Shamsul Hossain • Stone Sculpture in the Chittagong University Museum

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Stone Sculpture in
the Chittagong University Museum

This descriptive catalogue documents the stone sculpture collection of the Chittagong University Museum. It provides a comprehensive and authoritative guide and may also be used as a subsidiary textbook for a practical demonstration in a future course on Buddhist and Brahmanical Iconography in the university. The minute details of each piece of sculpture are vividly recorded in tune with the religio-cultural and artistic tradition of the cults and are traceable from the index.

Sculpures are most valuable objects, in a museum gallery, as a visual representation of the glorious past. They carry with them a great deal of social information from the bygone days. They constitute belief, attitude, implement, styles in textile, ornament and coiffure and other ideas from antiquity. This catalogue will serve as a guide to the connoisseurs in searching and understanding the specific and desired exhibits.

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Shamsul Hossain

Stone Sculpture in the Chittagong University Museum:

A Descriptive Catalogue

52 photographs in colour and 1 map

Chittagong University Museum

A Descriptive Catalogue of Stone Sculptures Preserved in the Chittagong University Museum

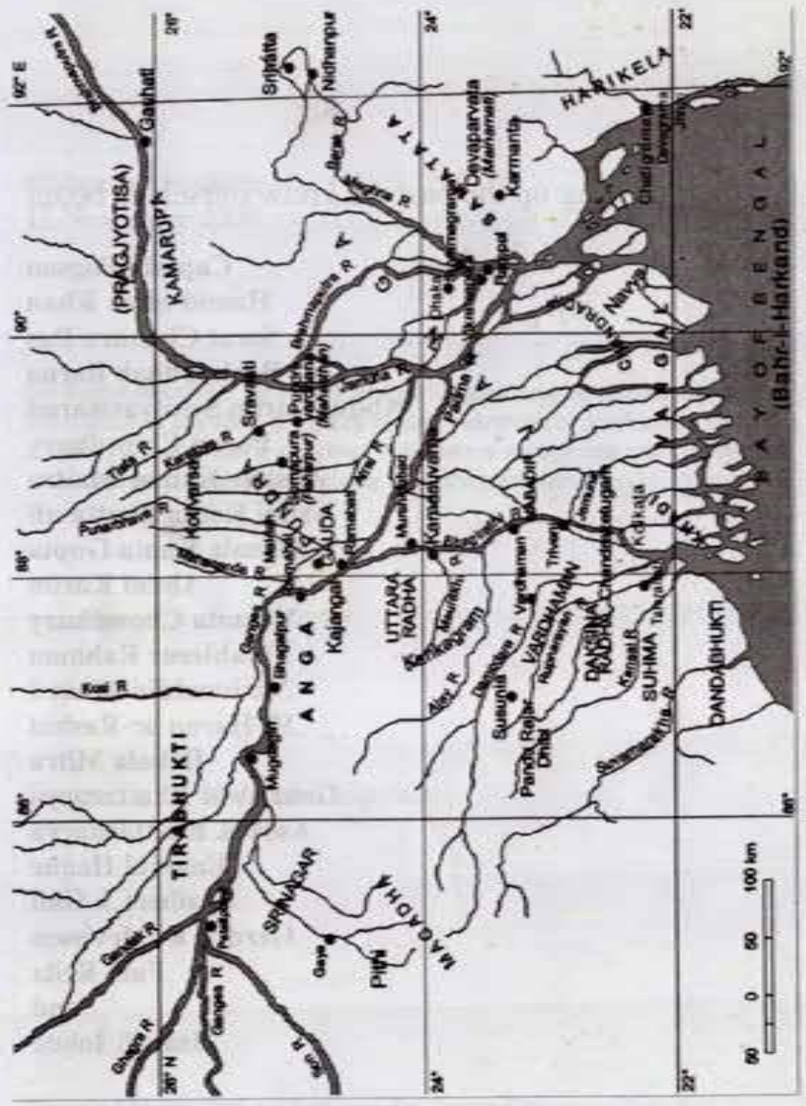
Cover: Tamal Mubasshir Hossain

Published by the Director Professor Dr. Emran Hossain on behalf of the trustees of the Chittagong University Museum with the financial assistance of the **Ford Foundation** and printed at Chittagong University Press.

For their digging up the past we know ourselves better

Captain Pogson
Hamid-allah Khan
Sarat Chandra Das
Benimadhab Barua
Abdul Karim Sahityavisarad
Purna Chowdhury
Akshay Kumar Maitra
Nalini Kanta Bhattasali
Kamala Kanta Gupta
Abdul Karim
Vasanta Chowdhury
Mukhlesur Rahman
Nazimuddin Ahmed
M. Harun ar-Rashid
Debala Mitra
Gouriswar Bhattacarya
Asok K Bhattacharya
Enamul Haque
Adalbert J. Gail
Gerd J. R. Mevissen
Falk Reitz
and
Isabell Johne

Ancient Bengal



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Publisher's Note

Chittagong University Museum was established on 14 June 1973 to collect, preserve, study and exhibit the objects of art and antiquities of Bangladesh for particular benefit of the students by advancing teaching and research. The collection of the museum contains raw sources of history. The practicing scholars in the university can utilize these materials in their research, specifically, in the studies in architecture, epigraphy, numismatics, iconography and the like. The first curatorial and founding academic staff of this museum Dr. Shamsul Hossain had tried his best to uphold the scholastic character of this institution and ventured many publications of a merit related to museum and museum collection.

Ancient sculpture is a rarely studied subject in Bangladesh. Dr. Shamsul Hossain deserves compliment for his ardent work in authoring a descriptive catalogue of stone sculptures preserved in the Chittagong University Museum. He has done this research with a great devotion and it will add to the existing knowledge of iconography of the Bengal sculptures.

It is an opportunity to extend our thanks to Dr. Enamul Haque, a renowned iconographer and ex-Director General of the Bangladesh National Museum for kindly perusing the manuscript on request from the Board of Trustees of the Chittagong University Museum. The members of the publication committee of the Trust have also helped me in many ways on their own interest and commitment for the academic development of the university.

Professor Abu Yusuf, Vice-Chancellor of the University and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Chittagong University Museum, has always encouraged us by patronizing the development of the Museum. He has also contributed a preface to this catalogue.

Emran Hossain
Director

November 11, 2009

Preface

Chittagong University Museum (CUM) is the first University-Museum in Bangladesh and a pride institution of the University of Chittagong. It carries scholarly flag of this university in the world of academics related to the study of materials of history and archaeology of the country. Some of its rich aspects were presented in distinguished publications for the perusal of scholars. This institution also possesses a worthy collection of huge documents on the Liberation War of Bangladesh. Exhibitions organized on different occasions of these documents along with other collections at CUM attracted attention of the teachers, researchers and students.

Conservation of cultural heritage is a prime responsibility of the Government and other organs. All centers of higher learning should inculcate the study of cultural properties and mobilize the young scholars' ability in this respect. The University of Chittagong is trying with its limited resources to contribute in this field in a modest manner. This museum is fortunate to have patronization from scholars from home and abroad in its many endeavours. We also acknowledge with gratitude the financial assistance received from the Ford Foundation for the development of CUM. The present catalogue of the Museum is an outcome of this project. This has also exposed collection of its stone sculptures. This work shall inspire other scholars to research in this poorly explored area of our cultural heritage.

There is a dearth of expert in the field of Museology in Bangladesh. Hence, museums in the country are suffering in the management of its collections. Conservation works are also not gaining momentum for the lack of committed and trained persons. I urge upon the University Grants Commission to look at this problem of national magnitude and extend us assistance for its mitigation.

Dr. Shamsul Hossain, the retired Deputy Curator of CUM deserve thanks for authoring a descriptive catalogue of stone sculptures and believe that it will attract notice of the specialists as original contribution.

Abu Yusuf

Dr. Abu Yusuf
Vice-Chancellor

Vice-Chancellor's Office
A. R. Mallick Bhavan
University of Chittagong
Chittagong, BANGLADESH
11 November 2009

Acknowledgement

The catalogue is prepared with the financial assistance of the Ford Foundation. The author is much indebted to Mr. Raymond C. Offenheiser and Dr. V.C. Joshi of the Foundation for their generous attitude and help. The New York office of the Foundation has also shown keen interest in the work. The author is also obliged to Professor R. I. Chowdhury, the then chairman and trustees of the Chittagong University Museum for confidently entrusting him with the task.

Dr. Gouriswar Bhattacharya of the Free University, Berlin, first initiated the author in the study of sculpture and also mailed some materials from Germany. Stimulating discussions with Professor Abdul Momin Chowdhury of the Department of History of the University of Dhaka and Dr. Enamul Haque, Academic Director, International Centre for the Study of Bengal Art, Dhaka, enormously enriched this catalogue. Dr. Haque has also kindly gone through the manuscript in the midst of his ample preoccupations and gave valuable suggestions for improvement. Professor Tapan Joyti Barua of the Department of English of the University of Chittagong patiently helped the author in sub-editing and proof reading.

Professor Emeritus Anisuzzaman of the University of Dhaka has kindly provided Mukhlesur Rahman's monumental catalogue *Sculpture in the Varendra Research Museum* from his personal collection. Dr. Gautam Sengupta, Director of Archaeology and Museums, Government of West Bengal and Dr. Sutapa Sinha, Reader in Islamic History and Culture, University of Kolkata also favoured the author with some related books and journals. The personnel in the libraries of the Centre for Archaeological Studies and Training, Kolkata; Asiatic Society, Kolkata; the University of Dhaka; Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka; International Centre for the Study of Bengal Art, Dhaka and the Chittagong University Museum helped the author in his study, for the act of which he is ever grateful to all of them.

Mr. Mainul Alam of Purba has kindly photographed the sculptures, and the documentation work of the collection was facilitated by the unstinted help and assistance received from CUM's former Registration Officer Mrs. Irin Pervin, Assistant Display Officer Mr. Ziauddin Chowdhury, former Senior Assistant Mr. Mahmudul Hoque Sikdar, Library Assistant Mr. Moksudur Rahman, Exploration Assistant Mr. Mohammad Lokman and Senior Cataloguer Mr. Abdus Sukur. Mr. Sekandar Alam, Director in-Charge, Mr. Mohammad Forkan, Computer Operator and Assistant Instructor Mr. Mourshadul Alam, of the Chittagong University Press saw the book through the printing process. Mr. Moqbil Hossain of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dhaka, provided technical assistance in typography.

Finally, it is the antiquarian interest of the present Director of the Museum Professor Dr. Emran Hossain, to see this catalogue in print that paves the way in concretising it in its present shape.

Rahela, Tamal, Tanay and Taran are always supportive to the author in his academic endevour with their utmost love and devotion. Recently Sadia also entered into this inquisitive circle.

List of Sculptures Catalogued

Pl. No 1	Cat. No. 2	Acc. No. 3	Object 4	Material 5	Measurement 6
01	Budd 01	770	**Mañjuvara**	Fine Basalt	59cm X 38cm
02	Budd 02	646	**Viṣṇu Lokeśvara**	Fine Basalt	76cm X 49cm
03	Vais 01	901	**Viṣṇu**	Fine Basalt	15cm X 8.5cm
04	Vais 02	652	**Viṣṇu**	Coarse Basalt	40cm X 20.7cm
05	Vais 03	78	**Viṣṇu**	Fine Basalt	69.3cm X 30.9cm
06	Vais 04	647	**Viṣṇu**	Fine Basalt	86cm X 35.6cm
07	Vais 05	768	**Viṣṇu**	Fine Basalt	85.5cm X 35cm
08	Vais 06	650	**Viṣṇu**	Fine Basalt	53.3cm X 21.5cm
09	Vais 07	649	**Viṣṇu**	Fine Basalt	57cm X 24.5cm
10	Vais 08	651	**Viṣṇu**	Fine Basalt	49cm X 20.4cm
11	Vais 09	648	**Viṣṇu**	Fine Basalt	67.6cm X 26.8cm
12	Vais 10	336	**Viṣṇu**	Fine Basalt	55.6cm X 23.3cm
13	Vais 11	781	**Viṣṇu**	Fine Basalt	83.1cm X 34cm
14	Vais 12	903	**Viṣṇu**	Fine Basalt	36.5cm X 32cm
15	Vais 13	902	**Viṣṇu**	Fine Basalt	63.5cm X 38cm
16	Vais 14	29	**Viṣṇu**	Fine Basalt	178.3cm X 81cm
17	Vais 15	767	**Viṣṇu**	Fine Basalt	81.5cm X 34.4cm
18	Vais 16	531	**Viṣṇu** (Fragments)	Fine Basalt	36.83cm X 12.7cm etc
19	Vais 17	27	**Garuḍārūḍha Viṣṇu**	Sand Stone	92cm X 57.6cm
20	Vais 18	783	**Garuḍārūḍha Viṣṇu**	Fine Basalt	54cm X 26cm
21	Vais 19	665	**Veṇugopāla**	Fine Basalt	55cm X 15cm
22	Vais 20	670	**Bālagopāla**	Fine Basalt	17.6cm X 14cm
23	Saiv 01	777	**Śiva-*liṅga***	Fine Basalt	H. 76cm
24	Saiv 02	778	**Caturmukha-*liṅga***	Coarse Basalt	H. 55cm
25	Saiv 03	593	**Lying Śiva**	Fine Basalt	67cm X 32cm
26	Saiv 04	653	**Umā-Maheśvara**	Fine Basalt	46cmX 23cm
27	Saiv 05	654	**Umā-Maheśvara**	Fine Basalt	38cm X 24.8cm
28	Saiv 06	586	**Umā-Maheśvara**	Fine Basalt	40cm X 22.5cm
29	Saiv 07	771	**Umā-Maheśvara**	Fine Basalt	59cm X 28cm
30	Saiv 08	772	**Umā-Maheśvara**	Fine Basalt	62cm X 26cm
31	Saiv 09	661	**Nandin**	Fine Basalt	25cm X 12cm

Notes on abbreviations: 1. Pl. No. [Plate Number], 2. Cat. No. [Catalogue Number], 3. Acc. No. [Accession Number].

Pl. No 1	Cat. No. 2	Acc. No. 3	Object 4	Material 5	Measurement 6
32	Saiv 10	667	**Virabhadra**	Sand Stone	33cm X 18cm
33	Saur 01	782	**Sūrya**	Coarse Basalt	82.5cm X 49cm
34	Saur 02	656	**Sūrya**	Fine Basalt	63cm X 31cm
35	Saur 03	769	**Sūrya**	Fine Basalt	75cm X 37cm
36	Saur 04	773	**Navagraha**	Fine Basalt	27cm X 66cm
37	Sakt 01	655	**Māheśvarī**	Fine Basalt	35cm X 17.5cm
38	Sakt 02	664	**Umā**	Fine Basalt	53cm X 29cm
39	Sakt 03	666	**Kokāmukha Durgā**	Fine Basalt	49cm X 29cm
40	Sakt 04	660	**Cāmuṇḍā**	Sand Stone	32cm X 10.5cm
41	Sakt 05	775	**Manasā**	Sand Stone	26.5cm X 16.5cm
42	Sakt 06	886	**Manasā**	Coarse Basalt	63cm X 28cm
43	Sakt 07	658	**Manasā**	Coarse Basalt	19cm X 11.5cm
44	Sakt 08	657	**Manasā**	Coarse Basalt	21cm X 11cm
45	Sakt 09	659	**Manasā**	Sand Stone	32.5cm X 17.5cm
46	Sakt 10	776	**Gaurī**	Fine Basalt	26cm X 72cm
47	Gana 01	885	**Gaṇeśa**	Coarse Basalt	46cm X 26cm
48	Migo 01	774	**Brahmā**	Coarse Basalt	40cm X 30cm
49	Migo 02	663	**Brahmā**	Coarse Basalt	26.5cm X 18.5cm
50	Migo 03	662	**Brahmā**	Fine Basalt	41cm X 17.5cm
51	Migo 04	725	**Kārttikeya**	Fine Basalt	15.3cm X 10.8cm
52	Othe 01	1001	**Dancing Female**	Fine Basalt	22cm X 14cm

INTRODUCTION

The stone sculptures preserved in the Chittagong University Museum (CUM) depict diverse religious beliefs. Most of them belong to Hindu cults that developed and flourished in one or the other socio-historical situation in the subcontinent, specifically in Bengal. The ancient ecclesiastical order of the Aryans in India provided rituals contained in *yajñas*. But the non-Aryan inhabitants of the subcontinent were in all probability worshippers of different images primarily related to fertility (Wheeler, 1966: 48 and Mitchell, 1982: v). Gradually five *upāsak sampradāya* – Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Saura, Śākta, and Gāṇapatya came into being with their respective images to worship (Banerjea, 1956: 6 and 1960: 15). We also come across some syncretistic icons – which exhibit a different strength lying inherent in the society – the urge for living together by accommodating each others' thoughts and ideas (Hossain, 2007: 378). Only two Buddhist stone images collected in this museum are a Bodhisattva and a Lokeśvara.

Sl. No.	Iconographic/Cult Category	Abbreviations (for documentation)	Image(s) in each category
1.	Buddhist	Budd	2
2.	Vaiṣṇava	Vais	20
3.	Śaiva	Saiv	10
4.	Saura	Saur	4
5.	Śākta/ Devi	Sakt	10
6.	Gāṇapatya	Gana	1
6.	Miscellaneous	Migo	4
7.	Other	Othe	1

The collection under study is very small, contains only fifty-two stone sculptures including a few fragments. In the context of a university campus they provide an opportunity to its members and visitors to perceive the art-historical reality of the land. Sculptures are also most valuable objects, in a gallery of a museum, as visual representation of the hoary past. They carry with them a great deal of social information from the bygone days. It constitutes belief, attitude, implement, styles in textile, ornament and coiffure and other ideas from the antiquity. The images intimately bear the skill of the sculptors, the urge of the patrons and the devotion of their keepers.

The ancient sites in Bengal are replete with small figural sculptures, mostly made of clay. They represent animal and human forms. At a subsequent stage the interior and exterior of the temples were also

richly decorated with sculptured terracottas. The deltaic Bengal provided in abundance this no-cost material for the use of the artists, and the phenomenon can still be largely traced in rural settings (Hossain, 1992: 75 and Haque, 2007: 75).

The opportunity ultimately promoted sculptural art in ancient Varendra, Vaṅga, Samatata, Raḍh and Harikela, with apt sculptors capable to work even with hard material like wood, metal and stone. The objects betray some regional features, not related to any specific schools. The art reached its zenith during the period generally attributed to "Pāla-Sena" (AD 800 to AD 1200), but this term should be used with caution, as it does not represent a dynastic art.

The monumental metal sculptures recently unearthed in Mainamati with other early-excavated specimen (Samatata) (Imam, 2000: 99, 102) and the Jhiuri[1] hoard discovered in Chittagong (Harikela) in AD 1927 (Mitra, 1982 and Bhattacharya, 1989) brought to light concurrent traditions in Southeast Bengal associated with other lesser-known dynasties and "...it is necessary to examine the style sources which influenced different regions and sites with various degrees of strength and persistence." (Huntington, 1984: 26). Literary and epigraphic evidence speak for a stable political condition in South and Southeast Bengal than in the north, which facilitated royal patronage in the development of art and architecture (Haque, 2007: 48).

The most alluring aspects of these sculptures are their distinguishing *āyudhas*, *mudrās* and *vāhanas* – attributed to each iconographic/cult category. Each devotee can easily recognize and communicate with his own deity, which is invoked to attain material benefit of the worshipper. The two major religions of the subcontinent have always been modified in response to internal and external development of socio-religious ideas and necessities of the communities. The visual representation of this development can also be traced in the sculptural art of pre-mediaeval Bengal affiliated with sects, cults and doctrines. The iconography of the deities is enumerated in scriptures and followed in the execution of images, as they "were largely the hand-maid of religion." (Haque, 2007: 43).

Though the sculptures described in this catalogue were associated with religious rites, those also bear the fruits of aesthetic impulse of the artists. Some of the specimens show masterly attainment of the sculptors in style and refineness in execution (Huntington, 1984: 159;

[1] This place-name was wrongly spelled as Jhewari in the earlier works.

fig. 198). They sought after beauty with the experience accumulated through working with a preferred medium. Within a very limited prescription of iconography the sculptors engaged themselves to inculcate beauty and diversity in their work to ultimately achieve prominence and satisfaction, not only for them but also for the lay worshippers. Most of the images were carved with a stele in the background, and some of them disply visual exuberance.

The stones used by the sculptors of Bengal were generally limited to two types, i) grayish stone queried from Gaya and ii) the black basalt or *kasauṭi-pāthara* from the hills of Rajmahal in the Santhal Parganas and Kharagpur in Monghyr. Limited sand stones used by the pre-medieval and medieval builders and sculptors of Southeast Bengal probably came from Assam.

The majority of inhabitants of geographical Eastern India (presently Bangladesh, West Bengal, part of Bihar) share common cultural traits – language, food habits, textiles and coiffures, materials and technique of making living quarters and means of transport. But they do not belong to a unitary system of religion. The Buddhists and Hindus venerate votive images; on the contrary, the Muslims are against icon worship.

The torso portion of a sand stone image of a Yakṣa discovered from Patharghata in Joypurhat is dated to c. 1st Century BCE/CE (Haque, 2007: 76). The image of a cock or owl from Mahasthangarh of c. 1st Century CE preserved in the Asutosh Museum seldom attract attention of the connoisseurs (Goswami, 1981: 11). The Kārttikeya from Mahasthangarh discovered at Skanda Dhap is one of the three earliest images in stone found in Bangladesh. On stylistic and iconographic grounds, it may be dated to the Kushana period, approximately 2nd or 3rd century CE and is severely mutilated (Goswami, 1981: 11, fig. 2; Huntington, 1984: 10-11; fig. 1). A Sūrya image (Cat. No. Saur. 01) exhibited in the sculpture gallery of the CUM is dated to c. late 8th Century CE on stylistic consideration, and is the most earliest stone object of the collection.

During this study, the author has discovered seven images in the collection to be iconographically important. They are: 1. Visnu-Lokeśvara (Cat. No. Budd 02), 2. Viṣṇu with Umbrella (Cat. No Vais 03), an overworked Viṣṇu (Cat. No. Vais 15), 4. Viṣṇu on Garuda (Cat. No. Vais 17), 5. Sūrya (Cat. No. Saur 1), 6. Māheśvarī (Cat. No. Sakt 01) and 7. Kokāmukha Durgā (cat. No. Sakt 03).

The exhibition catalogue of CUM (Hossain, 1988) first brought to light description of some stone sculptures of the collection. Of the fifty-two sculptures catalogued here, two were previously studied and published; these are Viṣṇu-Lokeśvara (Hossain, 2007: 378-383) and Māheśvarī (Rahman, 1989: 52-53). Richard Eaton has also used two images of Manasā from this collection in his *Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier* (1994: 105, figs. 16, 17). Forty-two stone sculptures from CUM were also included in the recently published monumental inventory entitled *Sculptures in Bangladesh* (Haque, Enamul and Gail, Adalbert, 2008).

The Vaiṣṇava images outnumber any other cult sculptures from Bengal in any collection depicting the popularity of the deity (Banerji, 1933: 101). CUM has twenty Vaiṣṇava images and four of them bear marked significance. Śaiva and Śākta images of CUM are numerically equal. Of the two Śākta images, one is (Māheśvarī) specifically unique, and the other (Kokāmukha Durgā) is also rare.

This sculpture collection came into being through the assistance and patronization of some connoisseurs and a large portion of it were available as antiquities confiscated by customs and police authorities. Mohiuddin Hossain, a student, first made a sand stone sculpture available from Mirsarai, Chittagong to the newly founded Department of History, while a student-group from the department was surveying the area in 1967 (CUM 27). Nurul Quader Khan donated the second sculpture (CUM 29) in 1968 from Rajshahi. These antiquarian objects were lying in a solitary room on the ground floor of the new building of the arts faculty and waiting to found their final repose into CUM in 1973. More stone, metal and wooden sculptures were acquired from the lay collectors in the meanwhile to enrich CUM sculpture gallery. Mohiuddin Hossain's donation represents the only sculpture that came to the museum from Chittagong and with known provenance.

Nazimuddin Ahmed, the then Director of Archaeology and the Secretary of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of the Government of Bangladesh helped us to acquire twenty-two stone sculptures in 1976. At the initiative of the then Dhaka Museum, these sculptures were prevented from being smuggled out of Bangladesh by the Chittagong Customs House. The generous attitude of Mukhlesur Rahman, the late Director of the Varendra Research Museum, was responsible for a donation of twelve coveted sculptures from their collection to this museum in 1979. We have received in 1980 three sculptures from the Chittagong Court Building *Malkhana*.

Buddhist Images

Cat. No. Budd. 01
Mañjuvara
Probably from Eastern Bengal/ 10th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 59cm; W. 38cm
CUM 770
Donated by Varendra Research Museum
Plate No. 01

The Bodhisattva sits on the back of a lion, in the *lalita* or *ardhaparyaṅka* attitude, and displays the sentiment of *śṛiṅgāra* (amour). His two hands are joined against the chest in forming the *dharmacakra mudrā*, which is the eternal symbol of instruction in the ways of dharma. The stalk of lotuses with lotus bud on each side rises from the left and right elbows of the deity. The *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript is placed on the lotus rising from the left elbow. His *vāhana* lion crouches on a *viśvapadma* and hauling with its head turning towards him. Isabell Johne identified the image as a form of Manjusrī, calling it Vādirāj (Haque, E and A, Gail, 2008: 294).

It has a *karaṇḍamukuṭa* on its head, *kuṇḍalas* on the ears, *hāra* on the neck, *keyūras* on the arms, *kaṭakas* on the wrist, *udarabandha* on the waist and a pair of *khāṇu* on the ankle. He wears an *uttarīya*, a *dhoti* and a *yajñopavīta* on his person.

This elegant piece of sculpture has lost the upper portion of its stele. There are two finely carved miniature *stūpas* on each side, which appears to have narrowly escaped destruction. Two *haṃsas* are seen on the either sides of the architraves behind the neck of the deity. The Gaja-Siṃha, Airāvata with rider are other figures that embellish the stele. At the back of the Lion, kneeling on a small *viśvapadma* Sudhanakumāra is praying and there is a manuscript under his left armpit. On the right end of the *ratha* a *pujāri* is also visible. The divinity above is also holding a manuscript. The *saptaratha* pedestal is decorated with padmas and *utpalas*.

Cat. No. Budd. 02
Viṣṇu Lokeśvara
Provenance unknown/ 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt / H. 76; W. 49 cm.
CUM 646
Courtesy: Department of Archaeology, GOB
Published (Hossain, 2007: 378-383)
Plate No. 02

The three-eyed central figure has twelve arms – six on each side, but one on the left is now missing. The upper portion of the stele is also broken. The deity in *samapādasthānaka* stands on a *padmapīṭha* in an *abhaṅga* pose and wears on his head a *kirīṭamukuṭa*, the apex of which is truncated. Except for these damages the remaining sculpture is in a fine state of preservation. The deity has *kuṇḍalas* in the ears, *keyūras* on the arms, *kaṭakas* on the wrist and a *hāra* round the neck. The image is also wearing a *yajñopavīta* on the body. A *vanamālā* dangles from his neck as it reaches down to the knees. The god also wears on his person a flower-studded *uttarīya*. An elaborate *ūrujalaka* goes round his waist and embellishes the upper portion of the thigh. The loincloth is also decorated with flower motif. A pair of *kiṅkiṇi* or chain anklet exposes the grandeur of the lotus feet.

The god holds in his right hands, anti-clockwise from up, (a) *Gadā* placed horizontally on an *utpala* (b) Vṛṣabha on a lotus (c) *Hala* on an *utpala* (d) *utpala* with stalk (e) this hand resting on the head of the Cakrapuruṣa (f) another raised in front in *varada-mudrā* and resting on a full bloomed *padma*, the open palm being sculptured with a *padmāṅka*. With the left hands, clock-wise from up, the god holds (a) *cakra* on an *utpala* (b) Airāvata on an *utpala* (c) Candra-Sūrya on an *utpala* (d) *Pāśa* or noose on an *utpala* (e) another hand resting on the head of the Śankhapuruṣa (f) the sixth being broken.

On the right side of the god and far right side of the Cakrapuruṣa stands a female figure conveying *abhaya* with her right hand and the left held on the hip. On the far left side of the sculpture and on the left side of the Śankhapuruṣa stands another female figure, the same as one on the right but with *nīlotpala* springing from her left arm. The Āyudhapuruṣas and the other two standing female figures are all depicted in *tribhaṅga*. The kneeling Garuda in *añjali-mudrā* is sculptured under the left feet and below the *padmapīṭha* of the Śankhapuruṣa. There is a couple of kneeling *pujāris* under the right

feet and below the *padmapīṭha* of the Cakrapuruṣa. A small figure below the *pujāris* is sitting cross-legged with *añjali-mudrā*.

The upper portion of the stele is decorated with motifs of sky and stylized flora depicting the rising sun with a *haṃsa* playing in a lake on the left horizon. The remains of a seven hooded *nāga* is clearly visible as *śiraścakra* on the broken stele. The pedestal is embellished with *padmapīṭha* and *utpala*.

There is a dearth of text to definitely identify this image. R.D.Banerji first gave a reproduction of a figure discovered at Sonarang and finding its Vaisnavite elements associated with a figurine of Amitābha - the meditating Buddha - at the apex of the stele named it Lokeśvara-Viṣṇu. (Banerji, 1933: 94-96). J.N.Banerjea in agreement with his predecessor's identification added two other types with it, Śiva-Lokeśvara and Sūrya-Lokeśvara under a general title of the syncretistic icons. (Banerjea, 1956: 547-548, 554-557; pl. XLVI, 4; XLVIII,3 & 4 and Majumdar, 1943: 469)). There are reports of two other images with eight hands in *samapādasthānaka* under snake hoods from Burdwan. Enamul Haque surmises that they might also belong to Viṣṇu-Lokeśvara type. (Haque, 1992: 93-96). Mukhlesur Rahman has identified two sculptures in the Varendra Museum as Viṣṇu-Śiva-Lokeśvara type (Nos. 661 and 1473) and advised not to overlook the snake hoods in the later one borrowed from the iconography of Balarāma. (Rahman, 1998: 73, 85 and pls. 88, 96). But Marie-Therese De Mallmann opined that "…we need no longer invoke a hypothetical 'Lokeśvara'; we can now immediately identify the god (or goddess), without fear or error, as a personage 'adopted' by the Buddhists and thus incorporated into a particular Buddha's spiritual family." (Mallmann, *ZS*, 1968: 41, 53).

Vaiṣṇava Images

Cat. No. Vais 01
Viṣṇu
Provenance unknown/ Late 9th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 15cm; W. 8.5cm
CUM 901
Plate No. 03

The image is sculpted on a very small stele, possibly for use during travel and/or exclusively at home. The absence of tenon beneath the pedestal is also indicative of its nature of use. The signs of vandalisation and natural weathering are clear on the surface of the sculpture. A part of the upper stele on the left of the central figure is broken and lost; the face, the *āyudhas*, consort Lakṣmi and the *ratha* are mutilated. Other elements, like the *kīrttimukha*, the lone garland bearing Vidyādhara, the *śiraścakra*, the *kirīṭamukuṭa* and the consort Sarasvatī are weathered. The major damage is done to the *ratha* pedestal.

The four-handed god is standing in *samapāda* holding the staff of the *gadā* with his upper right hand. The *āyudhas* on other three hands are not clearly identifiable. He wears on his head a *kirīṭamukuṭa*. The jewelries and textiles on the body are faintly visible. The remnants of *upavīta* and *vanamālā* are also there. The bust and *vīnā* of the Sarasvatī are visible and the two consorts are standing in *tribhaṅga*.

The apex of the pointed stele is adorned with a *kīrttimukha* and there is a flat running outline alongside the edge.

Cat. No. Vais. 02
Viṣṇu
Provenance unknown/ 10th Century AD
Coarse Basalt/ H. 40; W. 20.7cm.
CUM 652
Plate No. 04

Carved in high relief without any perforation on a solid and almost austere stele, the deity stands in *ābhaṅga* on an elongated double lotus placed on a *pañcaratha* pedestal – its upper rim having a short inscription at the centre. In *Gauḍīya* script and Sanskrit language it depicts the name of the donar: *siddam* (symbol) *dāpati-Śrīdhara*. The

donor (of the image) is Sridharah. (G. Bhattacharya in Haque and Gail, 2008: 295).

His conical *mukuṭa* is embellished with a finial and floral ornamentations. He wears *kuṇḍalas* on his ears, *keyūras* on the main arms, *kaṭakas* on all the four wrists and two neck ornaments - the *upavīta* being attached with the lower one with an adapter piece. The loincloth is firmly fastened with the support of an *udarabandha*. The short wavy *uttarīya* is also placed on the chest fixed with an emblem on the left shoulder. The nipple of the right breast on the expanded chest and the navel on the lower abdomen has also received adequate attention of the sculptor in a *gomukha* torso. The lower portion of the *vanamālā* has a passiflora at the end. There is a pair of *mol* on the ankles of the god.

He holds with his usual left hand a *śankha*. On the right there is an indistinct object [may be a *padmārika*], which also shows *varada*. The deity holds a *cakra* in his additional left hand and a *gadā* on the right. The knob of the *gadā* is decorated and attired with ribbon, which the god is holding very gently.

The apex of the pointed stele has a *kīrttimukha* partially hidden behind the three-dimensional conical *mukuṭa*. Of the two Vidyādharas depicted on the embossed rims, one on the left is defaced. Their modulation is not also fairly representative and lack clarity. An oval unostentatious *śiraścakra* behind the head of the god might be bearing a regional style occasionally found in other sculptures. On the two ends of the architrave of the throne-back behind the shoulder, two *haṃsas* are sitting at ease and there are also two unusual wavy folded draperies hanging from the lower corner of the architrave, one each on the either side of the central figure. In tune with the double lotus seat of the god, his consorts Lakṣmi and Sarasvatī are also standing on the *padmapīṭhas* in *tribhaṅga*. Their ornaments and garments are also put in conformity with the one of their master. Beside the consorts and on the farthest ends of the pedestal are indistinctly sculpted the Cakra and Śankhapuruṣas in a very low relief showing *abhaya*. The frieze on the *pañcaratha* pedestal depicts lilly-buds and foliages along with two kneeling *pujāris*.

Cat. No. Vais. 03
Viṣṇu
Habiganj/ Early11th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 69.3; W. 30.9 cm
CUM 78
Plate No. 05

On a *pañcaratha* padestal stands in *samapāda* the fourhanded Viṣṇu, with a *gadā* with short handle on his upper right hand, a *cakra* on the corresponding left, a *śankha* on the lower left and the lower right palm being sculpted with a *padmārika*. Though the central and the subsidiary figures are carved in high relief, but only the chest down to the knee of the god is entirely chiseled out of the stele. He wears a *kirīṭamukuṭa* on his head, *kuṇḍalas* on the lower ends of the elongated lobes of ears, *keyūras* on the arms, *kaṭakas* on the wrist, three-tired *hāra* on the neck, elaborate *ūrujalaka* on the waist, *kiṅkiṇis* on the ankle and *upavīta* hanging above the naval. The jewel *kausṭuva* is prominently sculpted on the chest of the deity. The upper end of the loincloth is neatly carved in irregular line to depict a precise form. There is a simple *uttarīya* on the upper part of the body and the pleats of the garments are shown in curved double line. The lower portion of a modest lacy *mālā* hanging down to the knee with a lone floral motif on its lower most end between the knees. The short handle of the *gadā* and the *upavīta* hanging above the naval are features associated with the East Bengal sculptural tradition.

Both the consorts of the deity - Lakṣmi and Sarasvatī stand in *tribhaṅga* on the plain platform of the pedestal, which do not contain their usual lotus seat. They are also adorned with *mukuṭas* and other jewelries. Mention may be made of a type of bracelet on their wrists, which are akin to the one seen on the CUM 666. The *dari śikal* on the waist with the dangling end at front is another unusual ornament worn by the consorts. They wear low-cut *kañcuka* with lace decoration on the neck, and transparent *ḍori sāḍi* as their garments.[1] The Lakṣmi shows *abhaya* with her right hand, while a *mṇāla* rises from in between index and thumb fingers of the left upto her shoulder with a full-bloomed *padma* at the end. An unadorned *vinā* is seen on the hands of Sarasvatī.

[1] The application of lace as embellishment on neck, sleeve-end and waist of a *kañcuka* is commonly seen in Pāla art. For an example please see: Saraswati, 1978: 47.

The apex of the pointed stele is embellished with an open umbrella posted upon the *śiraścakra*, while the outer circle of the *śiraścakra* is decorated with petals of lotus. On its either side garland bearing Vidyādharas are flying on the sky motifs. The periphery of the stele is chiseled with simple foliage stemmed out of an embossed outline. The centre of the pedestal contains the kneeling Garuda and the donor pair is sculpted on its second tire on the left. The lone figure on the right might be the sculptor himself. The face of the god shows a Mongoloid feature, with a flat snubbed nose. There are some damages on the face, the fore right arm and the right knee of the Garuda. Other than these damages the sculpture is in a fine state of preservation.

Cat. No. Vais. 04
Viṣṇu
Provenance unknown/ c. late 11th –early 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 86; W. 35.6 cm
CUM 647
Plate No. 06

The four-handed god stands in *samapāda* on an exquisitely carved *padmapīṭha* on a *saptaratha* pedestal. The deity's normal right palm - resting on a *padma*-decorated prop - is broken and lost; there is a neatly carved *śaṅkha* on the corresponding left hand also supported on a *padma*-head. On the upper right hand he gently holds a long handled *gadā* having a prominent knob and bottom placed on a *padma*; with the upper left he holds a *cakra*. The torso of the central figure is perforated away from the back-slab to give it a three dimensional modulation. "Evidences are not lacking which suggest that the tendencies were at work to free the reliefs from the stelae background as time advanced during these centuries. The slabs of the stone stelae have been cut along the edges of the central figures, giving an impression of the images having been carved in round." (Sahai, 1981: 3). The square and less sophisticated face with open eyes and hefty figure of the deity might also bear some specific ethnic identity.

There is a *kiriṭamukuṭa* on the head of the god and the lower ends of his long lobes of ears have a pair of small ring. He is also adorned with a necklace beneath the folded neck, *keyūras* on the arms and a short *ūrujalaka*. There are *kaṭakas* on the wrist and *kiṅkiṇis* on the ankles.

The *gomukha* torso is bare and the curves of the loincloth along with the *ūrujalaka* are flat. Hanging from the neck and surrounding the shoulders and elbows a *vanamālā* reaches down the knee-cup.

The consort Lakṣmī stands in *tribhaṅga* on a *padmapīṭha* on the right side of the deity leisurely holding a *cauri* with her right hand and a long-stalked *padma* in her left put in akimbo. The *vīnā*-playing Sarasvatī standing on a *padmapīṭha* in *tribhaṅga* on the proper left accentuates her posture. They are adorned with identical headdresses, ornaments and garments. The Cakra and the Śankhapuruṣas – standing beside the consorts - show *abhaya* with their right hands and the lefts held on the hip.

The pointed stele has a *kīrttimukha* at its apex and a pair of garland bearing Vidyādharas flying in clouds on the either side of a two-tired *śiraścakra*, its outer rim embellished with petal motif. The intermediate spaces have foliages in relief and two *haṃsas* are sitting on the *makara* heads of the architrave. On the lintels above the heads of the consorts, the same image of a fighter in acrobatic pose on the back of an unidentified animal below the chest of a hunching leonine beast is reversibly placed on the either side of the torso. The central tier of the pedestal has a pair of florets springing from the same stalk of the *padmapīṭha*. The third tier of the pedestal is sculpted with half-kneeling *pujāri* figures, one each on the either side. The tenon is also found at the bottom of the image.

Cat. No. Vais. 05
Viṣṇu
Provenance unknown/ Early 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 85.5; W. 35cm
CUM 768
Plate No. 07

The smiling god with closed eyes stands in *samapāda* on a *padmapīṭha* carved along with a *navaratha* pedestal. He lowers his normal right palm in *varada* sculpted with a *padmāṅka* at its centre and placed on a prop-head embellished with *padma*, the corresponding left hand is broken from the elbow and lost. On the upper right hand he gently holds a long handled *gadā* with a simple knob; with the upper

left he holds a *cakra*. Also like CUM 647, a portion of the central figure - particularly the torso - is carved away from the back-slab with perforation on the stele to substantially highlight anthropomorphic element. The facial expression and overall execution of other comparative features of this sculpture represents an improved version of CUM 647.

The god wears on his head an elaborate *kirīṭamukuṭa*, the lower ends of the long lobes of ears are pierced to adorn a pair of small ring. The execution of the beads of pearls with a necklace beneath the folded neck, *keyūras* on the arms and a short *ūrujalaka* received minute attention of the sculptor. There are usual *kaṭakas* on the wrist, *kiṅkiṇis* on the ankles and *upavīta* on the body. The *gomukha* torso has a simple *uttarīya* to cover a portion of its upper part. The curve of the loincloth along with its residual embellishments above the *ūrujalaka* depicts a developed stylistic feature. A *mālā* hangs from the neck, surrounds the shoulders and elbows and then it reaches down the knee-cup.

The differential figural depiction of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī observed in this sculpture is rather a rare feature. Lakṣmī stands on the plain pedestal in *tribhaṅga* on the right side of the master with her flywhisk put down in a leisurely manner. Her ponderous figure is laden with large round busts and wide hip; the robust arms are not even proportionate to the body. On the contrary, the *vīnā*-playing Sarasvatī, also standing in *tribhaṅga* on the plain pedestal, has a slim lustrous figure. They are adorned with identical headdresses, ornaments and garments. The Cakra and the Śankhapuruṣas showing *abhaya* stand beside the consorts.

The over-worked pointed stele has a *kīrttimukha* at the top and a pair of garland bearing Vidyādharas flying in stylized clouds on the either side of an elaborate two-tiered oval *śiraścakra*, its outer rim being embellished with a row of petal motif. The spaces between clouds and thin architrave have foliages in relief; two *haṃsas* are sitting on the *makara* heads. On the lintels carved in low relief above the heads of the consorts, the same image of a fighter in acrobatic pose on the back of an unidentified animal below the chest of a hunching leonine beast is reversibly placed on the *padmas* on the either side of the torso. The central tier of the pedestal has a pair of florets springing from the same stalk of the *padmapīṭha*. The pair of *pujāris* and the sculptor himself is sculpted on the third tiers of the pedestal. The tenon has also remained unmolested at the bottom of the image.

Cat. No. Vais. 06

Viṣṇu

Provenance unknown/ Eary 12th Century AD

Fine Basalt/ H. 53.3; W. 21.5cm

CUM 650

Plate No. 08

The central figure is four-armed and stands in *samapāda* on a *padmapīṭha* placed on a *pañcaratha* pedestal. From underarm down to the feet of the deity the figure is clearly carved out of the stele. His implements on hands, the *mukuṭa* and other ornaments, the garments, *upavīta* and *vanamālā* are comparable with CUM 767. The consorts of the god – Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī holding usual implement and musical instrument as they do, are there on their respective places in low relief. Their ornaments are not gorgeous except the tiara on their head. The treatment of their diaphanous lower garments and meager *uttarīyas* depict a decadent state of the tradition. A stalk is springing from the left arm of Lakṣmī high upto her head with a *utpala* at the end. The flower symbolizes the unfoldment of creation and as the emblem of beauty. It is conceived by the artist and sculptor as the seat of almost all the divinities. (Ganguly, *JAS*: 86).

The implements on the heads of the Śankha and Cakrapuruṣas are very indistinct. The pointed stele with *kīrttimukha* on the apex does not contain the figures of leogryphs or elephants with or without rider and the figures of Kinnaras. There is a pair of flying Vidyādharas as usual – one each on the either side of the *kirīṭamukuṭa* of the god. The architrave with *makara*-end is faintly visible in meager relief on the right side of *cakra*. Amidst a row of lily-buds and foliage on the pedestal, the kneeling *pujāri*-donar is depicted on the left and the *vāhana*-Garuda on the right.

Cat. No. Vais. 07
Viṣṇu
Provenance unknown/ Early12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 57cm; W. 24.5 cm
CUM 649
Plate No. 09

The deity stands on a *padmapiṭha* in a *samabhaṅga* form; the upper portion of the stele along with the upper right hand and *āyudha* is obliquely truncated and lost. Like CUM 650 the central figure is also carved out of the stele from the armpit down to the ankle in round. The stoutness of the legs, especially from the knees down to ankles, represents a feature of earlier tradition. The open palm of the normal right hand spread down ward in *varada* gesture and resting on a full bloom *padma* is sculpted with a small *utpala* at the middle. The remnant of the lower portion of the *gadā* is visible below the *padma*. With his normal left hand also resting on a *padma*, he holds a *śankha* with the twist of fingers. There is a *cakra* on his upper right hand having a multi-petal *padma* formation at its centre and small balls on the outer rim.

On the background of an extended and oval *śiraścakra* the conical *kirīṭamukuṭa* on the head of the god depicts exquisite embellishment. He is also adorned with a pair of ring on the elongated lobes of ears, *hāra* on the neck, *kaṭukas* on the wrist, *keyūras* on the arms, *kaṭijāla* and *kiṅkiṇis* but these show inferiority in execution compared with the work of *kirīṭamukuṭa*. There is a double-*yajñopavīta* fitted with an adapter-like piece and a *vanamālā* on his person. Three thin wavy single line obliquely carved on the chest represents a simple *uttarīya*. The loincloth is also depicted with some single oblique lines.

The consorts are also there on the either side of the god standing in *tribhaṅga* on their respective *padmapiṭhas*. The relief of different limbs of Lakṣmi shows imperfect module and weak execution. The depiction of ornaments and lower garments lack sharpness.

The remaining upper portion of the stele has some foliage in low relief. Behind the *cakra* a quacking duck is visible on the end of an architrave. Its other end might also have the similar image. Like CUM 650 and 652 there are also two wavy folded draperies hanging under the lower corner of the architrave from hooks. The *pañcaratha* pedestal has the usual *padma*-buds and *pujāris*.

Cat. No. Vais. 08
Viṣṇu
Provenance unknown/ 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 49 cm; W. 20.4 cm
CUM 651
Plate No. 10

The four-handed deity is carved out of the stele in round from below the armpit down to *kiṅkiṇi*-clad ankle along with the two legs modeled separately standing in *samapāda* on a *padmapiṭha* on a *pañcaratha* pedestal. The feature brings to light the inclusion of three-dimensional sculpting in the stele base of contemporary Bengal images. A *padmāṅka* is carved on the middle of the open palm of the lower right hand spread downward in the gesture of *varada* and resting on a full bloom *padma*. The lower left hand is defaced from the elbow along with the attribute *padma* and the head of the consort Sarasvatī. An evidence of the use of cement detected on the damaged elbow might be a capricious attempt of restoration. There is a long handled slender *gadā* in his upper right hand, its lower end resting on an *utpala* springing from the pedestal and a *cakra* on the upper left hand. With a *swastikā* sign in the middle, the *cakra* is distinctly sculpted and the knob of the *gadā* is embellished in tune with the apex of *mukuṭa*.

There is a *kirīṭamukuṭa* on the head of the god and *kuṇḍalas* on the extended lobes of ears. With open eyes and *trinayana* he stares at the visitors. The tip of the nose received a minor injury. The weighty *hāra* is prominent on the height of the *gomukha* torso with a diaphanous wavy *uttarīya* obliquely placed on the chest. The *kaṭukas* on the wrists display several designs but the *keyūras* on the arms are identical. He is also adorned with *kaṭijāla*, *kiṅkiṇi*, *yajñopavīta* and *vanamālā*. A *dhoti* with unusual tortuous and slanting line constitutes the lower garment of the deity.

The consort Lakṣmi is standing on the proper right of the central figure as usual in *tribhaṅga* on a *padmapiṭha* with a *cauri* in her right hand and the left akimbo. Sarasvatī also stands on a *padmapiṭha* in *tribhaṅga* on the left holding a *vinā* with her two hands. The ornaments and transparent garments of the consorts are almost incised on the elongated figures. The Śankha and the Cakrapuruṣas are also depicted in *tribhaṅga* showing *abhaya* with right hand and the left akimbo.

The apex of the stele is crowned with a *kīrttimukha* and a pair of Vidyādharas is flying in clouds on the either side of a multi-facetted oval *śiraścakra*. Sitting on the *makara*-end behind the *cakra* a Ghandharva is blowing a conch-shell; another Ghandharva figure is also visible on the other *makara*-end behind the upper right palm. The Gaja-Siṃha motif is sculpted in very low relief on either side of the torso. The central tier of the pedestal has a pair of *utpalas* springing from the same stalk of the *padmapīṭha*. The end of the second tiers of the pedestal is sculpted with kneeling *pujāri* figures, one on each side.

Cat. No. Vais. 09
Viṣṇu
Provenance unknown/ 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 67.6cm; W. 26.8cm
CUM 648
Plate No. 11

In respect of drawing, design and execution the sculpture seems to be an improved version of CUM 651. From the armpit down to ankle and the legs, the central figure is carved out of the stele in three dimensions and it stands in *samapāda* on a *padmapīṭha* on a *pañcaratha* pedestal. The open palm of the lower right hand spread downward in *varada* gesture having a little *padmārīka* carved in the middle and resting on a full-bloomed *padma*. With the lower left he holds a *śankha* by the twist of fingers composed in a *mudrā* and also resting on a *padma*, its long stalk rises from the pedestal. On his upper right hand there is a long staffed *gadā*, its lower end resting on an *utpala* springing from the pedestal. The upper left palm is defaced along with the *āyudha*.

There is a *kirīṭamukuṭa* on the head of the god and matching *kuṇḍalas* on the extended lobes of ears. The oval and open eyes along with the *trinayana* on a round puffed face display a charm of serene tranquility. The exquisitely carved ornaments are a remarkable feature of this sculpture. The prominent *hāra* round the neck, a diaphanous *uttarīya* placed obliquely on the chest and the dangling *yajñopavīta* have embellished the *gomukha* torso. He is also adorned with *kaṭakas*,

keyūras, *kaṭijāla*, *kiṅkiṇi*, and *vanamālā*. Tortuous and slanting double lines depict the lower garment.

Holding a *cauri* on her right hand and the left dangling at ease, the consort Lakṣmi stands on the proper right of the deity as usual in *tribhaṅga* on a *padmapīṭha*. Sarasvatī also stands alike on a *padmapīṭha* in *tribhaṅga* on the left holding a *vinā* with her two hands. A different ethnic type may be identified by observing their round and heavy busts on fleshy figures, execution of broad and rounded face and lively oval eyes. Attired with *kañcuka*, *ḍori sāḍi* and proper ornaments they are also looking majestic. In low relief the Śankha and the Cakrapuruṣas are also depicted in *tribhaṅga* showing *abhaya* with right hands and the lefts akimbo. The Śankhapuruṣa is only placed on a *padmapīṭha*.

The top of the pointed stele is embellished with a *kīrttimukha* and on its either side a pair of Vidyādharas is flying in clouds. There is a multi-faceted oval *śiraścakra* behind the head. Sitting on the *makara*-head of the architrave behind the broken *cakra* a Ghandharva is playing on a *vinā*; another Ghandharva with a hand fan is also visible on the other *makara*-end behind the upper right palm. The Gaja-Siṃha motif is sculpted in a very low relief and reversibly placed on the either side of the torso. The central tier of the pedestal has a pair of *utpala* springing from the same stalk of the *padmapīṭha*. The end of the second tiers of the pedestal is sculpted with a kneeling *pujāri* figure on the left and the Garuda on the right.

Cat. No. Vais. 10
Viṣṇu
Provenance unknown/ Early 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 55.6; W. 23.3 cm
CUM 336
Plate No. 12

On an elongated lotus seat with multi-facetted petals, the deity stands in *samapādasthānaka* posture. There is a neatly carved *śankha* on his prime left hand; a *padmārīka* sculpted on the principal right palm, a *sudarśanacakra* on the additional left hand and a gadrooned knobbed

gadā on the additional right hand. The ribbon of the *cakra* is depicted beside the left arm. He wears on his head a *kiriṭamukuṭa* with gadrooned embellishments on the apex akin to decoration on the knob of the *gadā*. The *kuṇḍalas* on the ears have two coils, one at the top and another at the bottom. The curled lobes of hairs dangle upon the shoulders in braids of flocks. He has *keyūras* on the main arms and *kaṭakas* on three wrists, the fourth being the additional left wrist adorned with string of pearl beads in three coils. The bejeweled *hāra* and a necklace in upturned trefoil formation embellished his chest. There are also *ūrujalaka* on the waist, *kiṅkiṇis* on the ankles and *upavīta* on the body. The transparent *uttarīya* and the loincloth are depicted in double wavy lines. The central figure is sculpted in high relief with a portion from underarm down to the feet being chiseled out of the stele.

The consorts of the god, Lakṣmi and Sarasvatī are standing on *padmapiṭha* in *tribhaṅga* beside their master. Their *mukuṭas* are seen partially hidden under the *padma* hand-rests of Viṣṇu. They are adorned with *kuṇḍalas*, *keyūras*, *kaṭakas*, *hāras*, *udarabandhas* and *kiṅkiṇis*. Both of these female figures have *kañcuka* as their upper garment and diaphanous *ḍori sāḍi* on the lower. A big flywhisk on the right hand of Lakṣmi has over shadowed the upper part of the low relief figure of Śankhapuruṣa and her other hand is depicted as *kaṭihasta*. Sarasvatī is playing on a single stringed *vīnā* using both her hands. The *tribhaṅga* figures of Cakra and Śankhapuruṣas standing on padmapita are sculpted in very low relief and are not distinct.

The apex of the pointed stele is decorated with a *kīrttimukha* and in cloud formation two flying Vidyādharas are, carrying club and *naibedyas* on their hands - one each on the either side of the *mukuṭa*. An oval *śiraścakra* embellished with a row of lotus petal is seen behind the head of the god. The sides of the stele are profusely decorated with architraves with *makara*-ends, sea horses, elephants and other decorative motifs. The *pañcaratha* pedestal has a horizontal frieze of *utpalas* and foliages, in the midst of which are sculpted in very low relief the figures of *pujāri* and Garuda.

Cat. No. Vais. 11
Viṣṇu
Provenance unknown/ 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 83.1 cm; W. 34 cm
CUM 781
Plate No. 13

The central figure of the sculpture bears a tinge of Gandhara influence in the execution of *uttarīya* and the loincloth. This impact had also been traced in numerous figures in terracotta unearthed in Vaṅga (Mukherjee, 2000: 57 and fn. 30). The very low flat-top *mukuṭa* might also have a bearing from the same tradition. The Kushanas were the ardent patron of the Gandhara art, and it is through them the tradition reached the Gangetic delta (Shakur, 1963: 3). The facial treatment also bears resemblance of the Gupta images. The flat embellishments along with the *udarabandha*, *uttarīya* and *upavīta* are executed in symmetry with the total presentation. The two lower hands of the god had been truncated from the elbow and lost along with the implements. With the upper right hand he holds a long staffed *gadā* with a small knob at its apex. There is a *cakra* on the upper left hand as usual. The god stands on a *padmapiṭha* in *ābhaṅga* on a *navaratha* pedestal.

The formation of the two-tiered *śiraścakra* behind the head has symmetry with the central figure in its emergence from the high shoulders. The locks of curled hairs are being spread over them. The god wears *kuṇḍalas* on the ears, *kaṭakas* on the wrists, *keyūras* on the arms and *kiṅkiṇis* on the ankles. He has fastened a smart *udarabandha* on his waist with loops hanging from it. The wavy *uttarīya* on the *gomukha* torso and a bi-linear *upavīta* are other adornments seen on the sculpture. The minute details of the ornaments, the *vanamālā*, the *padmapiṭha*, and the *utpalas* on the *rathas* do not match with the overall unadorned simplicity of style followed in the total structure.

The apex of the pointed stele is adorned with a *kīrttimukha* – its lower portion being extended with flora and foliage. Two Vidyādharas are flying on sky carrying garlands. The Gandharvas are playing *vīnā* – one each on the either end of the upper tier of the architrave, on the lower tier the same scene of a griffin hunching on the head of a kneeling Airāvata was repeated conversely on the either side. The stalk of the *padma* is depicted below the *ratha* with a pair of *utpalas*. The

kneeling figures of the Garuda and the donor-pairs are sculpted on the pedestal.

The consorts, Lakṣmi and Sarasvatī, are standing in *tribhaṅga* in their respective positions, but their *piṭhas* have been executed in simple style. The ornaments also lack any fine craftsmanship. Small figures of Śankha and Cakrapuruṣas are showing *abhaya* with their right hands and the lefts are placed akimbo.

Cat. No. Vais. 12
Viṣṇu
Provenance unknown/ 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 63.5; W. 32cm
CUM 903
Plate No. 14

In the center of a broad decorated stele stands the four-handed god. There are signs of vandalisatition on the *āyudhas* and portions of the hands of the central figure, the faces and limbs of the consorts and the face of the Vidyādhara flying on the right. There is a sculptor's error in carving the *ratha*, as the *rathas* on the either sides of the center are not same in number. Technically it may be a *trayodaśaratha* pedestal. The central tier of the *ratha* has *utpalas* and the stalk of the *padmāsana*. There is a kneeling *pujāri* on the center of second and third tires on the left and a floral carving on the extreme left tier. The kneeling *vāhana* Garuda loosing part of its head, shows *aṅjali* on the second and third tiers on the right, an *upacārdhāraka* is also sculpted behind it.

The god stands in *samapādasthānaka* on a *padmapiṭha* wearing a short but profusely embellished low *mukuṭa*. His serene face depicts a gentle smile. There are *kuṇḍalas* on his ears, *keyūras* on the arms and a broad *hāra* below the folded neck. There are some flowing locks on the shoulders, on the either sides of the *hāra*. A nipple is prominently shown on the right chest. The drawings of the wavy *uttarīya* on the *gomukha* torso and the loincloth are delicate and precise. The pearl *upavīta* hangs from the left shoulder, and dangles upon the *udarabandha* and *ūrujalaka*. The *vanamālā* added grace to the person and a pair of *kiṅkiṇis* adored the ankles.

The consorts Lakṣmi and Sarasvati stand in *tribhaṅga* on full-blown *padmas*, respectively on the right and left of the god. Lakṣmi holds a *cāmara* on her folded right hand and she clings to the stalk of the *padma* (*āyudha* of the god) with the left. Sarasvati plays on a *vinā*, working her fingers on the strings. Both the consorts are adorned with usual ornaments and *sādis*. There are also figures of Cakrapuruṣa and Śankhapuruṣa on the far right and left ends of the pedestal standing on *padmas* showing *abhaya*.

The apex of the pointed stele has an elaborate *kīrttimukha*, and on its either sides flies the Gandharvas in stylized clouds, each holding a garland and carrying a worshipper. There is a pair of oval and flat *śiraścakra* around the head carved with foliage. The ends of the horizontal member of architrave behind the shoulder of the god are embellished with *makaramukha*. Sitting beside the left *makaramukha* is a Kinnara musician, and on the right a Kinnara singer. The other images on the stele are, low relief vegetal foliages and a composite group of Gaja-Siṃhas.

Cat. No. Vais. 13
Viṣṇu
Provenance unknown/ 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 63.5cm; W. 38cm
CUM 902
Plate No. 15

The sculpture is chiseled on a broad stele, the upper portion of which is truncated and lost. The god stands in *samapāda* on an apparently square footrest, poorly embellished with *padma* petal and placed on a *pañcaratha* pedestal. The stiffness of the central figure and the treatment of the masculine form with a bulging hip, depict a unique execution. The facial expression of the deity and its consorts might have specific ethnic bearing. Like CUM 781, the two lower hands of the god are broken from the elbow and the associated implements defaced. The knob on the long staffed *gadā* is mutilated; the *cakra* on the upper-left hand has, fortunately, escaped damage.

The god wears on his head a high *kirīṭamukuṭa*, the elaborate *kuṇḍalas* on the ears matching with a befitting headgear. The *kaṭakas* on the wrists, the *keyūras* on the arms, the *hāra* round the neck, the *kiṅkiṇi* on the ankle, the *ūrujalaka* and the *udarabandha* are the other usual ornaments. The *gomukha* torso is wrapped with a simple *uttarīya* and an *upavīta* is hanging from the left shoulder. The 'U' shaped *vanamālā* is complementary to the outline created by shoulders and elbows.

The upper portion of the remaining stele is composed of an image of animal groups, almost the same scene inversely executed on the either side of the central figure. At the bottom and on the edge of an architrave, a dancing warrior is waving a shield on the back of a hunching elephant. Behind its back a roaring lioness is seen standing erect. Over it the big head of a charging elephant is sculpted beside the knob of the *gadā* on the left and a head of a hauling lion close to the *cakra* on the right. The lower portion of the stele has usual consort figures of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī associated with Śankhapuruṣa and Cakrapuruṣa on the subsidiary steles.

The central grid of the *ratha* is embellished with a stalk of *padma* with stylized leaves. The second tier of grids has the sitting *pujāri* on the left and the sitting *vāhana* Garuda on the right. The grids on the third tier have two *naibedyas*, one each on the either side. The tenon is also provided at the bottom to fit in a mortice. The elements chiseled on the stele are well balanced.

Cat. No. Vais. 14
Viṣṇu
Rajshahi/ 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 178.3; W. 81cm.
CUM 29
Donated by Nurul Quader Khan
Plate No. 16

In *samapādasthānaka* posture the deity stands on a *padmapiṭha*. His all hands are broken and all other attributes are lost except the lower part of of the *gadā* on the right. The apex of the *mukuṭa* is truncated and the knob of the implement *gadā* is missing. Other than these damages the sculpture is in a fine state of preservation. He wears a

striped diaphanous *uttarīya* and a loincloth studded with floral motif. The *kuṇḍalas* on the ears have locks of hairs beneath them. The other ornaments are *keyūras* on the arms, *hāra* and pearl-lace round the neck and *ūrujalaka* on the waist. There is also a pair of chain anklet on the feet. A *vanamālā* hangs from the neck and spreads down to the knee. He also has a *yajñopavīta* on the body.

He has on his right side his consort Sri standing in *tribhaṅga* on the *padmapiṭha* and holding a *cauri* (flywhisk) on her right hand. On her far-right stands the Śankhapuruṣa. On his left stands again in *tribhaṅga* his another consort Sarasvatī on a *padmapiṭha* with *vinā* on her right hands. There is the Cakrapuruṣa on her far-left conveying *abhaya* with his right hand. The *saptaratha* pedestal shows a kneeling *pujāri* on the left on a *padma* and the Garuda on the right in *añjali mudrā*.

The apex of the pointed stele is carved with a *kīrttimukha*. A pair of Vidyādharas flies a little below this – one on the either side – holding garlands. Around the *śiraścakra* is seen the stylized sky. On the lintel with *makara*-ends sit the Gandharva couples. The Gaja-Siṃha motifs are carved on either side of the stele.

This type of Viṣṇu is very rare and the only other fragmentary stone specimen is preserved in the Dinajpur Museum.

Cat. No. Vais.15
Viṣṇu
Provenance unknown/ 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 81.5; W. 34.5cm
CUM 767
Donated by Varendra Research Museum
Plate No. 17

The deity stands on a *padmapiṭha* in *samapādasthānaka* posture and has four hands. He has in his upper right hand the implement *gadā* with a decorated knob, on the lower the *padma*, in his upper left hand the *cakra* and *śankha* on the lower. His two lower hands are resting on open *padmas*. He wears on his head a *kirīṭamukuṭa* embellished with a decorated vase with gadrooned neck and a flower motif on its top. The

uttarīya and the *dhoti* have wavy line on them as decoration. He has *kuṇḍalas* on the ears, *keyūras* on the arms, *hāra* on the neck and *ūrujalakā* on the waist. He has a *vanamālā* hanging from his neck and a *yajñopavīta* on his body. The sculpture except a small damage on the lower right palm of the central figure, is almost entirely preserved.

His consorts Sri holding a *cauri* on her right hand and Sarasvatī with *vinā*, as usual, stand on his right and left sides. The Śankhapuruṣa and the Cakrapuruṣa showing *abhaya mudrā* with their right hands and the left hands on the hip are also depicted on the either sides of the consorts. All the subsidiary figures stand in *tribhaṅga* posture on the *padmapiṭhas*. The consorts wear long, slack and diaphanous lower garments with usual coiffures and ornaments. There is a line of inscription in *Nāgarī* characters inscribed just below the *padmapiṭha* of the central figure. Amidst a panel embellished with plants and *utpala* motifs on the two-tiered *pañcaratha* pedestal are carved a half-kneeling *pujāri* on the either ends.

The stele of this sculpture is overworked with profusely decorated motifs of sky, animals, plants, and architraves with *makara*-ends and a *kīrttimukha* at the top. A pair of Vidyādharas holding garlands flies beside the *śiraścakra*.

Cat. No. Vais. 16
Viṣṇu (Three strewn pieces)
Provenance unknown/ 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 36.83cm; W. 12.7cm and H. 26.67cm; W. 19.05 and H. 22.86; W. 12.97.
CUM 531
Plate No. 18

The strewn pieces may be identified as the upper portion, the middle portion and the lower portion of an image. The upper portion has on its center the head of Viṣṇu adorned with a bejeweled high *kirīṭamukuṭa*. The floral embellishments on the either lower ends of the *mukuṭa* are also minute and attractive. The workmanship of the *kuṇḍalas* denotes sculptor's mature ability. The petal ornamentation of the oval halo and the flowing lace on its sides added grace to the mood manifested in facial expression. The apex of the pointed stele though broken, one can

still enjoy the charm of the neatly carved foliage. The flying Vidyādharas carry *naibedya* on hand, and worshippers on back.

The truncated middle portion bears remnants of two broken left hands, *keyūra* ornament on the usual left elbow, a segment of *vanamālā*, a fraction of architrave and one partial and three miniature figures of Daśāvatāra figures standing on full-blown double-*padmas*. The Avatāras are, from top, Vāmana, Trivikrama, Vāmana and Rāma. Vegetal scrolls are also faintly visible on the right edge of the stele.

The upper edge of the lower portion is uneven and rough but depicts a composite *triratha* pedestal. From the rough upper edge emerge three pairs of feet, on full-blown, neatly carved *padma* – their stalks emanate from the floor. The composition of the central tier of the *ratha* bear a *padmapiṭha*, a pair of *kiṅkiṇi* clad feet and the kneeling Garuda on *utpala* with floral scroll on its either side. Superimposition of the Garuda on the center of the *padma* petals and the curve of the scrolls underneath the *padma* illustrate a unique composition. Two kneeling *pujāris* are also depicted on the pedestal, one each in between the *padmas*. A robust tenon has been placed underneath the pedestal.

Cat. No. Vais.17
Garuḍārūḍha Viṣṇu
Mirsarai, Chittagong/ 9th Century AD
Sand Stone/ H. 92; W. 57.6cm
CUM 27
Donated by Mohiuddin Hossain Bacchu
Plate No. 19

The minute carvings of the sculpture are defaced and only the volume of the relief remains. The regular outline of the stele is also lost and a portion on its lower left end is truncated. The mass at the middle has retained its contour and is identified as a four-handed figure of Viṣṇu sitting in *pralambapadāsana* on the back of a Garuda flying towards his right – which is not usual. Probably he had a short flat-top *mukuṭa* upon his head, as observed in other early sculptures of this deity.[1]

[1] For examples please see: Rahman, 1998, p. 70, pl. 84; p. 71, pl. 86.

The *vāhana* Garuda might have also been adorned with a tiara-like ornament. But other ornaments and garments – if there was any on the figures – are weathered and lost. The pointed stele had an embellishment at its apex – it may be a *kīrttimukha* and the two masses on the either side of the head of the god were the figures of flying Vidyādharas. The other bulged portions on the stele are not clearly identifiable. There is no indication of having a pedestal at its bottom.

Cat. No. Vais.18
Garuḍārūḍha Viṣṇu
Provenance unknown/ 11th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 54cm; W. 26cm
CUM 783
Courtesy: Department of Archaeology, GOB
Plate No. 20

The god is depicted sitting in *pralambapadāsana* on the back of a kneeling Garuda on a *viśvapadma*, which is providing support to his feet by its hands. With his four hands the god holds - clockwise from lower right hand - *padma, gadā, cakra* and a disfigured *śankha*. The sculpture has suffered damages here and there. The *kirīṭamukuṭa* is battered; the lower lip along with the chin is defaced, the upper right hand holding handle of the mace and a portion of the middle part of handle mutilated, the lower left hand with attribute and the fingers of the right hand marred. The left and right knees of the deity have also undergone injury. The face and knees of the Garuda got dilapidated.

The deity and its vehicle Garuda are adorned with almost identical ornaments. These are *kuṇḍala, keyūra, kaṭaka, hāra* and a pair of *kiṅkiṇi* or chain anklet. The *kaṭijāla* of the Garuda is visible and small portions of this ornament depicted on the thighs of the god. Both are dressed with simple *uttarīya* but only the loincloth of the Garuda is exposed to view.

The pointed stele has a *kīrttimukha* at its top and is embellished with a line of foliage on the rim. A pair of bouquet bearing Vidyādharas flies on the either side of the *śiraścakra* on pieces of sky. Each Vidyādhara carries a *pujāri* on the folded leg. A raised band on the inner side and an elaborate floral motif on the outer border are noticeable on the *prabhāvalī*.

Below the canopy of the *viśvapadma* a horizontal scenario is sculpted on the *pañcaratha* pedestal. It contains (from left to right) a kneeling *pujāri* in *añjali mudrā*; keeping a *cauri* on the right shoulder Viṣṇu-consort Sri is sitting with a lotus bud on her raised left hand; a pair of *utpala*; sitting Sarasvatī plays on the *vinā* and an *utpala* repeated.

Cat. No. Vais. 19
Veṇugopāla
Provenance unknown/ Modern
Fine Basalt/ H. 55cm; W.15cm.
CUM 665
Courtesy: Department of Archaeology, GOB
Plate No. 21

The deity stands on a *viśvapadma* in a dancing pose. His two hands are depicted in the attitude of playing a flute. Other than a pair of simple ear ornament the god is unadorned. There is a disk-like element that holds a tuft of hair at the centre of his head. The pleated loincloth is fastened into a *komarabandha*, which consist of a row of pendants.

Cat. No. Vais. 20
Bālagopāla
Provenance unknown/ Modern
Fine Basalt/ L. 17.6cm; B. 14cm
CUM 670
Purchased
Plate No. 22

The child god is seen crawling with left hand, left foot and left knee on the ground, holding the butterball on the upturned and half-closed right palm. The deity is unadorned but his long earlobes are pierced, probably to fix some ornaments afterwards. There is a disk element upon his head as a part of hairdo, through which a tuft of hair is visible. The three fold eyebrows are unusual and his eyeballs are lost. The tip of the nose is exceptionally sharp. There are some folds of skin on the neck and waist of this roly-poly infantile god.

Saiva Images

Cat. No. Saiv. 01
Śiva-*liṅga*
North Bengal/ 10th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 76cm
CUM 777
Donated by Varendra Research Museum
Plate No. 23

The projected round pedestal adorned with a flush bead on the rim have another protruded projection above embellished with double flush bead on the neck. The Gauripaṭṭa is sculpted upon this *piṭha* with a doubly outlined *nāla* for oblations projecting out of it and a peak formation at its centre. The channels have an outstretching mouth as it comes out of a throat. The cylindrical Pujābhāga of the *liṅga* having a smooth rounded top rises from the Gauripaṭṭa. The total sculpture bearing Brahmabhāga, Viṣṇubhāga and Rudrabhāga is carved out of a single block of stone.

The Supreme Being Mahādeva, the spiritual progeny of *Rigvedic* Rudra, combines in himself the powers of creation and destruction and he is generally depicted as the phallic symbol *liṅga* in union with the female organ *yoni*.

The phallus is a very popular form of Śaiva image worshipped in Bengal. It constitutes the nucleus of a village shrine in a monotonous-repetitive form.

Cat. No. Saiv. 02
Caturmukha- *liṅga*
Probably from North Bengal/ 10th Century AD
Coarse Basalt/ H. 55cm
CUM 778
Donated by Varendra Research Museum
Plate No. 24

The Liṅgam has on its side bust of four identical goddesses. They are adorned with low-height *kirīṭamukuṭa*, *kuṇḍala* and *hāra*. The sculpture is in a state of severe decay and most of its fine carves are weathered away. It conforms to the *Liṅgas* of the Caturmukha type. The unobtrusive square tenon of this sculpture has query mark on its body.

Enamul Haque reported eleven sculptures on sandstone of "... *liṅgas* carved with four female figures in *añjali* pose." (Haque, 1992: 134). He has also suggested "these specimens are a Tāntric exposition of a syncretic concept depicting phallic emblem of Śiva in conjugation with the *Śakti*." (Haque, 1992: 135). The sculpture under study does not have any other attribute as it only contain the busts.

Cat. No. Saiv. 03
Lying Śiva
Provenance unknown/ Modern.
Fine Basalt/ L. 67cm; B. 32cm
CUM 593
Plate No. 25

The lower part of a Kālī image and the rest is missing. Kālī is a stark naked four-armed young woman has only a garland of human heads and standing with her right foot on the middle of the chest of lying Śiva and the left on the right thigh. Two rectangular apertures on the chest and the thigh of the present image bear evidence of the missing Kālī.

The two eyes of Śiva are opened wide with arched eyebrows and a third eye at the center of the forehead. The openings of his nostrils are also wide with a neatly attired moustache below. His hair is combed backward in robust locks in the shape of serpents. The ears are also adorned with coiled serpents. A big snake goes around his neck and raises his hood above the left shoulder but the upper portion of the hood is broken and lost. Hissing serpents are also used as *keyūras*, *kaṭakas* and *kiṅkiṇis*. The god holds a *ḍamaru* on his right hand and his left palm is truncated from above the wrist. The raised phallus is mutilated. Both foots are broken from the ankle. The ends of the back-slab are unevenly rounded.

Cat. No. Saiv. 04
Umā-Maheśvara
Provenance unknown/ 9th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 46cm; W. 23cm
CUM 653
Plate No. 26

The upper portion and the left margin of the stele are truncated and the right knee of Umā is badly defaced. The wrist of normal right hand and the *āyudha* on the grip of additional right and left hands of Śiva are also damaged. There are scratches on the faces of the god and the goddess. Other than these damages, the image is in a good state of preservation.

The four-handed god sits in *lalitāsana* with his right leg pendent and resting on a full-bloomed lily supported on the upturned head of the crouching Nandin sitting on the pedestal. The bull also carries on his back the image of the Liṅgam. Folding the right leg into her genital the Devi sits upon the left thigh of Śiva, her right knee touches the *urdhamukhaliṅgam*. The god fondles the left nipple of the rounded breast and presses her to his left chest with his normal left hand. Umā clasps the right shoulder of Śiva with her right hand and holds a *darpaṇa* on the left. Her left leg is also pendent and resting on a lily sprouting from the *pañcaratha* pedestal.

The three-eyed god wears a *jaṭāmukuṭa* upon his head and the Devi has an usual *kirīṭamukuṭa*. They wear *kuṇḍalas* of different designs on their ears and *hāras* on their necks. The *kaṭakas* are simple on the wrists of Śiva and the left hand of Umā. Both the god and goddess have *upavītas* on their persons, and only Śiva wears an armlet. The diaphanous lower garment of the Devi is elaborate in graphics and fastened around her waist by a *kaṭibandha*. The bare foot of the god and the goddess are adorned with *kiṅkiṇis*.

The central core of the *ratha* contains the *vāhana* lion of Umā with the dancing Bhṛṅgin to its right. There is also a *naibedya* on the right end of the pedestal. The details of the face of the *vāhana* in some of these sculptures depict non-animal facial features.

Cat. No. Saiv. 05
Umā-Maheśvara
Provenance unknown/ 10th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 38cm; W. 24.8cm
CUM 654
Plate No. 27

The upper portion of the stele is truncated in an irregular curve. The right shoulder of Śiva; face, left hand and the right knee of Umā are defaced. The four-handed god sits on a *lalitāsana* with the Devi placed upon his left thigh and embracing each other with deep emotion. Her sitting posture is partially different from the other similar images of the collection. He lifts her chin with the index and middle fingers of the normal right hand and embraces her with his left putting the palm below the left breast of Devi. With the additional right hand the god uphold a *nīlotpala* and with the left a *triśūla*. Umā put her right hand upon the shoulder of Śiva. Her right leg is folded and the left is pendent and resting upon the upper fringe of the *padmāsana*. An open lily, its stem emerging from the *ratha*, supports the pendent right leg of Śiva. The tip of the *urdhaliṅga* is partially visible behind the left heel of the god.

The god and the goddess are profusely adorned with *mukuṭas* and jewelries, the *jaṭāmukuṭa* of Śiva being executed prominently - that influenced the hairdo of his consort. The designs of *kuṇḍalas*, *hāra* and *ūrujalaka* are also alluring. They also wear *upavītas* on their person and the diaphanous *ḍori sāḍi* gave a neat appearance to the Devi.

The remains of a trefoil arch are there behind the couple, supported on vertical pillars with capital. Wavy draperies are hanging from its fringe. The dado of the *pañcaratha* pedestal depicts an ancient frieze, composed of men, animals and chimeric elements. A half-kneeling *pujāri* is appeasing the *vāhana* of Śiva by scratching its tail, Nandin crouching at ease on the pedestal, a skeletal dancing figure waving a sword behind its head, and the lion *vāhana* of the Devi. The remains of a broken tenon are also seen below the pedestal.

Cat. No. Saiv. 06
Umā-Maheśvara
Provenance unknown/ 10th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 40cm.; W. 22.5cm.
CUM 586
Plate No. 28

The divine couple is depicted in *ālingana* on a double lotus. The *urdhaliṅga* Śiva has four hands. The faces of the god and goddess along with some parts of their limbs and *mukuṭas* are defaced and the upper portion of the back slab is broken. He lifts the face of his consort in adoration with the right hand and presses her to his chest with the left putting his cupped palm below her left breast. There is a *nīlotpala* on his additional right hand and a *tridaṇḍi* on the additional left. His pendent right leg is resting on an open lily supported on the uplifted head of the crouching Nandin as in CUM 653. The two-handed Devi sits on the folded left leg of the god in *lalitāsana* posture. She deeply embraces Śiva with her right hand and holds a *darpaṇa* on the left. Her pendent left leg is placed on a lily and the right is folded inward to her genital.

The couple is adorned with sumptuous jewelries. The wristlet on the left hand of the Devi resembles those on the hands of Kokāmukha Durgā (CUM 666) of this collection. The *upavīta* of Umā is prominent, while it is only partly seen on the lower garments of Śiva. A *ḍori sāḍi* is fastened with a *kaṭibandha* around the waist of the goddess as usual.

The back slab has an architrave behind the couple, which is embellished with the hanging draperies. The *pañcaratha* pedestal depicts (from left to right) a half kneeling *pujāri*, the crouching Nandin, a skeletal dancing figure, a lion and a *naibedya*. The *vāhanas* are sitting upon open lilies. There is a tenon below the pedestal.

Cat. No. Saiv. 07
Umā-Maheśvara
Provenance unknown/ 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 59 cm.; W. 28 cm.
CUM 771
Donated by Varendra Research Museum
Plate No. 29

Under a trefoil-arch on piers[1] and on the *lalitāsana*, the three-eyed Śiva is seen embracing Umā and drawing her closer with one of his left hands placing it just below her left breast. He lifts her chin in adoration with his normal right hand as they look intently at each other's face. He holds an *utpala* on his additional right hand and with left a *triśūla*. With the right leg pendant, his foot rests on a *padma* placed on the back of the Nandi bull. Umā sits on the folded left leg of the god folding her own right leg and places her pendant left leg on a *padma*. She clasps the right shoulder of Śiva with her right hand, presses him to her right bosom, and holds a *darpaṇa* or mirror with her left hand.

Only the *jaṭāmukuṭa* of the god is mutilated, and the rest of the image is in a fine state of preservation. Both the god and goddess have worn elegant pieces of ornaments – they are *kuṇḍala*, *kaṭaka*, *keyūra*, *hāra*, *kaṭijāla* and *kiṅkiṇi* or chain anklet. Mention may be made of the tiara worn by the goddess and the specific hairdo "in slanting cone at the back of the head" (Sahay, 1975: 104) with a short tassel and knot associated with it. Their *uttamārdhas* are bare and they wore only *dhoti* as lower garment. The god has also worn a *yajñopavīta* on the body.

An elaborate *kīrttimukha* is depicted on the apex of the pointed stele. The flying Vidyādharas with garland in hand and carrying a *pujāri* each on their folded leg is also sculptured on the either flanks of the

[1] The decorations on pier embellishments in this sculpture conform in design to some piers provided in the Sultanate architecture of Bengal. Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture* (Islamic Period). (Bombay: Taraporevala, Fourth Ed., 1964), pl. XXIX, from a mosque at Tribeni, Hooghly (1298).

The Chittagong University Museum has in its collection an identical pier from the ruins of a Sultanate mosque in Chittagong. Shamsul Hossain, *Heritage of Chittagong : A Study of the Muslim Monuments*, (Chittagong University Ph. D. thesis, unpublished, 2008), Photograph No. 22.

kīrttimukha. The *saptaratha* pedestal contains *upacāras*, a pair of kneeling *pujāris*, the *vāhana* bull (mentioned earlier), the dancing Bhṛṅgin, the *vāhana* lion and a dancing ghost.

Cat. No. Saiv. 08
Umā-Maheśvara
Provenance unknown/ 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 62cm.; W. 26cm.
CUM 772
Plate No. 30

Śiva and Umā embracing each other sitting on a *lalitāsana* under a trefoil-arch on pillars. The apex of the arch is embellished with a diamond shaped décor in symmetry with the stylized long tongue of the *kīrttimukha*. The four-armed god lifts the face of his consort putting the index finger of the normal right hand below her chin in admiration. He places the normal left hand below the left breast and draws her closer on his left chest. On the folded additional right hand he holds an *utpala* and on the left a *triśūla*. Umā is two-armed and hug Śiva by putting her right arm on his right shoulder and upholds a *darpaṇa* with her folded left hand. Both the figures are adorned with headgears and other ornaments.

The god put his pendant right leg on the head and back of his *vāhana* Nandin, which also sits on an *utpala*. On his folded left leg sits Umā with her right leg folded and left pendant on an *utpala*, that emerges from the back of a crouching and recumbent lion. The left end of the *pañcaratha* pedestal depicts a couple of *pujāris* sitting on an *utpala* with an arch behind. Two dancing figures on the either side of lion are of Bhṛṅgin and ghost.

The upper portion of the pointed stele is embellished with foliage and figures. The apex of the stele is sculpted with a *kīrttimukha*, sitting on a double folded pedestal on the left side Gaṇeśa eats *modaka* from the left palm. Mahādeva also sits on a double folded pedestal on the right in *dhyānāsana*. There is a *haṃsa* with a string of pearls on the beak upon the left elbow of the arch; a *makaramukha* kisses an *upacārdhāraka* on the right.

Cat. No. Saiv. 09
Nandin
Provenance unknown/ 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ L. 25cm; B. 12cm
CUM 661
Courtesy: Department of Archaeology, GOB
Plate No. 31

The couchant Vṛṣabha *vāhana* of Śiva on a simple pedestal depicts nothing but a theriomorphic form. The unadorned bull figure is vibrant with ample physical strength. The execution of a pair of short horns, the lifted ears, the robust hump and the coiled tail represent a realistic tradition.

Other than a *vāhana*, Nandin is also considered as an attendant of Śiva. In this role, he is presented in a human form. In the post-Vedic period Śiva himself was symbolized in the form of a Vṛṣabha. The sage Nandikeśvara was a member of Śiva's retinue and occasionally acted as his doorkeeper. The *Purānas* contain several accounts of his transformation into the divine and the semi-divine forms. "These include his recognition as another form of Śiva from whom, in some cases, his representations are sometimes almost indistinguishable." (Mitchell, 1982: pl. 36).

Cat. No.Saiv. 10
Virabhadra
Provenance unknown/ c.10th Century AD
Porous Sand Stone/ H. 33cm; W. 18cm
CUM 667
Courtesy: Department of Archaeology, GOB
Plate No. 32

The small stele is awfully weathered and its minute carvings are defaced. The vestige of an anthropomorphic low relief sculpture depicts a dwarf figure on the slab with rounded apex. His right hand is drawn towards his belly, but its palm along with the attribute has become amorphous and there is a mace on his left hand.

The figure is adorned with a high tiara on his head and the remains of a pair of *kuṇḍalas* are faintly visible on the ears. Probably there was a *hāra* round the neck. His lower garment has lost its fabric quality and texture.

His face is proportionately big. The relatively high mount of eyebrows with glassy eyeballs and large mouth there under make his look frightful. Virabhadra is considered to be a companion of Śiva. The legend provides that Śiva became furious and gave birth to Virabhadra when Satī – the daughter of Yakṣa – died on hearing the abuses about her husband. (Sarkar, BS 1380: 366-367).

Saura Images

Cat. No. Saur. 01

Sūrya

Provenance unknown/ c. late 8th Century AD

Coarse Basalt/ H. 82.5cm (without tenon); W. 49cm

CUM 782

Plate No. 33

The deity stands in *udichyaveśa* in *samapāda* on a *padmapiṭha*. A massive upper portion of the stele is truncated. The central figure dominates a relatively plain back slab with the subsidiary figures beneath its waist. The relative flatness of the low carvings and stockiness of the central figure bears incipient features associated with Kushana idioms. The high eyebrow of the deity is usually recognized as a Gupta tradition. On the wide-open eyes are added the details of cornea. A third eye is seen over the valley of the brows. The sunken images of the sculpted figures having a closer affinity with the stele is also seen in the art of Muṇḍeśvari Sūrya of Shahabad in Bihar dated to c.7th Century AD (Huntington, 1984: fig. 23). With his upturned palms and twisted fingers the god holds with his two hands the stalks of *padmas* rising upward. The left palm along with the full bloom *padma* is defaced, and the *padma* on the right is lost with the broken stele.

He wears on his head a medium-height flat-top *kirīṭamukuṭa*, showing the frontal portion of the combed hairs and the locks lying upon the shoulders in braids. The remains of a circular halo is clearly discernible behind the head. The backrest of the chariot is chiseled behind the god with horizontal and vertical members. The last mentioned is embellished with a capital. The end of a neatly designed armband is fluttering on its sides. He has *kuṇḍalas* on the lobes of elongated ears, *keyūras* as armband, *kaṭakas* on the wrists and *hāra* below the folded neck. The transparent tunic of the deity is adorned with linear embroidery on the trunk including the pearl *kausṭuva*. A pearl *upavīta* hangs on it from the left shoulder. The tunic is also embellished with a knotted band on the upper abdomen. The textured loincloth is wrapped firm around the waist with a *kaṭibandha* and a slanting belt goes round over the thighs with a heavy sword on the left. The lower end of the *dhoti* is embellished with a thin fold and a parallel linear engraving.

The god wears high-boots and Mahāśvetā stands between the legs. She holds a stalk of a *padma* with her raised right hand and a *kamaṇḍalu*

with the lowered left. Her face is chipped off and Aruṇa sitting before her holds reins with the left hand. With the raised right hand he commands the chariot.

There are two groups of figures, each group containing three forms sculpted on the either side of the central figure. The formation of the groups is remarkable and distinguishing – representing sculptor's visual agility. On the extreme right side of the stele stands Piṅgala, carrying pen and inkpot. Consort Nikusbha holds a flywhisk on the lowered right hand and keeps the folded left hand below the breast. The archer Uṣā is embedded in a sitting position on the pedestal, holding a bow on the right and the left hand keeping high in a martial posture. On the extreme left side of the stele stands Daṇḍin, his right palm being mutilated, he holds a *gadā* on his left hand. Another consort of the god Rājñī stands in front of Daṇḍin. Her right hand is akimbo and she shows *abhaya* with the left. Sitting in an opposite direction of Uṣā of the other side, Pratyuṣā is also engaged as an archer.

In the center of the *triratha* pedestal is a *padma* having a galloping recumbent horse superimposed within its circumference. On its either side and on the first tire of the *ratha* are sculpted two horses galloping on the opposite direction. The second tiers of the *ratha* contain two other galloping horses on each following the direction of the horse of the central tier. On the extreme left end of the pedestal is seen a modestly kneeling *pujāri*.

Cat. No. Saur. 02
Sūrya
Provenance unknown/ 10th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 63cm.; W. 31cm.
CUM 656
Plate No. 34

The god stands in *samapāda* on the top of a *saptaratha* pedestal. From the twist of his fingers emerge the folded stalks of two lotuses above the shoulders. His body is relatively bulky. He wears on his head a *kirīṭamukuṭa* and his earlobes are adorned with *kuṇḍalas*. Behind the head is seen a bi-linear oval *śiraścakra*. The forehead has a sign in its centre. His eyes are opened wide associated with arched eyebrows like

CUM 782. Below the folds of neck is a *hāra*, and there hangs an *upavīta* on the bare upper body. Behind the rugged palms the *kaṭakas* are placed on the wrists. The loincloth is wrapped around the waist and fixed by an *ūrujalaka*. A sword in scabbard hangs from a slanting belt on the left side. The god wears a pair of high boot.

The contour of the upper stele is embellished with a broad tapered band. The pot-bellied and bearded Piṅgala, standing on the extreme left end of the pedestal, enjoys inking his pen. He is adorned with *mukuṭa* and *kuṇḍalas* and wears high boots. Nikusbha stands on his right in *tribhaṅga* and holds a *cāmara* with the folded right hand and the left akimbo. She wears a low *mukuṭa* but her other ornaments are not legible. A pair of high boots is attached to her foot. Uṣā is drawn in martial action below the left knee of Piṅgala. Daṇḍin standing on the extreme right end of the pedestal shows *abhaya* with his folded right hand and the left in akimbo. He is adorned with *mukuṭa* and other ornaments. Another consort Rājñī raises her right hand in happiness and the left rest on waist and stands in *tribhaṅga*. She wears boots and her *mukuṭa* and ornaments are clearly recognizable. The figure of archer Pratyuṣā - in front of Daṇḍin below his knees - is partially chipped off.

Mahāśvetā stands below the knees of the god, right hand keeping underneath the breasts in fold and holding a *kamaṇḍalu* with the lowered left hand. Her *mukuṭa* is defaced and other ornaments are faintly visible. The little figure of Aruṇa commands the chariot sitting in front of her. Each tier of the *saptaratha* contains a forceful galloping horse.

Cat. No. Saur. 03
Sūrya
Provenance unknown/ 11th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 75 cm.; W. 37 cm.
CUM 769
Donated by Varendra Research Museum
Plate No. 35

The god stands on a *padmapiṭha* in a *samapādasthānaka* posture. His eyes are obeisant by a downward gaze in a polite facial expression. From below the armpit of the central figure and down to the feet, there

is a perforation separating the major portion of figure from the stele. He holds with the twisted fingers the stalks of two lotuses that rise from his upturn palms in serpentine form. He wears a high *kirīṭamukuṭa* on his head, *kuṇḍalas* on his ears, *keyūras* on the arms, *kaṭakas* on the wrists, *hāra* round the neck, *katiajala* on the waist and a pair of boots on the feet. A *yajñopavīta* has also adorned his person. The upper garments on all the figures can be identified as short transparent tunics associated with *Udichya* tradition and they wore *dhoti* on the lower part of the body. The rhomboid pearl *kausṭuva* is prominently placed on the *gomukha* torso of the god. Gerd Mevissen has pointed out the absence of a sheathed sword usually found hanging by the left thigh of the image along with the thin shawl running behind its back. (Haque and Gail, 2008: 290) He has on his right the pot-bellied and bearded attendant Piṅgala, on the left stands Daṇḍin or Daṇḍanāyaka in *tribhaṅga* in subsidiary steles. Piṅgala has a pen on his right hand and an inkpot on the left. Daṇḍin poses with his right hand as if holding an *akṣamālā* and the left in *ūru-hasta*. All the subsidiary figures are also adorned with befitting *mukuṭas* and ornaments. The principal deity is not provided with a throne-back, where as those are there for his attendants Piṅgala and Daṇḍin. ((Haque and Gail, 2008: 293)

The pointed stele is almost plain and there is a garland bearing Vidyādhara in the midst of sky depicted on the either side of the neat double-rimmed oval *śiraścakra*. The kneeling female attendants Uṣā and Pratyuṣā are seen shooting arrows in the opposite directions from the central figure sitting on extended frames behind the stele of Daṇḍin and Piṅgala. The *pañcaratha* pedestal of this sculpture bears in low relief a chariot drawn by seven forceful galloping horses conducted by the club waving Aruṇa – the central horse is being put inside a ring.

The image shows excellence in conception, plan, and execution. The sculptor achieved harmony in his work by mingling high restrain with creative imagination. The austere stele has uplifted the carved forms and highlighted the minute modulations.

Cat. No. Saur. 04
Navagraha
Probably from North Bengal/ 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 27 cm.; W. 66 cm.
CUM 773
Donated by Varendra Research Museum
Plate No. 36

A vertical stone slab presents in a line a group of ten figures. From the left it begins with Gaṇeśa, succeeded by Ravi, Soma, Maṅgala, Budha, Bṛhaspati, Śukra, Śani, Rāhu and Ketu. All the deities have two hands and are adorned with *mukuṭas* and ornaments. The right hands of Soma, Maṅgala, Bṛhaspati, Sukra and Śani are depicted in the same manner. They all stand individually in their respective poses on *viśvapadmas* and other than Rahu and Ketu, the *vāhanas* of eight Grahas being sculpted below the *padmapiṭhas*. *Śiraścakras* are drawn behind the head of all the figures having some common elements in the embellishments.

The pot-bellied Gaṇeśa and hoary Ketu have been robustly portrayed. The faces of Maṅgala and Budha along with the *mukuṭa* of Bṛhaspati have suffered minor damages. Following a set artistic tradition, this vertical slab also bears two traits of a stele – the forms of a curved apex and a wedge on its right and left respectively.

Sākta Images

Cat. Sakt. 01
Māheśvarī
Provenance unknown/ 10th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 35cm; W. 17.5 cm
CUM 655
Courtesy: Department of Archaeology, GOB
Published (Rahman, 1989: 52-53)
Plate No. 37

The goddess sits in *lalitāsana* on a *viśvapadma*. Her right leg is pendent and supported on an open lily held on the back of the *vāhana*. Her left leg is folded. She has four hands and holds a *triśūla* with the normal right and a *ghaṇṭā* with the normal left. There is a *ḍamaru* on her additional right hand and a *padma* on the left. But the sculpture lacks refinement and proportion.

The *trinayanā* deity is adorned with high *jaṭāmukuṭa*, *kuṇḍalas*, *hāra*, *mālā*, *keyūras*, *bartanā/ bātānā*, *kaṭijāla* and *kiṅkiṇis*. An *upavīta* is also seen on his upper body. Her garments are not prominent and may be assumed that she is short dressed. The Devi has a slim waist and fully developed breasts.

The apex of the austere pointed stele has a stylized *padma* and a pair of Vidyādharas with garlands on the either side. The double-rimmed *śiraścakra* is depicted on the background of head of the goddess. The periphery of the stele is embellished with a ribbon type decoration. In a *pañcaratha* pedestal the *vāhana* bull is sculpted on the centre and there is the kneeling *pujārī* on the left and a *naibedya* on the right. The sculpture of Māheśvarī depicted alone is extremely rare.

Mukhlesur Rahman first studied this sculpture and opined that the discovery of this unique image as an outcome of the activities of the smuggler is an amazing event. His attention was also attracted to the bulky treatment of this *mātṛkā*, in relation to other examples found in Bangladesh. (Rahman, 1989: 52-53).

Enamul Haque has reported three strikingly similar images of a four-armed Devi, and after examining the attributes and the vehicles of these deities identified them to be the emanation of Maheśvara. Each image has a child on its lap held by the lower left hand, and with the other three hands they hold clockwise a lotus bud (or a fruit ?), sword

and shield. Dr. Haque assumes that the attributes and the child in lap represent a combination of *ghora* and *saumya* aspects. (Haque, 1992: 258-259). But the CUM image do not carry a child in its lap and the other attributes in hands also do not tally with the images preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum and the State Archaeological Gallery, Kolkata.

Cat. No. Sakt. 02
Umā
Provenance unknown/ 12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 53cm; W. 29cm
CUM 664
Courtesy: Department of Archaeology, GOB
Plate No. 38

The four-handed Devi in a *samapādasthānaka* posture stands on a double-petalled *padmapiṭha*. With her upper right hand she holds an *akṣamālā* and a *liṅga* is sculpted in high relief at its back. A miniature image of Gaṇeśa is placed on the top left of the decorated border band. Her lower right palm depicts *varada mudrā* with a *padmārika* at the centre. She holds a *tridaṇḍī* in her upper left hand and a *kamaṇḍalu* with her lower left hand.

The deity has an elaborate hairdo with a high *jaṭāmukuṭa* and is adorned with *kuṇḍalas*, *hāra*, *keyūras*, *kaṭakas*, *kaṭibandha* and *kiṅkiṇis*. A long *upavīta* is also seen dangles from the left shoulder. She wears a *ḍori sāḍi* as lower garment and a wavy *uttarīya*. The stocky build of the figure has two gentle folds of skin on the upper stomach. She exposes a bulging voluptuous hip and a round and high bust line.

The stele has an arch-like embellishment made with bamboo straps. There are two fire altars depicted on the *prābhāvalī* and one on the *triratha* pedestal. A pair of plantain trees is seen on the either side of the central figure. The *vāhana godhikā* is sculpted below the *padmapiṭha* of the Devi. A *pujāri* is half-kneeling on the left side of the pedestal joining her hands in *añjali*.

Enamul Haque has located at least 54 images of Devi in Bengal with a godhikā as her *vāhana*. All these deities are four-armed, three-eyed and well adorned. Dr. Haque has examined the descriptions of the six emanations of Gaurī found in *Rūpamaṇḍana* and presented their attributes in a tabular form. The interchangeable placid forms of Umā, Gaurī and Pārvati can be viewed from the Table. (Haque: 1992, 220-221, Table F).

Dr. Haque was the first iconographer to draw attention of the connoisseur to the separate presence of a Śiva-*Liṅga*, above and away from the *akṣamālā* held in the upper right hand of the Devi.

> *...umā prakarttavyā padmopari vyāvasthitā/*
> *yogapaṭṭottarāsaṅgā mṛgasiṃhaparivṛtā//*
> *dhyānadhārana santāna niruddha niyamesthitā/*
> *kamaṇḍalu sasūtrākṣa varadodyatā pāṇinī//*
> *grahamālā virājanti jayādyaiḥ parivāritā/*
> *padmakuṇḍaladhāri ca śivārcanāratā sadā//*[1]

Actually, the *liṅga* is depicted in requirement of the text (*śivārcanāratā*); Dr. Haque also pointed out that the depiction of a deer on the right and a lion on the left is also in accordance with the text (*mṛgasiṃhaparivṛtā*).

The deity stands on a lotus surrounded by a deer and a lion. She holds an *akṣamālā* in her upper right hand, a *tridaṇḍī* in upper left, there is a *kamaṇḍalu* in her lower left hand, and she depicts *varada* with the right. These are all in harmony with the *dhyāna* of Umā described in the *Devī- purāna*. Her association with the plantain trees is prescribed in the *Agni-purāna*[2], and there is no doubt that the deity is Umā, observing penance among *agnikuṇḍa*, in order to gain Śiva as her husband.

[1] P. Tarkaratna (ed. and tr.), *Devī-purāna* [in Bangla], Calcutta, 1910: 50, 118-121 (in the part of Samvatsara-devata prathama vimsatibidhi).

[2] Cited in Haque, 1992: 223.

Cat. No. Sakt. 03
Kokāmukha Durgā
Probably from North Bengal/ 11th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 49cm; W. 29cm
CUM 666
Courtesy: The Department of Archaeology, GOB
Plate No. 39

With her bent right leg placed on the back of a decapitated buffalo and the left stretched and firmly kept on the back of the *vāhana* lion, Durgā stands in *ālīḍha*. The goddess pulls the *ardhaniṣkrānta asura* by graving his hair by her main left hand and thrusts the prongs of a robust *triśūla* on his chest with her main right hand. The deity holds on her additional uppermost right hand a heavy *khaḍga*, with the second an *aṅkuśa* and on the third a *cakra*. The attributes presented by the other three left hands are: *kheṭaka*, *dhanu* and *sarpa*. Here the anthropomorphic demon is depicted in the form of a pot-bellied dwarf emerging out of the neck of a Mahisa, his left leg still embedded inside. The *vāhana* lion bites his right foot and he also holds a sword in his right hand.

The well-built physique of the goddess is adorned with *jaṭāmukuṭa*, *kuṇḍalas*, *hāra*, *keyūras*, *kaṭijāla* and *kiṅkiṇis*. She has put on a special type of bracelets (*bartanā* or *bāṭānā*) on all the wrists of her eight hands. There is a diaphanous *ḍori sāḍi* as lower garment and an *uttarīya* on the upper and an *upavīta* dangles from her left shoulder.

The crouching Mahisa with its slain head and the *vāhana* lion is found on a *viśvapadma*. The convex pedestal is embellished with serpentine stalks emerging from a *padma* at the center and sprouting a line of buds. Behind the hindquarter of the Mahisa and the right leg of the Devi a slim figured dancing female is there waving a *khaḍga* with her right hand and *kheṭaka* on the left. She is adorned and wears a *jaṭāmukuṭa*.

The upper portion of the stele is truncated and there are some bruises here and there on the sculpture. The faces of the Devi and the demon, the right bust of the Devi, the structure of the *dhanu* are mutilated, but the representation of a wolf (*kokāh*) on her face is very much apparent. It resembles a similar image discovered from Pabna and now

preserved in the Mahasthan Museum. (Haque, 1992: 247, pl. 200). A small portion of sky motif has survived destruction on the upper left side of the stele.

Cat. No. Sakt. 04
Cāmuṇḍā
Provenance unknown/ 9th Century AD
Sand Stone/ H. 32cm; W. 10.5cm.
CUM 660
Courtesy: Department of Archaeology, GOB
Plate No. 40

The stele is badly defaced due to weathering but the figure of an emaciated goddess dancing on the back of a naked *preta* is clearly recognizable on it. Adalbert Gail presumes her attitude might be *catura*, i.e. alternatively stamping and lifting the feet. ((Haque and Gail, 2008: 293). The deity has four hands and with the main right she holds a *kapāla*, which is mutilated. With the main left she upholds a *tridaṇḍī*. The other implements on the additional hands are probably a *ḍamaru* and the ends of an elephant's hide. The round and bulged out eyeballs in two sunken sockets and the sunken belly makes her look hideous.

The vestige of a diadem is clearly visible on her head with a pair of *kuṇḍalas* on the ears. The remains of a robust *mālā* dangle from her neck but its components are dim and indistinct.

Cat. No. Sakt. 05
Manasā
Probably from northern Bengal/ 11th Century AD
Sand Stone/ H. 26.5cm; W. 16.5cm
CUM 775
Plate No. 41

The volume of a sculpture is perceptible; the details are weathered and defaced. The remains contain a female deity sitting with her right leg pendent and the left folded. She has two hands, the right one is

extended towards the right to hold an object and the left is kept on the left knee. A square mass is there between the right palm and the knee. The facial features are feebly present. There is a *mukuṭa* on her head and *kuṇḍalas* on her ears. The pair of busts is the only other figural member recognizable. The curved mass over her head is the vestige of hood of the serpent.

The pointed stele has a limited surface, the major area being consumed by the central figure. The pedestal also became a mass lacking in of any fine carving. The conservational condition of this image is similar to that of the sand stone image of Viṣṇu on Garuda (CUM 27).

Cat. No. Sakt. 06
Manasā
Probably from northern Bengal/ 11th Century AD
Coarse Basalt/ H. 63cm; W. 28cm
CUM 886
Plate No. 42

The goddess sits in *lalitāsana* on a plain pedestal with her right leg pendent and resting on a lotus under a canopy created by the obstinate and firm, minutely sculptured seven hoods of snake. Of her two hands, the left one is broken and repaired with cement. With her right hand in *varada* pose she holds a fruit. Gouriswar Bhattacharya opined that, this fruit has wrongly been given to her left hand instead of a snake at the time of restoration of the arm. (Haque and Gail, 2008: 293). All her ornaments, including the *mukuṭa*, are lacking in any fine embellishments. The round *kuṇḍalas* on her ears might represent the vestige of a folk tradition. Other ornaments adorned by her are *hāra*, *keyūras*, *kaṭakas*, *ūrujalaka* and *kiṅkiṇis*. She wears a transparent trouser as her lower garment with pleats at the ankles. Her damaged busts are also badly restored with cement and the remnant of a *yajñopavīta* is visible on her person.

The apex of the stele bears a stylized *padma* and there is a pair of anthropomorphic *nāgas* holding snakes on its either sides with snake hoods behind their heads and twisted tails. Aṣṭikamuni is sitting just beside the left elbow of the deity in *mahārājalīlāsana* with a raised

hood of a snake on the back of his head. The other side of the stele is damaged and the trace of a sculptured figure is thinly visible on it.

The *pañcaratha* pedestal of the image has a *ghata* at its center with a pair of *pujāris* on its sides, sitting on folded legs and showing *añjali mudrā*.

Cat. No. Sakt. 07
Manasā
Probably from northern Bengal/ 11th Century AD
Coarse Basalt/ H. 19cm; W. 11.5cm
CUM 658
Plate No. 43

Under the canopy of a seven hooded *nāga* the two-armed deity sits in *lalitāsana* on a double lotus. The hoods of the serpents are incised with parallel lines. The image has withstood the wear and tear of time and carries marks of abrasions. The upper right and the lower left portions of the stele are also severely mutilated. Consequently many fine carvings have become visually illegible. She holds a fruit and also shows *varada* with her right palm. There is a serpent with its raised hood on her left hand. The support of her pendent right leg is lost and the heel of the folded left leg is pressed to the genital.

She wears a *mukuṭa* on her head, round *kuṇḍalas* on her ears, *hāra* round the neck and *kaṭakas* on her wrists. But the minute carvings of these ornaments are not very visible. The heavy breasts are adorned with a fitting *kucapaṭṭa*. There is a deep naval on the bulged abdomen. She puts on *ḍori* apparel as lower garments.

The apex of the pointed stele is embellished with a stylized lotus, and of the two anthropomorphic *nāgas* on its either sides, one on the right is missing. The details of the remaining *nāga* image are also not recognizable. Bearded Jaratkāru, the husband of the deity, is sitting beside her right arm; while her son Aṣṭikamuni is sculpted on the left. There are two lines irregularly incised on the rim on the upper stele. The feeble image of a *ghata* is visible below the *padmāsana*.

Cat. No. Sakt. 08
Manasā
Probably from northern Bengal/ 11th Century AD
Coarse Basalt/ H. 21cm; W. 11cm
CUM 657
Published (Eaton: 1994, 105, fig. 16)
Plate No. 44

The robust snake on her left hand firmly raised its hood but she shows *abhaya* with her right holding a fruit. Her face is smiling, and she sits in *lalita* posture on a *padmāsana* under the canopy of a seven-hooded snake. The heel of her folded left leg lie on the genital. Her right leg is pendent and supported on a lily. Like CUM 658, this sculpture also lacks smoothness and fine carvings. Executed in low relief, the sculpture depicts a carver's immature capability.

The *mukuṭa* and other ornaments are visible in bare outlines as in CUM 658. However *kuṇḍala* has retained the minimum of its details. There is a tightly worn *kucapaṭṭa* on the breasts and a round and deep mark of thrash below the bust line of the deity. The *ḍori* strokes of a *sāḍi* are there on the lower limbs from below the naval.

The broken upper portion of the stele has created an uneven outline. The figures of Jaratkāru and Aṣṭikamuni are executed in cramped insufficient spaces, not in harmony with the central deity. A kneeling *pujāri* is feebly seen beside the right leg along with a *ghata* on the lower right of the stele.

The image is not several feet in height as indicated by Eaton. But his assessment of the progression of the Manasā cult from a simple, thatched shrine to an established order reveals the queer development of a premodern Bengali pantheon. (Eaton, 1993: 105, 108).

Cat. No. Sakt. 09
Manasā
Provenance unknown/ Pre-modern/ Folk
Sand Stone/ H. 32.5cm; W. 17.5cm
CUM 659
Published (Eaton: 1994, 105, fig. 17)
Plate No. 45

The pointed stele depicts a naked Manasā sitting on a cushion placed on the wooden stool; her pendent right leg is resting on the lower shelf of the stool. The left leg is folded and kept on the cushion. Of her two hands, she holds an indistinct object with the right, keeping it on the right thigh. A snake is coiled on her folded left arm. Five hoods of a serpent are emanating from the back of her head, superimposed by a diadem composed of three spearheads. The lobes of her ear are elongated and embellished with *kuṇḍalas*. The immature busts speak of her tender age.

The plain stele has only one creeping snake on its left. The middle high portion of the stool has lower shelve on its sides. A *ghata* is placed below the central stool with emerging heads of snakes.

This sculpture is not like other sculptures of the collection in material and execution. Gouriswar Bhattacharya dated the object to 12th century or later with his opinion that, "The shape of the back-plate and the working-out of the image is quite late and crude, and betrays the traits of a village deity." (Haque and Gail, 2008: 295). The embellishments of the diadem depict a typical tribal origin of the cult. The simple iconography was necessary for a popular understanding, as she "gained a following among ritually low-ranking communities like fishermen and cowherds, ..." (Eaton, 1993: 105).

Cat. No. Sakt. 10
Gaurī
Provenance unknown/ 12th Cetury AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 26cm; W.72cm
CUM 776
Donated by Varendra Research Museum
Plate No. 46

The deity reclines on her left in a *pālaṅka* with a naked child lying on his back. Her head rests on her left palm, supported by a big pillow. A kneeling female masseur sitting on the rear of the bed gently massages the sole of her bent and raised left foot. The outstretched right leg also rests on a small pillow. She raises her right hand holding a lotus to reach a Śiva-*Liṅga* by its fringe. Other two female attendants stand on *padmapiṭhas* emerging from the *pālaṅka* – one beside the head turning a fan and the other on the back waving a flywhisk – to give comfort to the goddess. Their exertions are depicted in the wavy movements of their physiques and textiles. The central figure in transparent lower garment is richly adorned and also has a double-stringed *upavīta*. Even the pot-bellied child and the attendants are also bejeweled with ornaments.

The upper portion of this horizontal stele is sculpted with miniature images of Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya in low relief. Underneath the *pālaṅka* a figure of a kneeling *pujāri* in *añjali mudrā* is faintly depicted on the left. In front of this figure a *śankha* is placed on a stand. There are also some pots and utensils along with a terracotta doll kept in a row. Like that of the Navagraha slab this stele also has a curved end on the left and a tenon on the right.

N.K. Bhattasali first ventured to identify these images and relying on a legend recorded in the *Brahma-purāna* put them in a variety of Vaivāhika images. (Bhattasali, 1929: 138ff). Later Mukhlesur Rahman understands them as human mother and child bearing secular character.[1] But, Enamul Haque confirmed the lying lady as Gaurī for the first time, based on recent discovery of an image inscription of the reign of Vigrahapāla II (c. 970-1000 CE). (Haque, 1992: 298).

[1] Mukhlesur Rahman, *Early History of the Cult of Mother Goddess*, (unpublished): London University Ph. D. Thesis, 1965: 390-400, cited in Haque, 1992: 297.

Gāṇapatya Image

Cat. No. Gana. 01

Gaṇeśa

Provenance unknown/ 10th Century AD
Coarse Basalt/ H. 46cm (without tenon); W. 26cm
CUM 885
Purchased
Plate No. 47

A poorly executed sculpture of Gaṇapati in low relief. The stele had suffered damages here and there, and an inefficient attempt made to restore the carvings. The pot-bellied *devatā* is depicted sitting in *mahārājalīlāsana* on a cushion with some attributes on his four hands. He holds a *mulaka* with head leaves on his upper right hand, a *triśūla* on his upper left, and there is an *akṣamālā* on his lower right and a *laḍḍuka* on the left hands. The god is eating sweets with his robust tusk from the lower left palm, its finger-ends being embellished with the beads of rosary. His right leg is resting on a *padma*. He is the 'Lord of Hosts' and 'The Remover of Obstacles'; "... his obesity contains the whole universe, his trunk is bent to remove obstacles, and his four arms represent the four categories into which things (e.g. castes, Vedas) can be divided." (Mitchell, 1982: 37). The mystic Gāṇapatya sect became very powerful toward the tenth century and Gaṇapati established his importance to the exclusion of every other Hindu god, even of his reputed parents, Śiva and Pārvati. (Getty, 1971: 5).

The deity has on his elephant head a *jaṭāmukuṭa* and a pearl-bend on the forehead. Its large ears are unadorned, but he has a pair of *kaṭakas* on the wrists, *keyūras* on the arms and *kiṅkiṇis* on the ankles. The remnant of the *vialayajñopovīta* is faintly visible on his body. The vestiges of the garments are there, but not clearly identifiable except a pleated end below the left foot.

The large head of the deity has a round double-framed *prabhāvalī* with hanging mango fruit and leaves on the apex. The mutilated Vidyādharas with garlands in hand are seen flying - one each on the either side of the nimbus. The upper left and the lower right portions of the stele are truncated, damaging the peripheral embellishments. The *vāhana* bandicoot is looking up at his master from the pedestal and the remnant of a tenon is seen underneath.

Miscellaneous Gods

Cat. No. Migo. 01
Brahmā
Provenance unknown/ 11th Century AD
Coarse Basalt/ H. 40cm; W. 30cm
CUM 774
Donated by Varendra Research Museum
Plate No. 48

The three-headed (the invisible fourth one is on the back) god sits in a *lalitāsana* on a *padmapiṭha* holding *akṣamālā* with his normal right hand and *kamaṇḍalu* on the left. He upholds a handle with his additional right hand, the apex of which is broken with a part of the stele. He also gently bears the *sruva* with his additional left hand. All the heads of the pot-bellied *devatā* are adorned with *jaṭāmukuṭas*. Though the long lobe of ears of his frontal face is devoid of any ornaments but he wears *kaṭakas* on all his wrists and *kiṅkiṇi* on the ankles. He is clad with a simple *uttarīya* and a *dhoti*. The deity wears a double stringed *yajñopavīta* on his person.

His consorts Sāvitrī and Sarasvatī accompany him, standing in *tribhaṅga* on subsidiary *padmapiṭhas*, on his right and left respectively. Sāvitrī carries a flywhisk on his right hand and the left is depicted as *kaṭihasta*. Sarasvatī holds a *vīnā* on his right and a book on the left hands. The consorts are adorned with simple ornaments, dresses and coiffures.

The remnant of an arch is left on the broken stele and a *haṃsa* is sitting on the architrave. The *pañcaratha* pedestal bears a female figure sitting cross-legged that carries a garland on the left. The *haṃsa vāhana* is placed at its center. A *pujārī* also sits cross-legged on the right putting her hands in *añjali*.

The word 'Brāhman' or 'Brahmā' was used in the *Ṛgveda* to denote the hidden power remain embodied in the sacred utterances. The priests also came to be known as Brāhman by their attainment of the skill of uttering the sacred words. The idea was further developed in the *Upaniṣads* and this power was considered as being universal and elemental from which the gods and the creations emerged. (Mitchell, 1982: pl. 2).

Cat. No. Migo. 02
Brahmā
Provenance not known/ 11th Century AD
Coarse Basalt/ H.26.5cm; W.18.5cm
Acc. No. 663
Plate No. 49

The three-headed god (the fourth one is not sculpted) has four hands and sits in *lalitāsana* on a viśvapadma. He is pot-bellied and has three eyes. The upper portion of the stele is broken and missing, with a part of the rounded two-tired *śiraścakra* taken away. The central face of the deity has also received injuries. The composite *jaṭāmukuṭa* and the graceful subsidiary faces are well balanced with the nimbus. He holds a rosary with the normal uplifted right hand showing *abhaya*, and the *kamaṇḍalu* on the normal left. He carries a *sruk* on his additional right hand, and on the left a *sruva*. His pendent right leg is resting on the edge of the lower tire of the *padmāsana*, the left leg is folded and its sole is extended towards the front with a mark at its center.

The deity has no apparent ornaments on his person; only a beaded *upavīta* is hanging from his left shoulder. The potbelly is made prominent by a visible fold on the upper end and a deep naval at its center. He wears a diaphanous *uttarīya* and a loincloth.

The spaces beside the nimbus are embellished with foliated scrolls. A *haṃsa* is sitting on the right end of a lintel, beside the *sruva*. The ends of draperies attached to the throne are also hanging below the lintel. The pedestal has no uniform division in *ratha*, the bigger right portion depicts a pair of *haṃsas* faces each other with strings of beads on their beaks and foliated scrolls behind them.

Cat. No. Migo. 03
Brahmā
Provenance not known/ c.11th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 41cm; W. 17.5cm
Acc. No. 662
Plate No. 50

The sculpture is badly damaged and mutilated. Consequently many artistic details are rubbed off and lost. The hands and legs of the god are truncated and only the outlines of the three faces remain. His pendent right leg is feebly identifiable as he is sitting on a viśvapadma, in *lalitāsana* with the left leg folded. The remains of a *hāra* and an *upavīta* are noticeable on the person of the god. The defaced *jaṭāmukuṭa* added a hoary look to the present precarious condition of the image.

The central tier of the broken *pañcaratha* pedestal contains the *haṃsa vāhana* of the god with a string of beads on its beak and placed on a full-bloomed lily. There is a kneeling *pujāri* on the second right tire of the pedestal.

Cat. No. Migo. 04
Kārttikeya on a Fragment
Provenance not known/ c.12th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 15.3cm; W. 10.8cm
Acc. No. 725
Plate No. 51

The fragment in the shape of a splinter may be identified as a part of right upper portion of the stele of an image. It contains Kārttikeya on his vehicle peacock. He is carved on an oblong miniature sub-stele with a half round arch on its apex. This is also provided with a plain pedestal upon which stands the *vāhana*. The sub-stele is superimposed on the flat outer rim of a big stele. There is a crescent sign underneath the pedestal. The ogee curve of the lower rim may be a part of a nimbus of the lost central deity.

The two-armed deity is seated in *mahārājalīlāsana* on the back of a peacock. The wings of the peacock are outspread in upturned curve. Kārttikeya holds the middle of his lower right leg with the right hand. There is a *śūla* on his uplifted left hand, its lower end resting on his knee. The face of the image is disfigured along with the details leaving the mass of the *mukuṭa*.

Kārttikeya is generally regarded as a son of Śiva and Pārvati. The single images of this god are a rarity in Bengal, the earliest one found in Skanda Dhap in Bogra. He is normally found associated as a *pārṣadevatā* with "the godhikāvāhini Devi both in her Gauri-Pārvati and Lalitā aspects, and as an attendant in Kalyāṇsundara images, Mātṛkās and the so-called 'Mother and Child' images." (Haque, 1992: 328).

Other Image

Cat. No. Othe. 01
Dancing Female
Provenance not known/ c.17th Century AD
Fine Basalt/ H. 22cm; W. 14cm
Acc. No. 1001
Plate No. 52

The stone plaque is probably a member of the frieze used in a projecting course of masonry surrounding the door, or as a horizontal adornment on a certain height of the external wall of a building. The piece of embellishment has elemental resemblance with a terracotta plaque. It contains an image of a *tribhaṅga* dancing female depicted in a sunken space within a frame. The upper and lower portions of the plaque were badly damaged, and the injured parts - mostly frame of the image – became separated from the body but are not lost.

The oblong plaque is pyramidal in shape, and the steps are moulded in panel and ogee curve. The dancing image in whirling apparel is consistent with the intense movement of her left hand and the body. The lower garment is executed in continuous bands, its loose end hanging from the genital. The *kuṇḍala* on the right ear was kept abreast with her prominent rounded breast.

The image depicted in this plaque is not sculpted following an iconography and it is mostly secular in nature, though dancing is associated with the temple culture. Dancing image is one of the popular subjects in the art of terracotta in Bengal. It was also in vogue in the Indus Valley Civilization. Terracotta plaques containing dancing image were used in embellishing the exterior of *vihāras* in Paharpur and Mainamati.

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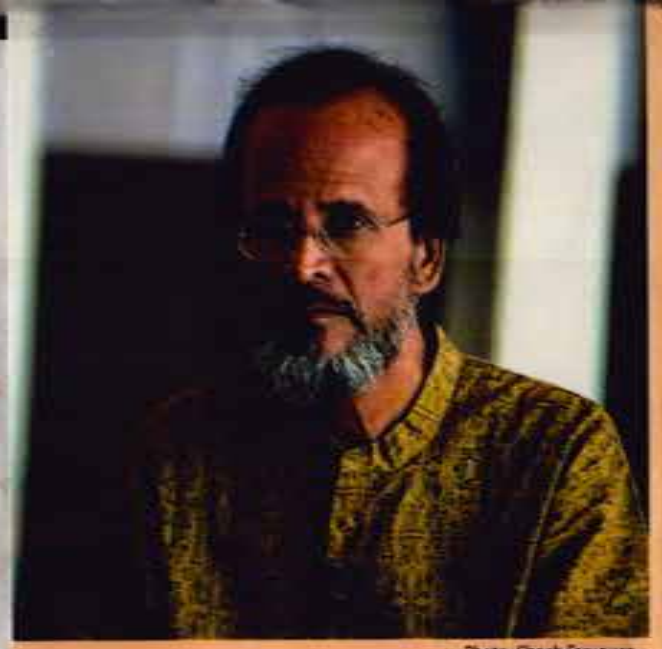

Photo : Shoeb Faruquee

Dr. Shamsul Hossain, the first curatorial and founding academic staff of the Chittagong University Museum, did his MA and Ph. D from the University of Chittagong. He started his research career as fellow of a project sponsored by the central ministry of education of the then Pakistan in the Department of History in the same university. He has attended a course on Managing Conservation in Museums held in York and London. He is the author and/or editor of more than fifty publications, including books. He has presented papers in many national and international seminars/conferences and conducted courses in home and abroad. He taught at some private universities of Bangladesh as an adjunct faculty. Documentary filmmaking is his fruitful passion. He is also an ardent organizer of movement for architectural conservation. Recently he served as a consultant on documentation work in the Nobel Laureate Yunus Secretariat in Dhaka.