

***Sparxan*¹: ‘Seeing’ Menstruating Goddess Kamakhya through the ‘ritual touch’**

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Abstract: This paper discusses how the conceptualization of menstruating goddess Kamakhya revolves around *sparxan*, the ritual act of touching the goddess. Here, the conventional mode of worship *darxan* (seeing/viewing the goddess) is effectively replaced by *sparxan* in order to ‘see’ and communicate with the goddess. However, to understand the complexity of worshipping Kamakhya, the paper explores two contrasting situations where Kamakhya is worshipped by performing and un-performing *sparxan-nitya puja* (the daily worship) and *Ambubachi* festival believed to be her menstrual period when she becomes inaccessible in sight and touch. In doing so, the paper argues that the act of *sparxan* subverts the traditional mode of worship prioritizing the elemental idea of auspicious touch over auspicious sight. But at the same time it also brings into question the ambivalence of how the same goddess becomes touchable or untouchable and both the modes are accepted ways of ‘seeing’ the goddess albeit in two different events.

Key words: Kamakhya; *sparxan*; *darxan*; *Ambubachi*; menstruation; auspicious touch.