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The womb of tantrism and tourism- Maa Kamakhya Devi Shakti Peeth (Assam): A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

The Shakti Peeth of Maa Kamakhya Devi in Assam is a sacred site that holds immense importance in the Tantric tradition. It is believed to be the place where the feminine energy of Goddess Sati's reproductive organ fell after her body was cut into pieces by Lord Narayan in a fit of rage. This site is considered one of the most powerful Shakti Peeth in the country and draws thousands of devotees and tourists every year.

To understand the significance of Maa Kamakhya Devi Shakti Peeth in the context of Tantrism and tourism, we can conduct a bibliometric analysis. This analysis involves examining the scholarly literature related to the site, identifying key themes and trends, and visualizing the data through pictures, graphs and tables.

One key aspect of the bibliometric analysis would be to look at the number of academic publications that mention Maa Kamakhya Devi Shakti Peeth. This can provide insights into the level of scholarly interest in the site and the kind of research being conducted. We can also analyze the keywords and topics that frequently appear in these publications to understand the main focus areas of the research.

Another aspect to consider is the impact of tourism on the site. We can look at the number of tourist arrivals at Maa Kamakhya Devi Shakti Peeth over the years and analyze the factors driving tourism to the site. This can help us understand the economic benefits of tourism for the local community and the challenges faced in managing the influx of visitors.

By visualizing the data, we can effectively communicate the findings of the bibliometric analysis and highlight the connections between Tantrism, tourism, and the sacred site of Maa Kamakhya Devi Shakti Peeth. This can help researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders make informed decisions about the conservation and promotion of this important cultural and religious heritage site. Maa Kamakhya Devi Shakti Peeth, a prominent center of Tantrism and a significant pilgrimage and tourist destination in Assam, India. The analysis aims to uncover publication trends, key research themes, influential authors, and collaborative networks within the academic discourse. Data was collected from major academic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Using tools like VOS viewer and CiteSpace, the study identifies the evolution of research topics, prominent institutions, and the impact of tourism on the temple's cultural and socio-economic landscape. The findings reveal a growing interest in the intersection of religious practices and tourism, highlighting the temple's unique role in both domains.

Keywords: Maa Kamakhya Temple, Tantrism, Shakti Peeth, Bibliometric Analysis, Religious Tourism, Assam, Goddess, Kalika Purana, Kamakhya, Kamarupa, Mother Earth, puja, Shaktipith, Yogini Tantra, Yoni

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Maa Kamakhya Devi Shakti Peeth, perched on the Nilachal Hill in Guwahati, Assam, stands as a cornerstone of Hindu religious tradition and a pivotal site in Tantric practices. The temple, dedicated to Goddess Kamakhya, a form of Shakti, is one of the 51 Shakti Peethas, places where the severed body parts of Goddess Sati are believed to have fallen. This temple is particularly revered for its association with the womb and genitals of Sati, symbolizing fertility and the power of creation, making it a unique focal point in Tantric rituals and beliefs.

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1.2. Significance of the Study: The Kamakhya Temple is not only a sacred site for religious devotees but also a major attraction for tourists, both domestic and international. Its dual role as a center for spiritual practices and a tourist destination offers a rich context for exploring the dynamics between religion, culture, and tourism. Understanding how these elements interact is crucial for the sustainable management and promotion of such heritage sites.

1.3. Objective

This research aims to conduct a bibliometric analysis of the scholarly literature on Maa Kamakhya Devi Shakti Peeth, focusing on its significance in Tantrism and its impact on tourism. Bibliometric analysis, which involves the quantitative study of written publications, will help uncover trends, key themes, influential authors, and collaborative networks within this body of research.

1.4. Scope

The study will cover various dimensions of the research literature on Kamakhya Temple, including:

1. Publication trends over time.
2. Prominent research themes and topics.
3. Citation patterns and the most influential works.
4. Key authors and institutions contributing to this field.
5. Collaborative networks and co-authorship patterns.

1.5. Research Questions

1. What are the predominant themes and topics in the scholarly literature on Maa Kamakhya Devi Shakti Peeth?
2. Who are the most influential authors and institutions in this field of study?
3. How has the volume of research publications evolved over time?
4. What are the collaborative patterns and networks among researchers studying Kamakhya Temple?
5. What is the impact of religious tourism on the cultural and socio-economic aspects of the temple?

1.6. Methodology Overview

To address these questions, data will be collected from major academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Bibliometric tools like VOS viewer and CiteSpace will be employed to analyze the data, focusing on metrics such as publication counts, citation analysis, co-authorship networks, and keyword co-occurrence. This methodological approach will facilitate a detailed and systematic exploration of the academic discourse surrounding Maa Kamakhya Devi Shakti Peeth.

1.7. Importance of the Study

By providing a comprehensive overview of the research landscape related to Kamakhya Temple, this study aims to highlight significant contributions and identify gaps in the current literature. The insights gained can inform future research directions and contribute to the development of strategies for the sustainable promotion and management of the temple as a cultural heritage and tourist site. Additionally, the findings will be valuable for policymakers, heritage managers, and scholars interested in the intersections of religion, culture, and tourism.

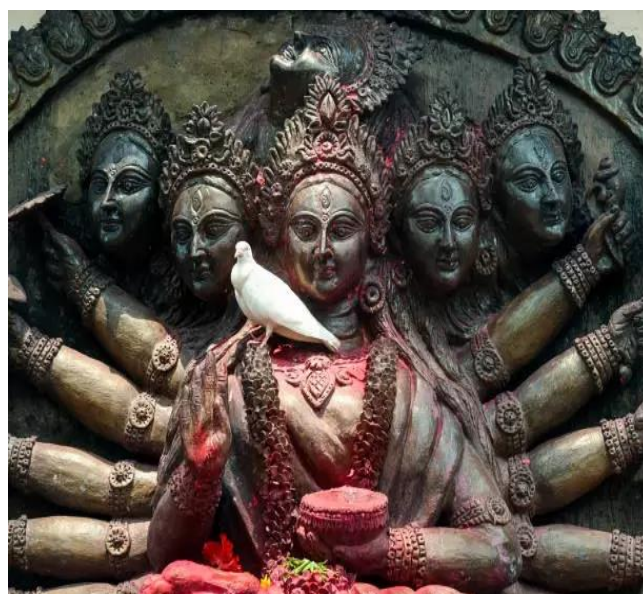
2. Literature Review

The Maa Kamakhya Devi Shakti Peeth, renowned for its

unique Tantric practices and rich cultural heritage, has been the subject of various scholarly studies. This literature review synthesizes existing research on the temple, focusing on its historical, cultural, religious, and touristic dimensions. By examining these studies, we can better understand the academic landscape and identify key themes and gaps in the current body of knowledge.

2.1. Historical and Religious Significance

Maa Kamakhya Temple is one of the oldest Shakti Peethas, and its historical significance is well-documented in various texts. Researchers such as Urban (2001) and Kinsley (1997) have explored the temple's roots in ancient Hindu mythology and its pivotal role in the development of Tantrism. These studies highlight the temple's association with the goddess Kamakhya, emphasizing its importance as a center for the worship of feminine power and fertility.



2.2. Tantric Practices and Beliefs

The Kamakhya Temple is central to Tantric practices, which are characterized by rituals that often challenge mainstream Hindu norms. White (2003) ^[16] and Brooks (1992) ^[7] have extensively discussed the temple's role in Tantrism, particularly its rituals related to fertility and menstruation, which are considered taboo in many other contexts. These works provide deep insights into the esoteric practices associated with the temple and their socio-religious implications.

2.3. Cultural Impact

The cultural significance of the Kamakhya Temple extends beyond its religious functions. Research by Sarma (2010) ^[12] and Deka (2013) ^[13] has examined how the temple influences local customs, festivals, and social structures. The annual Ambubachi Mela, for instance, is not only a major religious event but also a cultural spectacle that attracts scholars, devotees, and tourists alike.

2.4. Tourism and Economic Impact

Tourism is a significant aspect of the Kamakhya Temple's modern-day relevance. Studies by Bhattacharya and Ghosh (2018) ^[6] and Barua (2020) ^[5] have analyzed the economic impact of religious tourism on the local community. These studies highlight both the positive effects, such as economic

development and job creation, and the negative impacts, including environmental degradation and cultural commodification.

2.5. Pilgrimage and Visitor Experience

The motivations and experiences of pilgrims and tourists visiting the Kamakhya Temple have been explored in studies by Singh (2015)^[14] and Raj (2017)^[11]. These works investigate the spiritual and personal reasons behind visits, as well as the logistical challenges and experiences of visitors. Understanding these factors is crucial for managing the site sustainably and enhancing the visitor experience.

2.6. Environmental and Conservation Issues

With increasing tourist footfall, the environmental sustainability of the Kamakhya Temple has become a critical concern. Research by Das (2019)^[18] and Sharma (2021)^[13] addresses issues related to waste management, conservation of the temple's physical structure, and the impact of tourism on the local ecology. These studies underscore the need for effective conservation strategies to preserve the temple's heritage.

2.7. Gaps in the Literature

While there is substantial research on various aspects of the Kamakhya Temple, several gaps remain. For instance, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that integrate the religious, cultural, and touristic aspects into a single framework. Additionally, there is a need for more interdisciplinary research that combines insights from anthropology, religious studies, tourism studies, and environmental science. Further exploration is also needed into the long-term socio-economic impacts of tourism on the local community and the effectiveness of current conservation efforts.

3. Research Methodology-Bibliometric

Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative approach used to evaluate and analyze academic literature. This method employs statistical tools to measure the impact, productivity, and patterns within scholarly publications. Key bibliometric indicators include publication counts, citation counts, h-index, co-authorship networks, and keyword co-occurrence. These metrics provide insights into the research trends, influential works, leading authors, and collaborative networks in a particular field of study.

3.1. Key Components of Bibliometric Analysis

Publication Trends: Examining the number of publications over time to identify growth patterns and emerging areas of interest.

Citation Analysis: Evaluating the impact and influence of specific articles, authors, and journals based on the number of citations they receive.

Authorship and Collaboration: Analyzing the network of authors to understand collaboration patterns, including the identification of prolific authors and their affiliations.

Keyword Co-occurrence: Investigating the frequency and patterns of keywords used in publications to reveal major research themes and their interconnections.

3.2. Relevance to the Study of Maa Kamakhya Devi Shakti Peeth: Applying bibliometric analysis to the study

of Maa Kamakhya Devi Shakti Peeth offers several benefits and insights:

Mapping the Research Landscape: Bibliometric analysis helps in systematically mapping the body of literature related to the Kamakhya Temple, providing a comprehensive overview of the academic research conducted on this subject. This includes identifying the volume of research over time and key periods of increased scholarly activity.

Identifying Key Themes and Trends: By analyzing keywords and subject categories, bibliometric analysis uncovers the predominant themes and emerging trends in research related to the temple. This can include topics such as Tantric practices, cultural heritage, religious tourism, and conservation efforts.

Highlighting Influential Works and Authors: Citation analysis identifies the most influential publications and authors in the field. Understanding which works are most frequently cited helps in recognizing foundational research and seminal contributions to the study of the Kamakhya Temple.

Understanding Collaboration Networks: Analyzing co-authorship patterns reveals the collaborative networks among researchers, institutions, and countries. This can highlight key hubs of research activity and potential areas for further collaboration.

Assessing Research Gaps and Future Directions: By providing a clear picture of the current research landscape, bibliometric analysis helps in identifying gaps in the literature. This is crucial for directing future research efforts and addressing overlooked areas, such as the long-term socio-economic impacts of tourism or the integration of conservation strategies with religious practices.

Informing Policy and Practice: The insights gained from bibliometric analysis can inform policymakers, heritage managers, and tourism developers. Understanding the academic discourse and research findings can guide the development of strategies for sustainable tourism, heritage preservation, and community engagement.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Latest Tourism Trends at Kamakhya Temple

In recent years, Kamakhya Temple has witnessed a significant increase in footfall owing to both the rise of spiritual tourism and the government's efforts in promoting India's Northeastern cultural heritage. The introduction of improved connectivity, infrastructure development, and dedicated tourist circuits has made the temple more accessible to visitors.

Another trend is the digitization of temple services and rituals. While maintaining the traditional aspects, the temple trust now offers online services for rituals, making it possible for devotees to participate in offerings and prayers from afar.

Ecotourism is also gaining popularity, with visitors seeking to explore the natural beauty around the temple. The surrounding areas of Nilachal Hill provide opportunities for

light trekking and bird watching, complementing the spiritual journey with an ecological one.

Social media has played a vital role in showcasing Kamakhya Temple to the world. With the increase in travel blogging and influencer culture, there has been a surge in awareness and interest in visiting this ancient shrine. Consequently, during peak seasons and festivals, the temple can now be expected to host a diverse crowd of not just spiritual seekers but also travelers interested in history, culture, and photography.

4.2. Best Time to Visit Kamakhya Temple

Located atop the Nilachal Hill in Guwahati, Assam, the glorious Kamakhya Temple is a revered pilgrimage site, particularly for followers of Shaktism and Tantra practices. The most auspicious time to visit this temple is during the Ambubachi Mela, which usually takes place in the month of June (Ahaar) according to the Assamese calendar. The festival marks the earth's fertility and is believed to coincide with the menstrual cycle of the goddess Kamakhya. During these four days, the temple remains closed and reopens with grand festivities on the fourth day. Devotees from all over the world throng to the temple to seek blessings, making it a vibrant, albeit crowded, time to visit. The weather during this period can be hot and humid, indicative of the typical monsoon season in Assam.

For those looking to visit the temple in a more serene setting, the period from October to April is ideal. The climate is pleasant, with cool breezes and moderate temperatures, offering a comfortable pilgrimage and sightseeing experience. Durga Puja, celebrated in September or October, is another festive time to witness the temple's rituals and traditions. However, if a quieter visit is preferred, avoid major Indian festivals to miss the bulk of the crowds. Regardless of when you visit, early mornings are usually less crowded, providing an opportunity for a peaceful darshan (sight of the deity). Do note that Guwahati can get quite chilly in the winter months, so do pack accordingly if planning a visit around that time.

4.3. Economy/Tourism development

4.3.1. Employment in Hotel Establishments

As per the data available from the Economic Census 1998 (EC 1998), the total employment in the Hotel establishments in Assam during 1998 was 15,669. It consisted of 14,472 males and 1,197 females. The percentage share of women in the total employment in Hotel establishments was only 7.6 percent. The total employment also included 827 children (811 males and 16 females), which formed about 5.3 percent. The distribution of employment in Hotel establishments by age and sex is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Employment in Hotel Establishments by Age and Sex-(EC 1998)

Age	Male	Female	Persons
Adult	13,661	1,181	14,84 (94.72)
Child	811	16	827 (5.28)
Total	14,472 (92.36)	1197 (7.64)	15,669 (100.00)

(Note: Figures in bracket indicate percentage to the total)

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Assam

4.3.2. Classification of Hotel Units by Types: Distribution of Hotel units by category shows that about 7.10 percent

are starred hotels, and Unstarred Hotels are 85.51 percent. Table 2 presents classification of Hotel units.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Hotel Units by Type

Category	Nos.	%age
1 Star	0	0.00
2 Star	6	1.70
3 Star	15	4.26
4 Star	4	1.14
5 Star	0	0.00
Starred Hotels	25	7.10
Un-starred Hotel	301	85.51
Guest House/ Tourist Bungalow/ Heritage Hotel	16	4.55
Youth Hostel	0	0.00
Dormitory	2	0.57
Dharamshala / Others	8	2.27
Total	352	100

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Assam

The 352 surveyed Hotel units employed 5368 persons. The average employment per hotel is about 15.3 persons and the average employment per room is about 0.7. The highest average per hotel is at Silchar (23.3) followed by Guwahati (20.2) and Kaziranga (20.1).

4.3.3. Distribution of Hotel Units by Rooms and Employment

Table 3: Distribution of Hotel Units by Rooms and Employment

Type of Accom. Unit	Unit	No of Accom. Units	No. of Rooms	Permanent Emp	Casual Emp
2 Star	No.	6	246	255	0
	%age	1.70	3.19	4.86	0.00
3 Star	No.	15	494	562	0
	%age	4.26	6.41	10.71	0.00
4 Star	No.	4	275	690	0
	%age	1.14	3.57	13.15	0.00
Starred Hotels	No.	25	1015	1507	0
	%age	7.10	13.17	28.72	0.00
Un-starred Hotel	No.	301	6317	3400	80
	%age	85.51	81.98	64.79	66.67
Guest House/ Tourist Bungalow/ Heritage Hotel	No.	16	164	126	37
	%age	4.55	2.13	2.40	30.83
Dormitory	No.	2	150	120	0
	%age	0.57	1.95	2.29	0.00
Dharamshala / Others	No.	8	60	95	3
	%age	0.27	0.78	1.81	2.50
Total	No.	352	7706	5248	120

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Assam

4.4 Assam Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC)

The Assam Tourism Development Corporation was set-up in June 1988 as a registered company for the development of Hotel infrastructure in the state. It is presently operating most of the tourist lodges, tourist bungalows, Hotel units, guesthouses, entertainment projects, etc. taken over from the Directorate of Tourism.

4.5. Directorate of Tourism

The Directorate of Tourism of Government of Assam is mainly responsible for the development of tourism in the state. It undertakes infrastructure development projects, human resource development, publicity and promotion, etc. The revenue earning of the Directorate increased from about Rs.35.87 lakhs in 2000-01 to Rs.62.15 lakhs in 2004-05. The year wise earnings are given in Table 4.

4.6. Day Visitors

There are a number of pilgrim centers and other tourist spots in Assam, which are frequented by a large number of day visitors. These include Kamakhya temple, State Museum and Zoo and Kalakshetra at Guwahati. During 2023, Kamakhya temple recorded over 1.8 lakh visitors, State Museum about 0.4 lakh, Stte Zoo 4.4 lakh and Kalakshetra over 2.6 lakh visitors. According to a limited Survey conducted at a number of tourist spots in Assam,

about 13.2 percent of visitors were day visitors. The rest of the visitors were tourists staying either in Hotel establishments or with friends and relatives.

Table 4: Annual Earnings of Directorate of Tourism

Year	Earnings (Rs.)
2000-01	35,87,224
2001-02	38,88,841
2002-03	41,03,051
2003-04	60,44,642
2004-05	62,14,766

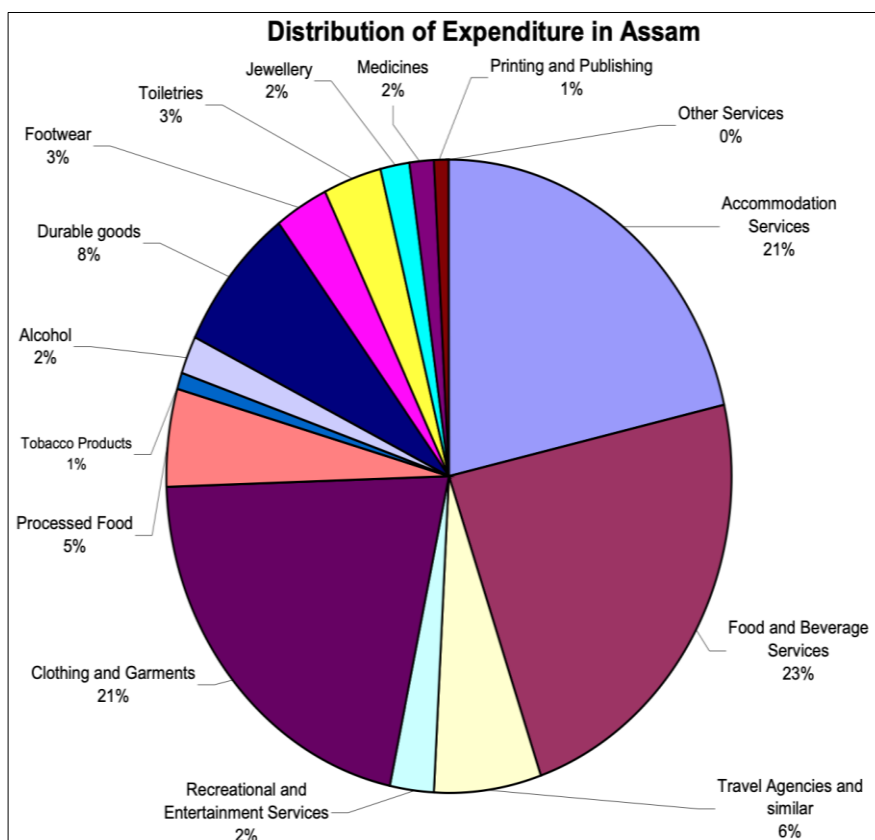
Source: Directorate of Tourism, Assam

Table 5: Origin of Domestic Tourists and Foreign Tourists

Domestic Tourists	Foreign Tourists
As high as 64.23 percent of the domestic tourists were from within Assam. All the seven north-eastern states taken together accounted for 79.23 percent of the domestic tourists. The largest percentage of domestic tourists from outside the North Eastern region has been from West Bengal (9.49%) followed by Delhi (5.02%).	The highest number of tourists visiting Assam were from the United States of America and accounted for about 20.8 percent of the total foreign tourists. The next largest contributor of foreign tourists to Assam was the United Kingdom which had a share of 14.3 percent of the total foreign tourists. The other major countries of tourist origin for Assam were Bangladesh (10.0%), Australia (7.7%), France (5.6%), Italy (5.5%), Bhutan (5.4%) and Germany (3.4%).

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Assam

4.7. Distribution of per day expenditure at the center by place of visit



Source: Directorate of Tourism, Assam

Fig 2: Distribution of expenditure in Assam

4.8. Symbolism (Maa Kamakhya Temple)

Like other ancient Indian tales, the image and presentation of Goddess Kamakhya is full of symbolic meanings. The

important attributes of Her imagery symbolism are described under different aspects.

Yoni: It is a Sanskrit word literally meaning 'source/womb/female genital' (COD, p. 1423) and also 'birth, rebirth, reincarnation' (OH-ED, p. 845). It is a symbol of feminine power of sex, and of creation. Following the latter set of meanings, yoni became the goddess' (re)birth or re-incarnation. Going by the mythological story, narrated by Shiva to the Devi, as contained in the YT, yoni (-circle) symbolized the Goddess and Her own procreative energy, source of origin of everything. According to the YT (3.14), it is the manifestation of Devi. It is said to be the abode of Goddess and all deities, symbol of all sacred power, and has been equated with sacred tirthas (cf. Kinsley 1998: 248). There are several instances of yoni worship in different parts of the world. Actually, in nature itself many yoni-symbols along with phallus-symbols are reported. And, then it is quite logical to find attestation of such worships in many ancient cultures.

Oozing of Yoni: To a simple understanding, oozing represents sexually aroused (and hence moist) active female organs. Going by the narration contained in the KaP, the yoni-circle (at Kamakhya) is supplied 'nectar' daily (cf. KaP, 82.34), it is easy to infer symbolically that the fluid oozing out of the yoni is nothing but the 'nectar' and that is why the yoni remains wet ever. This theme is detailed out in the Kamakhya Tantra (8.23a - 24b), of course a late work from eastern India where the 'sacred fluid' itself represents the force of the Goddess that a guru initiates (White 2003: 80) ^[16]. Since Kamakhya represents the genitals of the goddess, referred to as the yoni-pitha or yoni-mandala, it is partly covered with cloth and garlands of flowers (Goswami 1998: 69). It is evidently remarked that "The goddess Kamakhya, represented simply by her yoni (vagina), expresses the creative aspect of the power and energy that is an integral element of shakti (Foulston and Stuart 2009: 190).

Additionally, it could also be explained as a symbol of menstruating, as it is popularly understood to be, representing the (female's) fertility. We can compare here this aspect of the goddess with the Harappan seal bearing a female figurine which is undisputed symbol of fertility (cf. Fig. 4.5). Since female fertility is regarded equally sacred by the cultivators concerned with the Earth's fertility (more precisely speaking the farms' fertility) and the pastoral communities, etc. wet-yoni symbol fits well in the local cultural context (For Tantra and yoni-worship, see White 2003) ^[16].

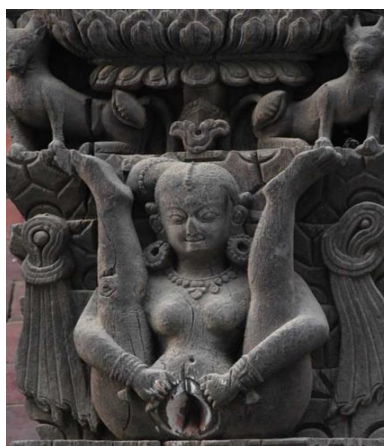


Fig 5: The goddess with her yoni shown for worship, and a lotus budding from her neck to signify creation.

4.9. Yoni on the Hill: The hill surrounding the sacred site is eulogized as 'Kamagiri' – the mountain/hill of Kama or Eros. In another context the same hill is said to be the body of Shiva himself that turned blue (KaP, 64.59) and therefore called 'Nilachala'. In both ways, this hill is a symbolic representation of a masculine body. The yoni on it expresses the domination of the goddess over Shiva. Further, if we try to link it with one of the images of goddess described above, it is also the symbol of goddess standing on a (male) corpse.

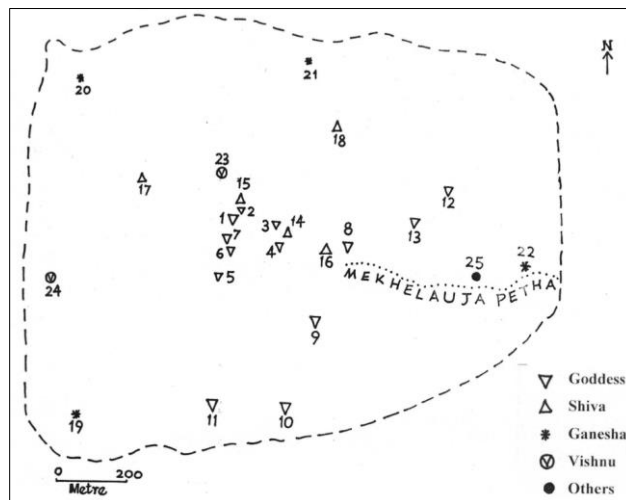


Fig 6: Distribution of sacred shrines in Nilachala

1. Kamakhya 2. Tara, 3. Kali, 4. Chhinnamasta, 5. Shitala, 6. Bhairavi, 7. Dhumavati, 8. Shmashanakali, 9. Lalita Kanta, 10. Joy Durga, 11. Vanadurga, 12. Bhuvaneswari, 13. Bagala, 14. Kameshwara, 15. Kedara, 16. Siddheshwar, 17. Amritokeshvara, 18. Kotilinga, 19. Ganesha (Mahakala), 20. Ganesha (Nandi), 21. Ganesha (Bhringi), 22. Ganesha (Ganapati), 23. Gadadhara, 24. Pandunath, 25. Betala

4.10. Rituals, Functionaries, and Festivities

Sacred places are not of religious significance alone, they are also the places of socio-cultural functions and celebrations. Kamakhya temple complex is accepted by people as the hub of Assamese culture. This section discusses the rituals performed, the functionaries, and the important festivals and their celebration.

4.11. Rituals

The rituals performed at the Kamakhya temple can be discussed under the following categories:

1. **Nitya Puja** ('daily worship') is regular and routine worship of the goddess. It begins with the bathing of the pithasthan(shakti Peeth). The first proper puja starts early in the morning (around 0600 hrs). It is conducted by a diksha dhari priest and the puja lasts almost for an hour during which the goddess is offered naivedya and a he-goat. Then, the temple is opened to devotees. Around 1300 hrs, the temple is closed and the goddess is offered bhog ('cooked offerings'). The temple remains closed till 1500 hrs and during this period, the devotees believe, the goddess goes on afternoon siesta. The temple is again opened to devotees till the (evening) arati the concluding ritual of daily worship after which she is offered her evening dinner.

Kameshwara and Kameshwari too are worshiped by the priest of Kamakhya temple following the rituals discussed above in daily worship on five days a month (2 chaturdashis +2 ashtamis +1 sankranti); and on four other occasions

(Uttarayana, Mahavisuva, Dakshinayana, and Jalavisuva) also.

2. **Naimittika Pujas** ('special worships') are performed on special festival days, viz. Durga Puja, Pohan Bia, Durgadeul, Vasanti Puja, Madandeul, and Ambuvaci, in a calendar year in the Kamakhya temple. These festivals are discussed at the end of this section.

3. **Kamya Puja** ('purposive worship') is not held on any specific and fixed day. Actually, every puja performed by visiting devotees belongs to this category.

4.12. Functionaries

Any organized work requires a battery of people for successful completion. Naturally, larger and complex are the rituals, greater is the requirement of personnel who can oversee, conduct their respective job(s) with expertise and success. Kamakhya temple being a sacred place where a very old live and continuing tradition of goddess worship is found, existence of elaborate and complex rituals is no surprise. And, thus a large number of functionaries are needed; of course, in the event of special pujas. The related functions could easily be put into two apparent categories:

(i) functions related to conduct of sacred rituals, and
(ii) supportive and non-sacred functions. It clearly reveals distinctive caste-affiliation of the different works which are carried on in the main temple especially. As far as the Brahmin functionaries are concerned, scholars' interpretation supports the fact that they were brought from outside, e.g. Gauda and Mithila (in present day Bihar) by several ruling monarchs (cf. Kakati 1989, Mishra 2004).

4.13. Festivals

Festivals and (their) celebrations are inseparable from the (cultural) life of all ethnic communities around the world. In the case of countries like India where religion forms the backbone of all activities, most of the festivals and related celebrations have got sacred underlining. In the Kamakhya temple complex, the festivals-celebrations are observed at two levels: in the Kamakhya temple, and among common people residing in the temple complex. The salient features of the festivals observed at the temple are presented as below:

1. **Ambuvachi:** It is held during a three day period starting from the end of Mrigashira star up to the end of Ardra star in the early Ashadha (June-July). On the first day, the pithasthan (shakti Peeth) is ceremoniously covered by red cloth and the temple is closed. During the closure period, three lamps are lit in the chalanta section and daily worship of Kameshwari is done. Though the usual bhog is avoided but he-goat sacrifice continues for all three days. Other temples, of the Kamakhya complex, too are closed during this period and worship of respective deities is done outside their pithasthan (Shakti Peeth).
2. On the day of reopening, the (red) covering is removed and the goddess is bathed ceremoniously. After that she is dressed in a new sari and purified topara. A simple puja by her attendant is followed by daily worship by the priest, marks resumption of routine rituals, etc. Some kinds of purification rites, etc. are performed in other temples here. This period of impurity and rites of purification, of household deities, are observed at the complex

3. A big fair is organized, during this period, which is supported by the government and voluntary agencies. Huge number of ascetics, monks, traders, and commoners assemble in the fair. They stay in different ashrams and makeshift arrangements at the site of the fair. It is observed that female devotees outnumber their male counterparts. The traders come from as far off as West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, etc. The fair reaches its peak on the third (and reopening) day. All participants to this fair are equally charged with high religious spirit. The most sought after object of all is a piece of that cloth used by goddesses during the pollution period called the Maha prasada. It is believed to be auspicious and protects against every evil and danger. The fair ends with gradual dispersion of traders and pilgrims.
4. **Durga Puja:** This puja lasts for five days, 6th-10th day of the light half of Ashvina (September-October), only. Clay image of goddess Durga, in Mahishasura-mardini form, and other companion divinities (Ganesha, Lakshmi, Sarasvati and Kartikeya) are also placed in the temple and worshiped specifically on Maha Saptami, Mahashtami, and Mahanavami.
5. On Sashti (6th day) adhivasa is held. Pigeons are sacrificed in all goddess temples in the Kamakhya complex on Maha Saptami (the 7th day). Mahashtami (the 8th day) is the day of highest sacrifice in all goddess temples. Buffalo sacrifice is made to Kamakhya. The idol of goddess Kameshwari is taken to bhramana ("Walk") around Kamakhya temple in a procession. She is offered special bhog on return. At night, after the completion of sandhi ('evening puja') and ardhatri ('midnight puja'), a special worship called Trishula Puja is done. The most notable feature of this worship is the symbolic sacrifice of a human replica (made of wheat dough). In other goddess temples of the complex, apart from routine rituals he-goats are sacrificed. On Mahanavami (the 9th day), matrichakra is worshiped and buffalo is sacrificed. The goddess is taken to bhramana (sacred walk) around the temple complex. In the other goddess temples duck sacrifice is made. During all these three days, a special bathing rite, accompanied with music, to the goddess Kamakhya is done. In this period, bhog plates are offered in all Shiva temples. Finally, on Dashami (the 10th day) specifically Jaya-Vijaya and Aparajita puja is done in the morning during which pantabhata ('soaked left-over rice') with fried dove meat is offered to the goddess. The clay images are taken out in a procession to Brahmaputra for immersion in the afternoon. This procession is marked with a sort of revelry which is reminiscent of the Shabarotsva, as mentioned in the KaP (chapter 60). Kakati (1989) refers to the descriptions made in YT (63.19) which makes it mandatory for the goddess devotees to be with dancers, musicians and prostitutes. 'Failure to join revelry would bring down the wrath of the goddess upon the delinquents'.
6. **Pohan/Puhan Bia:** It is also called Pancalya bia or Punsaban and held on the 2nd/3rd day of the bright half of Pausha (December-January), when Pushya star presides over the constellation. It marks the marriage of Kameshwari and Kameshwari. One day prior to the scheduled marriage, the idol of Kameshwari is taken out

from the chalanta section to Lord Kameshvara temple. The next day, Kameshvara (the bridegroom) is brought, with the marriage party in traditional pomp and gaiety, etc. to the Kamakhya temple and the marriage takes place in a typical traditional Assamese way. The bridegroom Lord Shiva in the form of Kameshvara, is presented with a sandalwood made special pipe for smoking ganja (Canabis sattiva) and kamandala ('a vessel carried by ascetics'). Different functionaries of the temple play the role of Kameshvari's family members during the function.

7. **Durgadeul:** Observed from the second to fifth day of light half of Phalgun (Feb.-March), special puja of Kameshvari, put on a dola near the Calanta section, is done in this festival. Adhivasa and meshdah puja on the second day and dolon puja during the third to fifth day are conducted. On the sixth day, the goddess Kameshvari is taken for a Brahmana around the temple complex. People play colours with the idol during the whole period of this festival.
8. **Vasanti Puja (the spring festival):** It is observed during Chaitra (March-April) navaratri at the pithasthan (shakti Peeth) of the Kamakhya temple, especially from the 7th to the 9th day. The goddess Mahasana ('great bathing') is performed but no other elaborate ritual is performed in Ashvina navaratri. However, on the navami (9th day), special puja is held in all goddess temples and each goddess is offered pigeon-sacrifice.
9. **Madan deul:** It is also called 'Madan Caturali' or 'Kamadeul' (this festival may be compared with 'Madanotsava'). It is observed from the 13th day of the Full Moon in Chaitra (March-April). Lord Kameshvara/Kamadeva is offered special pujas. Goddess Kameshvari is out on bhramana and people play color (kept in the skin bag made of skin of the he-goat sacrificed on the occasion) with the idol as well as amongst themselves.
10. **Manasa Puja:** This festival is observed from Shravana (July- August) sankranti up to the second day of Bhadrapada (August- September). It is held in the nata mandir portion where a special mandapa is established for the purpose. A sacred pitcher is worshiped in the nata mandira part, unlike during the puja of the goddess, other manifestations at the pithasthan (shakti Peeth) a. It gives us ample reasons to believe that the worship of Manasa is grudgingly adopted in the regular religious service of the temple. Deodhani naca, which continues during these two days and nights, is the most important accompaniment of this festival. 'Deodhani' appears to be the corrupt form of a Sanskrit word 'devdhvani' literally meaning 'the divine sound'. To the tune of drums and karatala, the deodha ('divine dancer'), dressed up like bhairava, dances miraculously during peak hours (0300-0500 hrs) of this procession. As common people understand, the deodha is under divine influence and consequent protection these days.
11. **Kumari Puja:** The prominence of the cult of this worship is attested by large scale worship of living Kumaris in Nepal and during Durga puja in India too. The observed rise in Kumari puja in Kamakhya temple complex (Mishra 2004) necessitates some remarks on it. Kumari puja ('virgin worship') has a somewhat ancient history in India. It is symbolic representation

and acceptance of the pervasive divine female principle present in every female form (cf. Kinsley 1998). Though this puja is normally done during Ashvina Navaratri Durga puja, Kumari is identified with the goddess Tripura (-sundari) – a virgin goddess of beauty and sex (see Kakati, 1989: 48-55). It may be mentioned here that the word 'Kumari' is not understood in any one way by all the believers. To some, it denotes only 'virgin' girls and to some others it stands for 'prepubescent (virgin) girls'. Kakati (1989) quoting Tripura Rahasya (TR, 10/14), comes up with yet another interpretation associating the word 'virgin' emphatically with 'she being her own mistress, independent, and creator of the universe according to her desire.' On the 8th and 9th day of Ashvina light half, the prepubescent virgin girls are welcomed and offered systematic puja, fed, and given dakshina before being seen off. Textual prescriptions are not unanimous on the issue and hence there is no strict instruction about from which caste they should be. In practice, normally Brahmin girls are preferably looked for and in case of their non-availability, girls of any caste background could be worshiped.

Special worship is done on specific occasions in other temples in this sacred complex. Normally, such occasions are directly associated with the presiding deity of the concerned temple. Janmashtami in Kamaleshwar, Lakshmi Puja (Kojagari) at Lakshmi and Kamala's pithasthan (shakti Peeth), Ashvina Amavasya and Magha Chaturdashi in Kali temple, Magha Shukla Panchami at Matangi, Sivaratri in all Shiva temples, etc. are a few major examples.

5. Summary and Recommendations

1. Assam is fast emerging as a major tourist destination in India with its splendid tourist attractions. Its breathtaking scenic beauty, dense forests, green valleys, large waterways, rich biodiversity and unique art and culture make Assam a state with enormous potential for development through tourism.
2. The tourist visits in Assam have been increasing steadily during the last few years and the trend needs to be sustained through the provision of appropriate tourist facilities and services.
3. There are a good number of Hotel units scattered throughout the state. These units are primarily meeting the demands of domestic tourists and as such there is a need for more quality hotels, particularly in tourist destinations like Guwahati, Kaziranga, Nameri, etc.
4. The unique attractions of Assam are its wildlife sanctuaries like Kaziranga and cultural attractions, temples, monuments, art and craft. Accessibility and tourist facilities around these attractions have to be enhanced and marketed aggressively in national and international markets.
5. As such 64.2 percent of the domestic tourists are from the state and another 15 percent is from the other North Eastern State. Though, it is good to promote tourist movement within the state from the point of social integration, it is important that efforts are made to attract more tourists from other states in order to improve the tourism earnings from outside the state. It is, therefore, important that publicity and promotion of

tourist attractions of Assam strengthen, particularly in the tourist generating states.

6. Assam also has the potential of attracting more foreign tourists, particularly those segments of tourists having a liking for cultural and wildlife attractions. Special efforts have to be therefore made to improve the requisite infrastructure facilities and strengthen overseas publicity and promotion.
7. The most potential international tourist markets for India are the USA, UK, Australia and France. Marketing for these countries needs to be drawn up and implemented.
8. Human resource development is another important aspect that needs to be given adequate emphasis in the tourism development effort so as to improve the quality of services and to ensure that economic benefits of tourism are shared by the local community.
9. It is also important to develop and implement strategies for enhancing the duration of stay of both domestic and foreign tourists.
10. By and large, tourists in Assam are satisfied with various infrastructure facilities. However there is scope for further improving the infrastructural facilities to provide a hassle free and memorable experience to the tourists.
11. The policy framework and facilitation services in Assam also need to be improved for attracting private investment in the tourism sector.

6. Conclusion

The existing body of literature on Maa Kamakhya Devi Shakti Peeth is rich and varied, covering its historical, religious, cultural, and touristic dimensions. However, there are opportunities for further research, particularly in integrating these dimensions and addressing the emerging challenges related to tourism and conservation. This bibliometric analysis aims to build on this existing knowledge, providing a comprehensive overview of the academic discourse and suggesting directions for future research. Bibliometric analysis is a powerful tool for examining the scholarly literature on Maa Kamakhya Devi Shakti Peeth. By providing quantitative insights into publication trends, research themes, influential works, and collaborative networks, this method enhances our understanding of the academic landscape surrounding the temple. This analysis not only contributes to the field of religious and cultural studies but also supports practical applications in tourism management and heritage conservation. Conducting a bibliometric analysis of Maa Kamakhya Devi Shakti Peeth can provide valuable insights into the intersection of Tantrism and tourism at this sacred site in Assam. By visualizing the data through diagrams, graphs, and pictures, we can effectively communicate the findings and contribute to the preservation and sustainable development of this important cultural heritage site. Highly developed system of rituals, celebration of festivals during a calendar year and functionaries are evidence to the living tradition maintained at this sacred shrine. Today Kamakhya requires a comprehensive multidisciplinary treatment in the contemporary context.

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relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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