CHAPTER V

SOME MINOR DEITIES AND THEIR WORSHIP IN THE GOALPARA REGION

In this chapter we shall discuss some of the minor deities of the Goalpara region. They are termed as 'minor' because of their confinement to a particular locality or localities. An attempt has been made to give a description of these deities, their method of worship and their influence upon the folk of the region.

1. Ajankar or Ajangar Puja

Ajankar or Ajangar is the zoomorphic form of snake worship. This Puja is in vogue in the western part of Goalpara. Ajankar is represented by a hood of snake made of pith or of clay. Another image of Kani Bisohari made of same article is placed beside the snake hood. The Puja is performed in the evening preferably, in the month of Bhadra. Three or five bamboo baskets containing a bunch of banana, vermilion, milk, curd, honey, areca-nuts and betal leaves, twig of bamboo tree jatropha plant etc. are kept as naivedyas in each basket in front of the image. Earthen lamps are lit and incense burnt. The votaries are women. They sing and dance throughout the night. On the following morning, the images
are immersed in the nearby river on a rafter.

The Puja is performed when somebody suffers from ophthalmic disease and to avert fear or bite of snake. Even for getting child and wealth the deity is worshipped.

Ajankar and Ajanger is the popular name of the snake Ajagar. According to Manasa Kavya of Durgabara, Manasa or Bisohari was married to Ajagar and it was Ajagar who bit Lakhindar. The snake was once worshipped by the Rabhas. The images signify the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic worship of the snake and snake goddess.

2. Bastu Puja

Bastu is a household deity of some families of West Goalpara. There are Bastu bhithas inside the main house of these families. A piece of bamboo, an earthen pot rapped with a piece of red cloth, earth collected from seven villages ending with the word Pur, earth from the tusk of an elephant, earth from the door way of a brothel, areca-nuts and betel leaves, gold, silver, etc. are required for the Puja of Bastu. All these articles are put inside the earthen pot and then the earthen pot is installed deep into the floor preferably in the eastern corner of the house. A little portion of the bamboo is kept erected from the earthen pot. The erected

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1. See Dafra chap. II.
piece of bamboo is called Bastu thakur. The Bastus are of three kinds, namely, Bhaní, Gitthérí and Maínení and the votaries are the Brahmin women, the housewives and the gardening women respectively. The Bastu bhitha is cleaned everyday and milk is poured on it. Bastu Puja must be performed on the day of first rice taking ceremony. In some places Laksmi Puja is performed on the altar of the Bastu.

Bastu is a Sastraic deity. The literal meaning of the word is an appropriate place for the construction of a house—"gsha-karana vegabhuhin". In the "dhvana mantra" of Bastu his attribution can be learnt that Bastu is like the moon, he wears golden necklace and golden sacred threads, his head decorated with golden turban, "abhavabaradahaatam" and lord of the universe:

"om śrīsañdham āvarañ amṛtakañjñāvalāyam
caksa mukuta gudam āvarañ vaiñé pāthin
abhavabaradahaśeṣam sarbalokekenatham tamah
bhavanarupamastu rajaṃ bhaiśām."

But the Bastu of the sestra has lost his identity and has become a local deity. The articles required for the Puja,

2. Sabda Kalpadrumah, p. 1318.
installation of Bastu etc. are significant and may be inferred that some tantric elements have been incorporated. We may also infer that the deity is connected with the productivity.

3. Mirkali Thakur

The word Mirkali is, perhaps the antonym of the word Kali. There is a belief in our society that Kali destroys the peace and tranquility of a family. So, to avoid quarrel in the family or among the villagers, the women of West Goalpara propitiate a deity called Mirkali. The method of worship is very simple. There is no image. The deity may be worshipped at any time by offering flowers, fruits areca-nuts and betel leaves etc. At the end of the Puja, areca-nuts, betel leaves, cloves, cardamons etc. are distributed among the invitees. The invitees must finish the Prasad at the place of worship. It is forbidden to bring home the Prasad and they are to chew the nuts without spiting. A Vrata katha is told by a kathati woman. The Vrata katha centres round a black cat. The daughter-in-law of an old man had to face many calamities for the zealously of her father-in-law; but she regained everything after propitiation of Mirkali. 4

4. See Madha Chap. X.
4. Kora-Kori

Kora-Kori Puja is performed in many places by the women folk of the Goalpara region. The deity is worshipped by installing an earthen pot. The paraphernalia required for the Puja is the flowers of water hyacinth, dhakia sak, Kalmav Sak, lily flower, fruit of mavan tree etc. Muri, akhai, fruits of the season, sugar cane and the blade of newly grown paddy are also required. Earthen lamps are lit and incense burnt. The above mentioned articles are placed in front of the installed pot. In some places two cowries are placed on cow dung. The two cowries are symbolised as kora-kari. There is no image of the deity and no Brahmin priest is engaged. Only the devotees bow down before the altar and pray for the welfare of the family. In some places the deity is worshipped for prosperity. The appropriate time for the propitiation of the deity is the Sankranti day of the month of Kati. It is noted in east Goalpara that the deity is worshipped along with Kati thakur. Of course, the Puja starts in the afternoon and ends before dusk.

Though the Puja is held in a particular family, it takes a public form as all the women of the village assemble together. They bring baskets of articles and offered to the deity. It is interesting to note that no article is offered in fraction. The devotees believe that they will not face
any pecuniary troubles if the deity is worshipped every month on the Sankranti day. During the Puja a Vrata katha is told by a Kathati and the other devotees utter ulu-ulu sound at a possible interval. The main theme of the Vrata katha is the disappearance of poverty and ailment and regain of health and wealth.5

The word kora and kori may be the corrupt form of the Sanskrit word 'Karardkah' the meaning of which is a kind of coin; scull of a sea animal. In old time Kari was used as a medium of exchange. Even now when a Hindu corpse is to be burned, the cremated ground should be purchased by putting four cowries on four sides of the Pyre. Kari khel was an ancient game in India. When there is constant drought the Kari-khel is played and it is believed that rain is sure to pour. In some places of Assam and Bengal cowdung beamed with vermillion is kept on the wall or post and cowries numbering five are attached to it. This is done in marriage and sraddha ceremony. Both cowdung and cowries may be the symbol of productivity.

5. Hāsān

Hāsān was initially a deity of the fishermen though other people also participate in his puja. On the eve of going

5. See śarāra Chap. X.
for fishing either in a river or a hil, the fishermen worship Hasan. For the occasion of the Puja a ghat or nichan of bamboo rapped with black and red cloth is erected. Ashia banana, curd, flattened rice, sugar cane and roast fish are offered as naivedya to the deity. The fishermen believe that when the deity is propitiated properly, they will face no trouble in fishing and will be able to catch enough fish.

Hasan may be the corrupt form of the sanskrit word smasana i.e. cemetery or crematorium. Hasan is a kind of dance danced in the Gambhira festival of Bengal. But we do not find any connection between the Hasan puja of the fishing community and Hasan dance of the gambhira festival. In Bengal there is a deity called Makal who is worshipped by the fishing community. G.K. Basu is of opinion that the word Makal or Makhal may have come from the word Khal-Kumari. Khal Kumari is a female deity of the Sunderban area of West Bengal. But Makal, on the contrary, is a male deity. Some people want to identify the deity with smasen-kali, an epithet of the goddess kali. But we do not find any relation of Kali with the fishing. As such, the deity may be an indigenous one.

It is difficult to ascertain the probable time of introduction

of Hasan puja in Goalpara region. Sri D.N. Das thinks that the deity might have migrated from other parts i.e. from West Bengal. But the ethno-cultural affinity of Goalpara with that of North Bengal cannot be ruled out.

6. Yaka or Yakha

Yaka or Yakha is a household deity of the western part of Goalpara region. The Yakhas are of two kinds, Vaistam (benevolent) and Kal (malevolent) yakha. The Vaistam yakhas do not harm to the family. The Kal Yakha, on the other hand, may kill a new born baby or may impose some serious diseases. So, to contend the deity, a mother of a new born baby propitiate him. The Vaistam yaka, as it is believed, protects the babies and members of the family from any danger.

There is no specific image of the deity. However, in some places, an image is made of Pith and installed in the dwelling house or in the courtyard in time of worship. The articles required for the puja are athua and malbhog banana curd, milk, sugar and a pair of pigeons. The articles are placed in a naivedya. In case of Kal Yaka instead of banana and milk, twelve varieties of crops (Bara sayya) after being fried, are offered. The pigeons are let loose after the propitiation of Vaistam Yaka. But in case of Kal Yaka, a curry of the flesh of pigeons preferably, black in colour, is

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prepared with Purva kal and offered to the godlings.

There is a belief that valetaM yak a may be transmitted from one family to another. The female counterpart of Kal Yak a is called Kalmatri. Kalmatri is also a malignant spirit. She is worshipped in isolated places under a tree. Athiya banana unboiled rice, curd, milk, gira and a black she-goat are offered. The she-goat is let loose after the puja.

The word yaka or yakha is the corrupt form of the sanskrit word "yakṣa". According to the Ramaṇa, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata Purana, the yakṣas are demi gods. They are the attendant spirits of kuvera and live in the Himalayas where they are the guardians of hidden treasure. The yakṣas are born out of the body of hunger striken Brahma at night and after their birth they tried to eat Brahma up. But they were debarred from eating by the Rakṣasas. In the Bhagavata Purana, it is mentioned that Dhrwra the son of uttanapada fought against the yakṣas. According to the Buddha Jataka the yakṣas are māyabhis and eater of raw flesh. In Hindu Puranas and Buddha Jataka yakṣas are depicted as malignant spirit. But in Jaina literature, the yakṣas or the yakkhas have occupied a high position. The Jains believe that the yakṣas

are the protector of the baby in the mother's womb and
giver of child to the childless woman. They also cure
diseases. But according to the Jaina faith, they become
ferocious if they are not properly worshipped. Even they
eat human being. They do sexual intercourse with the
virgins.10 Thus the benevolent and malevolent nature of the
deity have been expressed in the Jaina literature. There
are some temples dedicated in the name of the yakhas in
India and some images are also discovered.

The yakhas worshipped in Goalpara, are seemed to be
related with the Jainas. But we do not find any historical
evidence of Jainism spread in this area. In Kamrup and in
upper Assam the yakhas are called yakh. They are always
of malignant nature. B. Rajkhowa describes the Jakh as
"He is a terrible spirit. He kills his victim by gnawing
into his vital part. He assumes the form of a large buffalo
and splashes the water with his horns."11 In Kamrup, it is
believed that when a child is growing weaker and weaker day
by day, he or she is possessed by the jakh. Moreover it is
believed that the jakha live in water or crematorium or
some other isolated places. There are several kinds ofjakha
such as go jakh, braha jakh, seh jakh, kisi-jakh etc.

Another point to be noted that yakhas are the custodian of hidden treasure. In the Assamese society a miserly person is named as jakh.

It is difficult to ascertain the probable time of introduction of yaka puja at Goalpara. In Bengal, the Puja was in vogue in time of Sri Caitanya. In Assam the existence of the Jakhas can be assumed from the biographical literature of Vaishnava period. It is narrated that yakhas were driven out from a bil by chanting nam-kirtana. Even now there is a bil which is known as yakeer jah near the Sundaridya sattra. 13

7. Radhika Thakur

Radhika Thakur is a forest deity. The deity is worshipped by the wood cutters when they go to the forest to fell trees or to collect faggots. Even picnickers and hunters worship by offering oum-san. The godling is also offered puja to get rid of the monkeys and harmful pests. Sometimes hemp is offered to the deity. In some places of southern part of Goalpara an image of a human skeleton with four hands is made of straw or banana stem. Indigo colour is be smeared on the image. A goat is sacrificed.

Whether the deity is a male or female one is doubtful. Dr. B. Datta thinks that the deity is a male one offering of hemp justifies his findings. But from our own investigation, the deity seems to be a female one and she is identified with the dreadful goddess kali. There is Than at Chotamatiyya village under Krishnai police station which is known as Ai than. But the devotees call the deity Radhaka sundari and they try to identify her with Kali.

8. Hāumārī

Hāumārī is a female godling. The deity is worshipped when a child suffers from any diseases. A pair of eggs and a garland are offered in the name of the deity. Hāumārī is believed to be the sister of Mahesh deo. She lives in the water.

9. Saītor

Saītor is worshipped on the seventh day or a month after the birth of a child. She is worshipped with Saēthi, the goddess of the child protection. An image is made of pith.

The image is tied with a bamboo stick and kept hanging. Under the image a naivedya with Akhal, banana etc. is kept. Then the new born baby is brought under the image and the image is whirled over the head of the baby.

From the folk song it is understood that a childless Brahmin blessed with a son after worshipping the godling.

The word Saitar or Saitari may be the corrupt form of the Sanskrit word 'Saptami'. Saptami is a Vrata of the Hindus. According to the Purohita Darpana there are six Vratas connected with the Tithi. In almost all the Vratas the sun is worshipped. The fruit of the Vrata is to get child, wealth and remedy from disease. Saptami Vrata may be observed with the last part of the tithi of Saethi. As the godling is worshipped on the seventh day of the new born baby, we may infer that Saitor is the Saptami Vrata of the Sastra though the method of worship is non-santric. Saitar is popular among the Rajbansi women of Mankachar area.

10. Balorśa

Balorśa is the elder brother of Lord Sri Krsna. He is worshipped as a god of production. In some places the deity is worshipped for removal of diseases. Mainly, the

barron women worship the deity for getting child. The method of worship is very simple. A bamboo is erected as a symbol of the deity. Sometimes, a plough is also kept to represent the deity.

11. Mādār or Mādār Baś Puja

Mādār is a peculiar and interesting godling of the western part of Goalpara. The votaries are both Hindus and the Muslims. The Muslims take active part in Mādār Puja. Dr. B. Datta observes that the evolution of the godling is through the process of juxta position of Hindu and Muslim religious beliefs and practices. Like Madan Kan or Bas puja, bamboo is the symbol of Mādār puja. In the Dās jëmiva dhām of the Hindus Mādār occupies a special seat. Similarly, the Muslims also propitiate Hindu deities along with Mādār. There are thāne of Mādār both in Hindu and Muslim dominated areas. Both Hindus and Muslims often let off goats in the name of Mādār and invoke him in some charms, especially in those meant for women whose off spring do not survive. The rites of the Mādār Puja are similar to those of Bāś Puja.

There is a belief in the Hindu community that when two bamboos are coming out from the same bamboo stem the Mādār Puja must be performed, by that particular family; otherwise many calamities may appear in the family or in the
village.

The method of worship is almost same with that of Madan Kīm puja. The bamboo poles are decorated with colourful cloths and taken in procession with music and dance. There is no _jagam_ but dancing is more prominent. The ceremony is fixed according to the lunar calendar. The chief pole represents Mazdar. Besides there are other deities representing Hindu and Muslim faiths. Among the Muslim deities are Fatima, Barud or Barīka, Satya Pir, Fauz etc. The Hindu deities are Kali, Mahādeva, Śiva etc. Shamanistic dance is a must in Madar puja.

Now the question arises whether Madar is a Hindu or Muslim deity, outwardly, Mazdar seems to be a Hindu godling and many Hindu gods and goddesses occupy respectable place in Madarar Bas ceremony organised by the Muslims. But the Muslim origin of Mazdar can not be ruled out. The godling may have developed through the deification of the famous Muslim saint Shah Madar. "The ceremony most probably migrated to Goalpara from the parts of North Bengal in which Madarar Bas (or Ghazir Bas) is a very important institution among the muslims". 16

Some scholars of Bengal are of opinion that the word Radar may have some connection with the word Dambadar which had been mentioned in the Sunya Purana. Radar preached the ideology of sufism and the devotees of his ideology are known as Radariva Tarika. Devotees belonging to the said Tarika may introduce Radar Puja in North Bengal and from there to Goalpara. According to the legend this Radar was a very powerful pir. He was known as Radar because he was left by his parents under a Radar tree just after his birth. He was known as Dam Radar too because once he made a bet with Bara Pir and entered later's belly through magical power. The Bara Pir being defeated in the bet, asked Radar to come out of his belly. Radar came out through his head and thence he was known as Dam Radar. There are many Dargah dedicated in the name of Radar in Bengal. Both Hindus and Muslims venerated the Dargah. From the above discussion we have reason to believe that Radar was originally a Muslim Pir, later on worshipped as a deity after deification and lastly he has occupied a place among the Hindu folk deities.

12. Sanyasi

Sanyasi is a peculiar godling. Both Hindus and Muslims

of West Goalpara worship him. The Muslims offer Sirni in his name. He has occupied a special place in the Hindu shrine. The articles required for his worship are a red flag, a piece of red cloth, a drum, a cilia of hemp, resins, incense, earthen lamp, banana, milk etc. In time of worship the votaries are to sit facing towards west. Milk is to be poured on the altar of Sanyasi. There are 18 of Sanyasi in the District. 18

Sanyāsi Puja is prevalent in north Bengal and Rangpur now in Bangladesh. In North Bengal "Mahadev or Dana dhora Sanyāsi is also worshipped in all ceremonial occasions with curd, ripe plantain, flattened rice flowers of Datura (Cannabis) and a little hemp (ganja). Sanyasi seems to be Siva as hemp or Datura is offered which is a favourite intoxication of him. Pouring of milk over Siva linga is a religious practice of the devotees. In many places the Muslims also regard Siva. But doubt arises when the devotees propitiate the deity facing towards the west which is a Muslim custom. Moreover, the Muslims offer Sirni to the deity. If he is identified with Siva why sanyasi is given a place in the Hindu shrine where Siva is occupying a distinct place. In the ordinary sense, the Pirs of the Muslim and meditating persons of the Hindus who

are free from any worldly attachment are called Sanyasi. The editor of the Sartigrantha, A.S.S. Dhubri, session has opined that Sanyasi may be a pious man either of the Hindus or of the Muslims who has been regarded as a deity for miraculous deeds. 20

13. Langtā Gosain

There is a than of Langtā Gosain at Bakt którą village about 25 Km. east of Goalpara town. There is no image of any deity. There is a congregational prayer house where Maa- Kirtan is performed on Sankranti day of every month. Dauloطا was observed in a befitting manner. An Earthen mound is still found where Dauloطا was held. It is heard from the villagers that the Zaminder of Bijni granted some bighas of land in the name of Langta Gosain. Still these lands are known as Langta Gosain bāth, i.e. land of Langta Gosain. The than was under the supervision of a Brahmin (Goswwali) family of Koekkushi village, under Barpeta subdivision. The deity is very powerful and living. People can get their desired things if the deity is propitiated properly. There are instances of calamities in which people suffered from due to the wrath of the deity.

The literal meaning of the word Lengta Gosain is the naked god. Siva is known as naked God. But in the than Siva is not worshipped. From the observance of Daulotsova the deity seems to be Vaisnava one who may be identified with Krishna. The other point is that the than was once supervised by the Gosains of Kootkuchi village. They were the holders of the landed property. May we not think that Lengta Gosain was a powerful and pious man who used to live in the said than and later on people used to worship him as a godling. He might introduce the Daulotsova there. People do not know the actual date of the than. Some people think that the than was established in pre-Christian era. But there is no basis of such statement.

14. Rāṅgācan

Rāṅgācan Puja is held on the southern part of Sri Suryya hill popularly known as Ek chālīvā Pahār and at Rāṅgācan hill which is now in Meghalaya. A big rock is spreading like a canopy under which there is a than known as Rāṅgācan at Sri Suryya hill. The Puja is performed on the sixth day of the month of Baha. The votaries are the Rajbansis, the Rabhas and other Hindu communities. Especially women votaries out number the males. On the previous day of the puja, women
go on foot and on the particular day they assemble there and pray the deity by offering milk, flowers etc. They believe that if the deity is satisfied, they will be good weaver. It is noticed that on the following year they produce new clothes before the deity. The dauri belongs to the Rajbansi community. Male devotees also propitiate the deity for public and personal welfare. No sacrifice is made, no Brahmin priest is engaged. Though the Rangachan hill is situated at the Meghalaya the votaries are mainly from Goalpara District and they belong to the Sutrudhar community. Their method of worship is peculiar. Seven days ahead of the actual date of puja, the dauri and other votaries assemble in the house of dauri. The villagers select one person to assist the dauri. Then the dauri and his assistant take a sacred bath and they prepare laupani (country liquor) in wearing wet cloth. That day must be a Sunday. On the following Sunday i.e. after one week, the actual puja is performed. The than is made clean on Saturday. From the preparation of laupani to the performance of Puja, the interim period is called laupani.

The Puja is held in the month of Adhon (Nov.-Dec.) Milk, banana, sugar, gram, unboiled rice and laupani are required for the Puja. The puja starts in the morning and
ends in the evening. Twelve naivedyas are offered. Along with Rangacan other deities such as ḍhaṇḍi, Rakṣi, Lakhā, Kaññāńga, Āṯiuri Bātiuri Durgā, Turā, Papāl and Pirānā are propitiated. In the Puja twelve cooks, one duck and a goat are sacrificed. Country liquor is also offered.

The purpose of the puja is to welcome Lakshmi i.e. new crops and to avoid any calamities in cutting wood, straw etc.

The word Rangacan may have come from the Garo word Rāṅgacan, the meaning of which is the sun. The same word is used by the Rabhas of the Rangdaniya sub-group. Offering of twelve naivedyas is also significant. The number twelve is connected with the sun god. The Puja is held on Sunday which is called deabar. Thus Rangacan may be inferred as the sun god. It may also be inferred that the name Sri Suryya hill might have originated from the word Rangacan.

18. Bure-Buri

Bure and Buri are worshipped jointly in many places of Goalpara. Their single identity is also notable. They are worshipped individually and congregationally. There is a myth (legend) as regards to the introduction of Bure-Buri

puja in this mortal world. A merchant's son has an Eagle (Dahnesh). One day the bird died of some unknown reasons.
The merchant's son was weeping sitting beside the dead bird. Fortunately, Mahadeva and his consort Parvati were roaming
in the air on a chariot. Hearing the weeping of the boy, they got down from the chariot and appeared before the boy
in the guise of an old man and woman. When they came to know the reasons of his weeping, they advised the boy to worship
Bura-Buri. He did so and the bird regained its life.

Bura-Buri Puja is performed in the first week of the month of bahan. An earthen mound is made and two birina
bushes are planted on it. The birina bushes are supposed to be the Bura and the Buri. Flattened rice, molasses, curd, banana, areca-nuts and betel-leaves, flowers etc. are offered to the deities. No Brahmin priest is generally engaged. At the end of the puja the devotees utter the word "Bura-Buri
nimitte Hari Hari".

In some places, Bura Thakur is a godling associated with the welfare of the young calves. When a calf is thirteen
days old, it is given a bath and then milked. The milk is kept in a container till the calf is twenty three days old.
On the twenty fourth day, the cured formed out of the milk is put in five containers made of banana barks. The containers
are placed under a sacred basil tree. Flattened rice, sugar, molasses etc. are also put in the container as a form of naivedya. No elaborate rituals are uttered. The golding is prayed for the welfare of the new born calf.

There are thans of Bura-Buri in some houses. They have been worshipped generation after generation as their house hold deities. When the hairs of a child matted, the Bura, Buri will have to be worshipped before the cutting of the hairs by a barber. The barber must be careful in cutting the hairs so that not a single hair falls on the ground. The cut hairs are to be kept before the deities and a pair of black pigeons is to be let loose. After the Puja the cut hairs with two athia bananas are to be rapped by a cloth and to be hanged on a plum tree. In some places Kalamiri maa is worshipped for shaving the matted hair.

There are many thans of Bura-Buri in the District. The Thans at Dhapdhepi village near Golakganj Police Station, at Salkocha, at Fakira gram and near at Laksipur (Jaleswar) are prominent. At Jaleswar the deities are symbolised by two rocks, one of which is found erected. The erected rock is assumed to be the Bura and the other one the Buri. Big male (festivals) are held at those thans particularly in the first week of the month of bahao (April-May). Devotees irrespective of caste, creed and religion assemble in the male.
The words Burs and Buri may be the corrupt forms of the Sanskrit words brddha and brddhā. The two names are associated with Śiva and Pārvatī in popular belief. Brai and Buri are two words used by the Kachari indiscriminately to identify Śiva and Pārvatī. We have reason to believe that the words might have originated from the Kachari words braj and buri.

16. Nukā Thākur or Lukā Thākur (hidden god)

The word Nukā or Lukā means something hidden. Nukā or Lukā Thakur means the hidden god. In the western part of Goalpara some holy men come for begging in the name of Nukā Thakur whose name is never mentioned, in every year. They came with sticks rapped by jutes. They do not utter a single word. The householders understand their mission and offer alms freely. Those who do not understand and refuse to give alms the holy men say nothing but take thatch from the roof of the house and throw it in the fields. The householders think that it may bring ill-luck to the family.

Nukā Thakur is worshipped on the bank of a river. Puffed rice (muri), sweet balls made with muri and molasses and rice cooked in milk are required. After the offering is made, the pot on which the Pavaṇa is cooked is sunk in the river water.
17. Bara Gopali

Bara Gopali are also twelve godlings of the forest. The godlings are offered milk, banana uncooked rice etc. in twelve containers. Bara Gopali may be the twelve friends of Sri Krishna with whom he played and herded cows in the forest of Vrndavana. Twelve seems to be a mystic number. In some villages, the people believe in other godlings and spirits who are referred in association with that number e.g. Bara khatra, Bara maya etc.

18. Baman thakur

The Rajbanshis, the Kaucharis and the Rabhas of Salkooha area worship a peculiar godling called Baman Thakur. The tribal people worship the deity three times in the year. The first time Puja is held in the month of Behan for the welfare of the villagers and the domestic animals. The second time Puja is held in the month of Ahar. The occasion of the Puja is good ploughing and seedling. The last function of the Puja is performed in the month Kati for good harvests. There is no image of the deity. Rice, banana, fruits leaves of marmelous and basil tree are offered. No sacrifice is made.

The Rajbanshis worship the deity once in a year in the month preferably of Raag or in the rainy seasons. The
Deity is worshipped to protect the cow and the calf from the tiger and for the welfare of the villagers. Even when a cow is lost the loser vows to offer Puja to the deity.

The literal meaning of the word Banan is the dwarf. Dwarf is an incarnation of God. We do not find any relation of Banan with the incarnated God. Firstly, the deity is a parochial one; only in the Salkochara area and in the Tetelia village of Sonapur area of Kamrup the deity is worshipped. Secondly, the deity seems to be connected with the agriculture. We do not find any connection of the saatric Banan with the agriculture. So we can infer that the deity is an indigenous one.

19. Diglai Thakur

The people of Damodar Pur village of Salkochara area worship the godling. The Puja is performed on the top of the Bankura mari hill. There is a big rock and by the side of the rock there is a whole. The devotees pour milk and Phau in the whole. The Puja is held on the fifth day of the Daulotsave festival. The purpose of the worship is the welfare of the villagers.
20. Khatra Puja

Khatra Puja is performed by the women of West Goalpara. The Puja is held in the courtyard of the house. Twelve naivadyas containing akhal, fruits and twelve kinds of cakes are offered. The naivadyas are placed in the middle of the courtyard. Two bunches of paddy are planted on two sides of the naivadyas. The twelve women with their husbands living sit round the naivadyas and propitiate the deity. The purpose of the worship is to get husbands for the unmarried girls and child for the childless women.

The word khatra is the corrupt form of the Sanskrit word Keatra, the meaning of which is the place i.e. the 'earth'. In Bengal, there is a deity called Kestrapala. His description is given in the Matsya Purana, Sadyudti Karnamrita, some Bengal Kavyas and the Buddhist scripture of the Mahayana sect. According to the Dharma, Bengal Kavyas Keatra Pala are the door keepers of the four doors of the kingdom of Dharma. He is indentified with Siva or his attendant Shairya. In some places of North Bengal and Chitagong, Keatra pala is still worshipped in a befitting manner. There the symbol of

the deity is a piece of bamboo reaped with red cloth. The piece of bamboo is kept erected in an earthen pot. Or an earthen pot is kept over a winnowing tray. The Puja is held on the *Sankranti* day of the month of *chat*. After discussing pros and cons G.K. Basu has opined that Keatra pala was originally a non-aryan god of harvests.  

In the Khetra Puja of Goalpara, we do not find any similarity of the method of worship with that of Keatra Pala Puja. Even in the name the word *pala* is elided. The Puja is not seasonal. Only we can guess from the planting of paddy, seedling, participation of the married women with their husbands living and purpose of the Puja that khetra puja may be connected with the productivity or it may be the worship of the mother earth.

21. Pāñchū Gopāl

*Pāñchū Gopāl* Puja is performed on Saturday evening. The godling is worshipped by offering any articles numbering five i.e. five bananas or sweets or five *pound* of milk etc. Earthen lamps are lit and incense is burnt. There is no image of the deity. No Brahmin priest is engaged. At the end of the Puja the offerings are distributed among the devotees.

The devotees must finish the eatables at the place of worship. The Puja is performed for the fulfilment of any desire.

There is a godling called Panchu Thakur in Bengal. The godling is a malignant one. People believe that when the godling is angry with somebody he kills the child either in the womb of his or her mother or just after the birth. If he can be satisfied he cures the children who are ailing in anemic disease. In some families, Panchu Thakur is a house hold deity. Even children are named as Panchu gopal, Panchu charan etc. immitating his name. The worshippers are non-Brahmin. He is conceived as the son or attendant of Siva. Saturday and Tuesday are the appropriate time for his propitiation.

Panchananda or Panchanan is another benevolant local deity of Bengal. He protects the child from any danger. There is a Bengal Kavya of Panchu Thakur known as Panchu Thakura Panchari. G.K. Basu thinks that Panchanan and Panchu are two different deities.24

Panchu gopal may be migrated to Goalpara from Bengal. The time of worship indicates that Panchu gopal is Panchu Thakur. A malignant deity may loose its own nature in course

of time in some places and may be propitiated as a benevolent deity. Of course, the custom is that the offerings which are distributed among the participants must be finished at the place of worship and it is forbidden to take it home. May indicate something harmful nature of the deity. The number five is attached to Satya Narayana also. Perhaps the name Panchu may indicate five and such five numbers of articles are offered.

22. Dakait Puja

Dakait Puja is performed in the morning. It is done for the welfare of the cow and the calf and for giving enough milk by the cow. The first flow of milk after the birth of a calf is kept in a container for preparing curd. When the curd is prepared, it is mixed with flattened rice and abhia banana and then offered to the godling. Earthen lamp is lighted and incense is burnt. The mixed things are then distributed among the participants.

In the folk song of Borakea nath, Yama is identified as Dakait. His vehicle is the buffalo. Dakait Puja is perhaps the worship of Yama though he is not attributed as the protector of the cows. In some places Bura Thakur is also propitiated in the same manner, so it is difficult to ascertain whether
Dekait Thakur is Yama or Bura Thakur.

Another deity connected with the cattle is Barut Thakur. Barut Thakur is worshipped when the calf of a cow is missing. Cakes made of Sona paddy is offered. Keen and unboiled rice are also offered.

Barut Thakur is perhaps the Bura Thakur who is also connected with the cattle.

23. Gaganā Thākur

Gaganā Thakur is an indigenous godling of West Goalpara. He is worshipped during the Dauletlsawa. Some bamboo sticks are kept representing the deity in a prayer house known as Gaganā Thakurer Pat. Articles required for his propitiation are curd, molasses, sugar, banana etc. The articles are kept in a bamboo basket and the devotees will have to keep the basket with the articles in raising hands still the Shawariya or phera dance begins. Siva and Thakurani are also worshipped along with Gaganā Thakur. The deity is worshipped for the welfare of the villagers.

24. Maheshdeo and Aheeshdeo

Maheshdeo and Aheeshdeo are two village deities of Garangtari village of Salgacha area. The votaries are mainly
the Rajbanshis. The deities ride on white elephants according to the faith of the votaries. Mohesh deo wears white garments and Ahash deo yellow. The puja is held in the month of bahag or Jeth (April-May-June). Before the Puja green bananas are kept in the houses and when the bananas are ripe the douri informs the villagers and the Puja is held on the following day. Milk, banana, unboiled rice, flowers etc. are offered. The deities worshipped along with Mohesh deo and Ahash deo are Dwighnath, Bagan Thakur, Mahesava, Darsehila, Kaleswar, Kamakhya, Bacheswary, Ganesh, Charaphara, Hitl Swaragoli etc. There are no specific image of the deities except some small stones which represent them. There is a then of Mahesdeo-Aheosdeo at the said village.

25. Raja Thakur

Raja Thakur is an important deity of the Baugasen area of the Goalpara region. The deity is worshipped twice a year i.e. in the month of Bahag and Aohon. The votaries are male members. The deity is much more popular amongst the Rajbanshis of the area. When the deity is worshipped in the month of Bahag a Khashi is strangled to death and offered to the deity along with other articles. The liver of the strangled animal is also offered as Pressed. At the end, the articles
offered to the god is immersed in the water on a raft made of banana tree. The Puja is performed on the eve of the first ploughing. In the Puja performed in the month of Aghan a pair of pigeons are sacrificed. It is done before harvests.

There is another deity by the name of Garja Thakur in Srijongram area of the region. The method of worship, time and purpose are the same. Raja Thakur is identified with Siva. Doubt arises as regards to Garja Thakur. Gärja Puja is an important function of the Bodo-Kacharis. Thus Gärja Thäkur may be the reminiscence of the Bodo-Kacharis who have been sanskritized. But the voters opine that both the deities are same.

26. Dhalkhau Thakur

Dhalkhau Thakur is a peculiar godling of Gauripur area. There is no image, no shrine of the godling. Only a big tree represents the godling. The passers by throw mud on the tree when they go by that way. People believe that if it is not done some trouble may occur in the journey. The purpose may be the ward off evils of the road.