D. Nath, op. cit., p. 155; R.K. Barman, op. cit., p. 137.
190. M. Neog, op. cit., p. 78.
191. Ibid.
192. M. Neog, op. cit., p. 79.
193. The *Katha Guru Charita*, op. cit., p. 85; *Guru Charita*, vv. 2751-2836, pp. 546-63; Pranab Kumar Bhattacharyya: *Aitihāsik Prekshapate Kamata-Koch Rajvamsa O Tar Kicchhu Samashya*, in his self-edited: *Kamata-Cooch Behar in historical Perspective*, Calcutta, 2000, p. 45.
194. The *Katha Guru Charita*, op. cit., p. 107.
195. D. Nath, op. cit., p-155; R.K. Barman, op. cit., p. 137.

196. M. Neog, op. cit., 110.
197. Pranab Kmar Bhattacharyya, op. cit., p. 45.
198. *The Katha Guru Charita*, op. cit., p.87.
199. D. Nath, op. cit., p.156.
200. *The Katha Guru Charita*, op. cit., pp.80, 85, 86, 545 and 560. Also, see M. Neog, op. cit., p. 78 and D. Nath, op. cit., p.157.
201. Khan Chaudhuri A. A. op. cit. pp. 43-44.
202. William Robinson: *A descriptive Account of Assam*, reprint, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 245ff.
203. D. Nath, op. cit., p.157.
204. Ryley, op. cit., pp. 98-100; Phanindranath Chakraborty, writes, from Agra Fitch, "came to-Bengal via Allahabad, Benaras and Patna with a fleet of 180 boats , laden with merchandize. He came to Maldah and thence at Cooch Behar" op. cit., p.90.
205. Wessels, op. cit., p.128f.
206. J. P. Singh, *Monetary development of early Assam*, Jorhat (Assam), 1989, p.20.
207. N. G. Rhodes and S. K. Bose: *The coins of Assam*, vol. I, Dhubri, 2003, p. 27.
208. Ryley, op. cit., pp. 118. Fitch states that besides accepting it as money, people also used to eat it.
209. N. G. Rhodes and S. K. Bose, op. cit., pp. 57-64. Cowri or couch shell was in use as a common medium of exchange in Bengal and Assam from the early medieval period. In the Koch kingdom, during the reign of King Naranarayan , cowries were largely utilized as money for local transactions. Even after the introduction of Narayani Tanka, cowries remained as medium of exchange for local transactions.
210. J. M. Bhattacharyya , op. cit., pp.77-79; Hiteswar Barbaruah, *Ahomar Din*, APB, Gouhati, 1981, p.140;Gait op. cit., p.99; quoted in idid.,p.143.
211. *The Katha Guru Charita*, pp. 79, 128 &188. Gupta-type gold coins of the Bharman dynasty had been discovered from Paglatek, a place situated on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, and 15 km west of Goalpara. The copper coins of the Mleccha dynasty of 9<sup>th</sup> century have been discovered from Dhulapadung, near Tezpur and other places. N. G. Rhodes and S. K. Bose, op. cit., pp.12-4 Haliram Dekial Phukan , *Assam buranji* , edited by J. M. Bhattacharyya , Gauhati, 1369BS. p. 88.
212. The Silimpur inscription of Jayapala (11<sup>th</sup> century), refers to Gold coins but such coins yet to be discovered (see. Mahadev Chakraborty: *Assamer Itihas* ,Vol. I ,

- Calcutta, 2007, p. 63. ) Moreover, silver coins specially the coins of kacharies, Sultani coins of sikander shah(1356-89) and Hussain Shah (1493-1519) were also circulated in the area. Mahadev Chakraborty, op. cit., p.68.
213. Mahadev Chakraborty, op. cit., p.63.
214. The Raja Vansavali of Durgadas Majumder, mentioned that Biswa Singha issued coins in his 13<sup>th</sup> regnal year and he presented a latter with five hundred horses and five hundred coins to Ahom king Suhungmung in saka 1419(1497);. *Assam Buranji* of Gunabhiram Barua, recorded that Biswa Singha was the first king of the dynasty to issue coins and he also credited to have repaired the Kamakhya temple and having placed a gold coin in between each set of two bricks. Khan Chaudhuri A. A. op. cit. p.281; P. K. Bhattacharyya, *JNSI*, XXXIII, I, pp.42ff; and *Indian Studies Past & Present*, X, No. 3 (1969), p.275, f.ñ.3., and others.
215. N. G. Rhodes and S. K. Bose: *Coinage of Cooch behar*, Dhubri, (Library of Numismatic Studies), 1999, pp.74-85.
216. Pratip Kumar Mitra and Sutapa Sinha (ed.): *Coins of Mediaeval India*, Calcutta, Books & Books, 1997, pp. 278-79.
217. Ibid & N. G. Rhodes and S. K. Bose, op. cit., pp. 74-85.
218. This is why some scholars assumed the date 1555 as the date accession of Naranarayan. However, this view does not match with other sources.
219. The DRV, vv. 819 & 839; Kamarupa Buranji, p.12.
220. N. G. Rhodes and S. K. Bose: *Coinage of Cooch Behar*, Dhubri, (Library of Numismatic Studies), 1999, pp. 9-10.
221. Ibid. pp. 27-28.
222. *JASB*, Vol-LXIV, PT-1, 1695; National Library , Kolkata ; *J.A.S.B.*, Vol , VI, No. 4 , p-159 , cited in 'Koch Beharer Itihas' of Khan Chaudhuri A. Ahamed,op. cit., pp.121-123 and A .W.Botham, 'Catalogue of the Provincial coin Cabine's, Assam, Allahabad, 1930, p. 544. cited in D. Nath op. cit. p.79fn.
223. The DRV. vv. 379-487; Gait, op. cit., 52-54; R.K. Barman, op. cit., pp.84-85.
224. Ibid. vs. 688.
225. A. Guha, 'The Medieval Economy of Assam ' , in 'The Cambridge Economic History of India ' (1200-1750) Vol. I , (ed) Tapan Roy Choudury and Irfan Habib , Cambridge university Press , 1982 , p. 488 .

226. D. Neog: *New Light on History of Asamiya Literature*, Beauty Publications, Dispur, (Assam), 1962, p.131.
227. N. N. Majumdar: *A Study of Tribe-Caste continuum and the process of Sanskritization among the Boro Speaking tribes of the Garo Hills* in K. S. Singh (ed.): *The Tribal situation in India*, New Delhi, (Motilal Banarsidas) , 1996, pp.263-70.
228. D. Neog, op. cit., p. 122.
229. We have several references of using both the languages in the royal activities. For example, the language of the letters, which exchanged between King Naranarayan and the Ahom king were written in local language and the language of the Kamakhya Temple Inscription and Haragriva Madhava Temple Inscription were inscribed in Sanskrit language.
230. S. N. Sen op. cit., described the language of the letters, which exchanged between King Naranarayan and the Ahom king as early Bengali language and Suniti Kumar chaterjee, Sukumar Sen supported this view.
231. D. Neog, op. cit., p. 122; B. K. Barua : *History of Assamese Literature* ,Sahitya Academi, Delhi, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1961 and Nagen Saikia: *Medieval Assamese Literature*, in K. Ayyappapanicker (ed.) *Medieval Indian Literature : an anthology* , Vol., 3, Sahitya Academi, Delhi, pp.4-19.
232. One thing is to be noted here to find out the roots of these controversies and for that, we are to go back to the period of songs and aphorisms, commonly known as *Charyas* or *Charyapadas* composed by *Bhuddist Siddhacharyas* (8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries) and discovered by M. M. Hara Prasad Sastri of Bengal in 1916. Not only Bengali and Assamese scholars but also the scholars of Maithili and Oriya claim these songs to be the early specimens of their languages. These claims proved that these songs posses some common characteristics of these four languages. Sastri's observation that the language *Charyas* or *Charyapadas* can be called the Sandhya Bhasha is very meaningful. The language upholds the formative characteristics of all these eastern Indian languages and its language is equivocal in character, which matched with all the languages. Under this situation, it better to assume that the language of *Charyas* or *Charyapadas* is the early specimens of both the languages i.e. Bengali and Assamese, for the scripts of the both languages is almost same with minor differences. (See Nagen Saikia, op. cit., pp.4-19.)

233. Hiuen Tsiang (Yuan Chwang)'s, 'Si-u-ki', edited by David, Rhyas and Bhushel S. W., 2 vols. London, 1905, reprint, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1961, pp.186-192 and in T. Watters, 'On Yuan Chwan's travels in India (A.D.29-645)', , II, p.186.
234. Cited in Sukhbilas Burma: *Socio-cultural facets of the History of Kamata Koch Behar*, in Pranab Kmar Bhattacharyya (ed.): *Kamata-Cooch Behar in historical Perspective*, Calcutta, 200, p. 92.
235. Ibid.
- 236 Ibid.
237. Historical Letters of the Ahom Period, a collection of 44 letters exchanged between the Koch and the Ahom kings, Transcripts no. 18, Vol. V, Part VI, DRAS, Gauhati; Khan Chaudhuri A. Ahamed, op. cit., pp.104-5.
238. The DRV. vv., 265-268 & 291-270.
239. Ms. Maharaja Vansavali, f.9.
240. P. C. Choudhury, 'A Catalogue of the Sanskrita manuscripts of the DHAS', DHAS, Gauhati, 1961, p.58; Khan Chaudhuri A. Ahamed, op. cit., p.131.
241. Khan Chaudhuri A. Ahamed, op. cit., p.130.
242. DRV, vv., 604-610.
243. The *Katha Guru Charita*, pp.237f, 245f; Daityari Thakur, vv., 815-38.
244. D. Neog op. cit., p.135.
245. D. Nath, op. cit., p.178.
246. In his translation of the book X of the Bhagavata Puran, Ananta Kandali writes that he got this title for his mastery over debate. Bhagavata, Book X, v. 17462.
247. *Pitambar Siddhantavagis: Markandeya Puran*, Ms. (N.B.S.L.Ms.no.08 and 13), f.1a, 1b. Cited in R. K. Barman, op. cit., p.184.
248. *Pitambar Siddhantavagis: the Bhagavata Puran (Dasham Skandha (Book X)*, Ms. (N.B.S.L.Ms.no.58),
249. N. N. Vasu, op. cit., pp.58-9; N. K. Basu; *Assam in the Ahom Age*, Calcutta, 1970, p.275.
250. Ajay Kumar Chakraborty: *Literature in the Kamata-Koch Behar Raj Darbar*, Dhubri, 1964, p.85.
251. Rama Saraswati: Pusharan and Nanaparva, vv. 3936-3937; B. K. Barua , op. cit., p.54.
252. B. K. Barua, op. cit., pp. 54-5; R. K. Barman, op. cit., p.185.

253. H. C. Goswami, op. cit. pp.14, 38 and 76ff;. B. K. Barua, op. cit., p.56.
254. Ananta Kandali; the Mahabharata (Rajasuya), Ms. (NBSL.Ms.no.101); Kavishekhar, '*Kirata Parva*', Ms. (NBSL.Ms.no. 90) and B. K. Barua, op. cit., p.59.
255. B. K. Barua, op. cit.,p. 59.
256. Ibid.
257. Ajay Kumar Chakraborty, op. cit., 85.
258. B. K. Barua, op. cit., p. 59; M. Neog: *Sankaradeva and his times*, reprint, Delhi, 1985, pp. 112-114. Neog identified the year of migration 1546.
259. M. Neog, op. cit., p.160-61.

**A) In Bara Bhuyan territories (up to 1516):**

i) Non-Bhagavata group:-

1. *Hahischandra-Upakhyan (Markandēya-Purana)*.

2. *Bhakti-Pradipa (Garura-Purana)*

3. *Kirtana-Ghosh: 'Uresa-Varnan' section, (Brahma-Purana)*

ii)4. *Rukmini-Upakhyan Kavya (Mixed breed of Harivansa and Bhagavata- Purana)*

iii) Lyrics:-

5. *Bargitas*

iv) First group of *Bhagavata* tales, taken from outside Book X:-

6. *Ajamil-Upakhyana (Book VI)*

7. *Amrita-Mathana (Book VIII)*

8. *Kirtana-Ghosh: Ajamil-Upakhyana (Book VI), Prahlada Charita (Books III, VII), Haramohana, Balichalana, Gajendra-Upakhyana (BookVIII) and Dhyana-varnana sections.*

iv) 9. *Gunamala, ii-vi.*

**B) In the Ahom kingdom (1516-1546):**

i) Presentation arguments in favour of the *Bhakti* cult:-

1. *Kirtana-Ghosh: Pasanda-Mardana and Namaparadha sections (Bhagavata, Padma and Brihana-Naradiya Puranas, Visnu-Dharmottara and Suta-Sanhita).*

2. *Patni-Prasada-Nata (Bhagavata-Purana, X)*

ii) About early life of *Krishna* from *Bhagavata-Purana, X:*

3. *Kirtana-Ghosh: Sisu-lila, Rasa-Krira, Kansavadha, Gopi-Uddhava –Sanvada, Kujirvanchha-Purana, and Akrurar vanchha Purana Section.*

The writings *Bargitas* also continued in this period.

**C) In the Koch kingdom (1546-1569):**

i) Second group of *Bhagavata* tales, taken from outside Book X:-

1. *Bali-Chalana* (Book VIII)

2. *Anadi-Patana* (Book III, *Vamana-Purana*)

ii) *Bhagavata* tales, taken from Books X (Uttarardha), XI, and XII:

3. *Kirtana-Ghosh: Jarasandha-yuddha, Kalayavana vadha, Muchukunda-Stuti, Syamanta -Harana, Narada Krishna Darshana, Vipra-Puttra-Anayana, Daivakir-Puttra- Anayana, Veda- Stuti, Lilamala, Rukminir Prema-Kalaha, Bhrgi- Pariksha, Srikrishnar Vaikuntha-Prayana, Chaturvinsati-Avatara-Varnana and Tatparya section.*

260. Lakshminath Bezboroa: Sankaradeva, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Jorhat, p. 142

261. M. Neog, op. cit., pp.161-2. He refers as many as 29 *Kirtana Ghoshes*: 1. 'Uresa-Vaman' (*Brahma-Purana*), 2. *Ajamil-Upakhyana* (Book VI), 3. *Prahlada Charita* (Books III, VII), 4. *Haramohana*, 5. *Balichalana*, 6. *Gajendra-Upakhyana* (Book VIII), 7. *Dhyana-varnana*, 8. *Pasanda-Mardana*, 9. *Namaparadha* sections (*Bhagavata, Padma* and *Brihana-Naradiya Puranas, Visnu-Dharmottara and Suta-Sanhita*), 10. *Sisu-lila*, 11. *Rasa-Krira*, 12. *Kansavadha*, 13. *Gopi-Uddhava-Sanvada*, 14. *Kujirvanchha-Purana*, 15. *Akrurar vanchha Purana*, 16. *Jarasandha-yuddha*, 17. *Kalayavana vadha*, 18. *Muchukunda-Stuti*, 19. *Syamanta-Harana*, 20. *Narada Krishna Darshana*, 21. *Vipra-Puttra-Anayana*, 22. *Daivakir-Puttra-Anayana*, 23. *Veda- Stuti*, 24. *Lilamala*, 25. *Rukminir Prema-Kalaha*, 26. *Bhrgu- Pariksha*, 27. *Srikrishnar Vaikuntha-Prayana*, 28. *Chaturvinsati-Avatara-Varnana* 29. *Tatparya* sections. (serial no. 16 to 29 from *Bhagavata* tales, taken from Books X (Uttarardha), XI, and XII) .

262. The story of 'Uresa-Varnan' taken from the *Brahma-Purana*.

263. B. K. Barua, op. cit., p. 23; M. Neog, op. cit., pp.161-2.

264. B. K. Barua, op. cit., pp. 23-24.

265. The *Katha Guru Charita*, pp. 104f; B. K. Barua, op. cit., p. 24.

266. M. Neog, op. cit., pp.182-209.

267. The *Katha Guru Charita*, pp.185-87; M. Neog, op. cit., pp.197.

268. *Ibid.* pp.184.

269. M. Neog, op. cit., pp.197-207.

270. B. K. Barua, op. cit., p. 50; D. Nath, op. cit., pp.180-1.

271. DRV. v., 609.
272. B. K. Barua, op. cit., pp.131-32.
273. Ajay Kumar Chakraborty, op. cit., p.100.
274. D. Sarma, op. cit., p.85.
275. *The Katha Guru Charita*, pp.3278; M. Neog, op. cit., 95..
276. Ibid.
277. Ibid.
278. M. Neog, op. cit., 96; D. Nath, op. cit., pp.176.
279. Daityari Thakur: *Mahapurusa Sankaradeva and Madhavadevar Jivana-charita*, (published by Haribilas Gupta), Calcutta printing press, 1900, vs.951.
280. DRV. Vv. 265-68.
281. *The Katha guru Charita*, pp.220; M. Neog, (Ed), *Sri Guru charita by Ramananda Dvija*, Nal bari, 1957, v.1364.
282. M. Neog, Ibid.
283. *The Kalika Purana*, Ch. 71.
284. DRV. vv. 125-28.
285. DRV. vv. 326-27.
286. D. Nath, op. cit., p.183.
287. M. Neog, op. cit., p.279; D. Nath, op. cit., p.183. *The Katha Guru Charita* of Daityari notes that Mathuradasa Budha ata was one of the Palis of the chorus of Tatikuchi in Madhavadeva's days; that one Laksmana was its Oja, and that Madhava, son of Laruwa Rama, was the Daina pali.
288. R. K. Barman, op. cit., p.186.
289. M. Neog, op. cit., p.280.
290. M. Neog, op. cit., p.277; D. Nath, op. cit., p.183.
291. M. Neog, op. cit., p.281.
292. M. Neog, op. cit., p.287.
293. M. Neog, op. cit., pp.288-292.
294. M. Neog, op. cit., p.277.
295. M. Neog, op. cit., pp.294-300.
296. Ibid.
297. D. Nath, op. cit., p.184.
298. D. Nath, op. cit., p.185.

299. Ibid.
300. The *Hayagriva Madhava* temple Inscription. See D. Nath, op. cit., appendix, E, p.211. However, the DRV refers to another artisan named Barkath Sumaru, DRV, v. 679.
301. E.T. Dalton; 'notes on assam temple ruins', JASB, 1855, Vol. XXIV, no. 1, p.19. Cited in D. Nath, op. cit., p.19
302. Ibid., p. 20.
303. According to the Ms. *Rajoupakhyana*, King Naranarayan rebuilt the Baneswara Siva temple which had a remote antiquity, and named the as 'Gard Sandara'. Prannarayan (1632-1665) had again rebuilt it in the present structure. *Koch Behar Jelar Pura Kriti*, p.53.
304. R. K. Barman, op. cit., p.176.
305. *Pachyasasanavai*, op. cit., p.6 ; D. Nath, op. cit., appendix, F, p.212.
306. DRV, vv. 208-9.307.
307. Although there is Kamteswaridevi temple near Koch Behar town, but the temple belongs to later period. (Personal visit).
308. DRV. v. 544. In this connection it should be mentioned here that D. Nath's supposition, that ghee baked bricks were used in every building might not be correct, for the DRV refers to a particular case i.e. the construction of the Kamakhya temple. Therefore, it is not correct to hold the view in general.
309. D. Nath, op. cit., p.188.
310. M. Neog, op. cit., p.309 ; D. Nath, op. cit., p.188.
311. R. K. Barman, op. cit., p.175.
312. D. Nath, op. cit., p.189.
313. The *Katha Guru Charita*, 353-ff; M. Neog, op. cit., p.307.
314. Ibid., pp.187-8.
315. S. K. Chatterjee, op. cit., 59.
316. JARS, vol. II, p.42.
317. The strongest connection with north Bihar and mid India is proved by the facts that Biswa Singha had many wives from that places , Naranarayan and Chilarai had their education at Benaras in grammer, the Puranas, Sruti, Smritis, Mimamsa and Atharvanic military practices under Brahmananda Sannyasi , a great Sanskrita scholar. Kanthabhusan of the Maguri village near Hajo went to Benaras for

advanced education in the Vedanta under a scholar named Brahmananda/ Rama-Bhatta.

318. M. Neog, op. cit., p.303.

319. There is great controversy regarding the date of this manuscript. Moti Chandra places the work in 17th or early 18th century A.D. because of the style of the paintings. Karl Khandalawala supports the view of Motichandra. M. Neog expressing similar views says that the original copy bears the date Samvat Saka 1461 (A.D. 1539), which seems to be too early; the work may suitably be dated to 17th century A.D. and he further says that the original manuscript was written earlier. The present date of the manuscript falls in the lifetime of Sri Sankaradeva. Therefore, if we are to accept the date, then we must assume the work as one done when the great saint was alive. Moreover, Maha-Purnan, a manuscript dated 1540, from Palam near Delhi and Mrigavati, in which the north Indian style of miniature paintings of early 16th century can be seen, are stylistically close to the manuscript of the Bhagavata paintings.

320. M. Neog, op. cit., 306.

321. Cited in M. Neog, op. cit., p.307.

322. M. Neog, op. cit., 304.

323. *The Katha Guru Charita*, 210.

324. A specimen, believed to be a part of this work, is at the Association pour l'Etude et la Documentation des Textiles d'Asie collection at Paris (inv. no. 3222). The *vastra*, commissioned by Chilarai, was woven by 12 master weavers in Barpeta under the supervision of Sankaradeva probably between 1565 and 1568. It was housed in the Madhupur satra but it disappeared at some point. It is believed this cloth made its way to Tibet and from there to its present place. (See Barman, Sivnath: *An Unsung Colossus: An Introduction to the Life and Works of Sankaradeva*, Guahati, Forum for Sankaradeva Studies, (1999) and Crill, Rosemary : "Vrindavani Vastra: Figured Silks from Assam", *Hali* 14(2),76-83 (1992).).

325. D. Nath, op. cit., p.190.

326. M. Neog, op. cit., pp. 306-7.

327. *Ibid.*, p.307.

328. The paintings of Assam may be divided into two broad schools viz., Tai-Ahom school and Assam school. Again, the Assam school of painting may again be sub-divided into two styles viz., Sattriya and Royal. The royal school developed in the late period.

: xxx :