



## PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY OF KAMRUPA AND THE MOTHER GODDESS KAMAKHYA

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### Abstract

The present paper made an attempt to explain the philosophy of history of Kamrup and the mother Goddess Kamakhya in brief. The history of kamrupa is as old as Naraka on the one hand and closely associated to Kamadeva the lord of love on the other hand. *Kamarup* hinges the region where *Kama*, i.e., Kamadev regained his original form or shape, i.e., *rupa*. Even Kamakhya is the Goddess of sexual desire or aspiration as the *Purana* like *Kalika* links the origin of the word *Kamakhya* with the *genital organ* of **Sati**. Of 51 different places of India, Kamakhya is an important place as Siva throws down the sacred genital organ of Sati on *Kamagiri*, i.e., the Nilachal hill near Guwahati, and the place was thenceforth held sacred to Kamakhya. Thus, in a nutshell, it can be said that Kamrupa is both historically as well as religiously a holy place. It is known by the world as *Devi Kamakhya*. This is the reason why the present paper is important.

**Key words:** *Devi, Kamakhya, Kamrupa, Sati, Siva.*

If we look back to the history of present day Assam, a state of India, the name Kamrupa has been occurring in different places. In the *Kalika Purana* it is state that immediately after Naraka of Mithila became king and was placed in charge of the goddess Kamakhya, the name of the land was changed from Pragjyotisa to Kamrupa. The term Kamrupa (Kamakhya) symbolized a new

cult, and in exaltation of it the land itself was rechristened.<sup>1</sup> According to Kakati the word ‘*Kamakhya*’ has been derived from an Austric formation *Kamoi* (demon) in old Khmer, *Kamoit* (devil) in Cham, *Kamet* (corpse) in Khasi, *Kamui* (grave) or *Komouch* (corpse) in Santali.<sup>2</sup> Equally, B. P. Rabha said that ‘*Kamakhya*’ is a sanskritised form of *Kamakhs*’ or ‘*Kamalakhi*’, the female deity of the Mongoloid tribes of ancient Assam. The traditional origin of the name Kamarupa, myth-logically, is connected with **Kamadeva**, the lord of love. What our **Mythology** state that when **Sati** died of vexation at the discourtesy shown to her husband Siva by her father Daksha, **Siva**, overcome by grief, wandered about the world carrying her dead body on his head. In order to put a stop to his penance, Vishnu followed him and lopped away the body piecemeal with his discuss. It fell to earth in fifty-one (51) different places, and wherever each piece fell, the ground was held to be sacred. Her organs fell on *Kamagiri*, i.e., the Nilachal hill near Guwahati, and the place was thenceforth held sacred to *Kamakhya*, the Goddess of sexual desire. As Siva still continued to do penance, the other Gods became afraid that he would thereby acquire universal power, and accordingly dispatched Kamadev, the Indian Cupid (the God of *love*), to make him fall in love again, and thereby break his penance. He succeeded in his mission, but so enraged was Siva (the great God) at the result, that he burnt him to ashes by a fiery glance from the eye in the centre of his forehead. Kamadev eventually recovered his original form (*rupa*) and the land where this took place known as Kamarupa.<sup>3</sup> According to mythology, therefore, the word *Kamarup* means the province where *Kama* (Kamadev) regained his *rupa*, i.e., his life and his original form (*Kama + rupa = Kamarup*). Like mythology, the *Kalika Purana* links the origin of the word *Kamakhya* with the *genital organ* of **Sati** which

might also be applicable to the word *Kamarup*. Such descriptions, according to Choudhury, have a bearing on the pre-Aryan cult of the phallus, which revived new orientation with the introduction of Aryan culture.<sup>4</sup>

It is worthy to note here that the earliest epigraphic reference to Kamrupa is mentioned for the first time in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta (fourth century A.D.).<sup>5</sup> There is no question of doubt that in the classical Sanskrit literature Pragjyotisa and Kamrupa appears side by side, namely, Kalidasa. In the description of Raghu's *dig-vijaya* in the *Raghuvamsa* the hero first came to Pragjyotisa and then to Kamrupa after crossed the Lauhitya valley.<sup>6</sup> In his *Vaijayanti*, Yadavaprakasa (c. 1000 A.D.) states Pragjyotisa and Kamrupa: *Pragjyotisa Kamarupa pragjalika*.<sup>7</sup> Equally, the Jaina Lexicographer Hemchandra (c. 1200 A.D.) says, "the Pragjyotisa are the Kamrupas."<sup>8</sup> Purusottam mentions that Pragjyotisa is Kamrupa.<sup>9</sup> Yasodhara (c. 1300 A.D.) the author of the *Jayamangala* commentary on the *Kamasutra*, admits Kamarupa as a country of the eastern region: *gauda kamarupakah pracyavisesah*.<sup>10</sup> Barring these, in some later *Puranas* the name Kamarupa appears in several times, namely, the *Siva Purana* states that in Sahyadri there was the country named Kamrupa which was conquered by a Raksasa named Bhima.<sup>11</sup> The *Kalika Purana* and the *Yogini Tantra* (c. 1600 A.D.) gives an account of the topography of the country. The *Yogini Tantra* traces the frontiers of Kamrupa as:

Nepalasya kancanadrim brahmaputrasa sangamam

Karatoyam samarbhya yadav dikkaravasanim

Uttarasyam kanjagirih karatoya tu pascime

Tirthasrestha diksunadi purvasyam giriknyake

Daksine brahmaputrasya laksayah sangamavadhi

Kamarupa iti khyatah sarvasatresu niscitah<sup>12</sup>

Here it reveals that *Kamrupa* is said extend from the *Karatoya* river on the west to the Dikhu on the east, and from the mountain of *Kanjagiri* on the north, to the confluence of the Brahmaputra and Lakhya rivers on the south; that is to say, it included roughly, the Brahmaputra valley, Bhutan, Rangpur, Cooch Behar, the north-east of Mymensingh and, possibly, the Garo Hills.<sup>13</sup> The later Sanskrit work *Hara-Gauri Samvada* divides this land into four portions (*pithas*), such as Ratnapitha from the Karatoya to Svarnakosa, Kamapitha from the Svarnakosa to the Kapili, Svarnapitha from the Puspika to the Bhairavi, and Saumara from the Bhairavi to the Dikrang river.<sup>14</sup>

Accordingly, the name *Kamrupa* occupies in many places in different times. According to some work the word *Kamrupa* has been derived from an Austric formation such as *Kamru* or *Kamrut*, the name of a lesser divinity in Santali which justifies the association of the land with magic and monarchy,<sup>15</sup> not otherwise. A number of early sources grants that the very word *Kamarupa* is a Sanskritisation, for example, it is attested in the Buddhist *Charyas* and ancient Persian works, namely, the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri* and the *Riyaz-us-Salatin* etc., and in *Hara-Gauri Sambada* and many more, we have just mentioned above, refer to this land as *Kamru* or *Kamrud*.



Here one can remind Yuan Chwang, the Chinese pilgrim, who visited the court of Bhaskaravarmana in 643 A.D. Yuan Chwang called this land *Kamolup'o* and, the *T'ang-Shu*, *Kamopo* and *Komelu*.<sup>16</sup> This is all about how many ways the word *Kamarupa* has been derived and occupies an important place in the ancient period of the Assam History.

All these references mentioned above sufficiently indicate that *Pragjyotisa* and *Kamarupa* hinges one and same region, i.e., Assam which has been referred to both in epigraphs and literature. Quite truly, the present day Assam was known as *Pragjyotisa* or *Kamarupa* in ancient times. But the boundaries of *Pragjyotisha Kamarupa* did not remain unchanged or static throughout. The boundaries of *Pragjyotisa* or *Kamarupa* varied from time to time either for political reasons or otherwise. The kingdom of *Pragjyotisa* and *Kamarupa* covered the major parts of Eastern India. However, there exist conflicts with the neighboring states about her boundary across the river *Karatoya* and sometimes extended it beyond the river. Indeed, unlike other kingdoms is to be found in the Epics, the kingdom of *Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa* was greatly larger. “*Pragjyotisa* or the ancient *Kamarupa* was a much larger kingdom than the most of the other kingdoms mentioned in the *Mahabharata* and most of the sixteen *Mahajanapadas* existing during the time of Gautama Buddha.”<sup>17</sup> This is in brief about the philosophy of the history of *Kamrupa* and *Devi Kamakhya*.

#### REFERENCES:

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<sup>1</sup> Kakati, B. K. *The Mother Goddess Kamakhya*, Guwahati, 1978, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Kakati, B. K. *Assamese: Its Formation and Development*, p. 53f.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Gait, E. *A History of Assam*, Guwahati: EBH Publishers (India), 2008, Reprinted, 2013, pp. 11-12.



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- <sup>4</sup>Choudhury, P. C. *The History of Civilization of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A. D.*, Guwahati, 1966, p. 35ff.
- <sup>5</sup> *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, iii, p. 1ff.
- <sup>6</sup> IV, 81, 83. VII. 17.
- <sup>7</sup> Ganguly, D. C. Jadavaprakasa on the ancient geography of India. *IHQ*, XIX, pp. 214ff.
- <sup>8</sup> *Abhidhanacintamani*, p. 381.
- <sup>9</sup> *Trikanda*, p. 93.
- <sup>10</sup> *Kamasutra*, p. 225.
- <sup>11</sup> See Ch. XXXXVIII.
- <sup>12</sup> Ch. XI, pp. 16-18.
- <sup>13</sup> Gait, E. *A History of Assam*, op cit. p. 11.
- <sup>14</sup> Cf Kakati, B. K. *The Mother Goddess Kamakhya*, Guwahati, 1978, p. 8.
- <sup>15</sup> Kakati, B. K. *Assamese: Its Formation and Development*, pp. 53-54.
- <sup>16</sup> Watters, T. *On Yuan Chwang's Travel in India*, New Delhi, 1968, II, p. 185f.
- <sup>17</sup> Barua, K. L. *Early History of Assam*, Guwahati, 1966, p. 7.